



# Self-Realization Fellowship

Founded in 1920 by Paramahansa Yogananda

November 1995

*"It was for a divine purpose that I came to America, and it is through God's grace that this work has grown. What I have been blessed to witness in my lifetime has been beyond my dreams.... It has been a great dream, an epic of joy."*

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Dear Friends,

Since his *mahasamadhi* in 1952, Paramahansa Yogananda's work of Self-Realization Fellowship—the society he founded in America to carry on his worldwide mission—has continued to grow and to bring his universal message to truth-seekers all over the world. In 75 years of service there have been many milestones, as well as the inevitable challenges that come with every worthwhile endeavor.

During Paramahansa's lifetime, when incidents occurred that had the potential for creating confusion and inharmony, he would do his utmost to bring forth the highest and the best in everyone involved, while continuing to move forward with confidence. In all circumstances, he had full faith that truth and harmony would prevail in the end—and he kept his gaze focused on that. This was his way, and he encouraged all of us in SRF to do likewise.

In that spirit, we want to discuss with you "An Open Letter from Ananda Church of Self-Realization, September 30, 1995." Copies of this document—which contains many misstatements and unfounded allegations about the honesty and integrity of Self-Realization Fellowship and its leaders—have been widely distributed, not only at SRF temples but in other public places. In the interest of truth we feel we have a responsibility to present the facts as we know them, and it is our hope that the misunderstanding evident in Ananda's letter will be ultimately resolved.

## Historical Background

Ananda is an organization founded in 1969 by J. Donald Walters in northern California. A former monk of Self-Realization Fellowship, Mr. Walters joined the SRF Monastic Order in the fall of 1948 and was given the final vows of *sannyas* in 1955 by Sri Daya Mata. (At that time he was also given the monastic name "Kriyananda.") He served as a vice president of Self-Realization Fellowship from 1960 until 1962, at which time the SRF Board of Directors (composed of close disciples personally trained by Paramahansa and appointed to the Board by him) voted unanimously to request his resignation.\*

Over the years, Mr. Walters has expressed his opinions about SRF and its leaders through letters and other writings. In the past five years, this letter-writing campaign has escalated and has become increasingly derogatory and inflammatory in nature. At least a dozen open letters, written by Mr. Walters and other Ananda leaders, have been distributed to Ananda members as well as (unsolicited) to members of Self-Realization Fellowship. The open letter referred to above is the latest in this series.



*True religion satisfies the demands of your soul, not by words but by proof. I wanted never to be so dogmatic that I would stop using my reason and common sense. When I met my guru, Sri Yukteswar, he said: "Many teachers will tell you to believe; then they put out your eyes of reason and instruct you to follow only their logic. But I want you to keep your eyes of reason open; in addition, I will open in you another eye, the eye of wisdom."...*

*In the beginning of my spiritual search in India I had steadfastly refused to join any society because I didn't find in them demonstrable truth. But when I found my guru and this path, and saw through my own experience that it worked, I gave my life to this cause.*

—Paramahansa Yogananda  
in *Man's Eternal Quest*

\* Paramahansa Yogananda listed in writing the disciples he wished to serve on the Board of Directors after his lifetime. He directed the Board to choose, as needed, additional members not specifically named by him. Donald Walters was not appointed to the Board by Paramahansa Yogananda himself, but was elected by the other Board members after the passing of Dr. M. W. Lewis in 1960.



**Sri Daya Mata, President  
of Self-Realization Fellowship**

*"How we respect and love the individual who always has a kind word to say about everyone. We may not always have peace and understanding with others, because not everyone will understand us. Christ had his enemies, but from his side there was always the giving of love....The best way to influence others is by our understanding hearts, our kindness, our compassion, and our love...."*

*"We are all divine children sharing this path to God with thousands and thousands of GURUJI's disciples throughout the world. ...We are united in divine love, divine brotherhood, divine friendship, and one common goal: seeking God together and serving Him in whatever way we can as we reach out to our greater family of all living beings."*

—Sri Daya Mata  
in *Finding the Joy Within You*

SRF has not responded publicly to these highly derogatory letters; nor have we, out of respect for Mr. Walters' privacy, engaged in any public discussion of the circumstances that made it necessary for the SRF Board to ask Mr. Walters to resign.\* On a personal level, however, we have made numerous attempts to achieve a greater understanding with him, even encouraging him to continue serving the work of Paramahansaji wherever he was. On April 4, 1969, Sri Daya Mata wrote to him:

Dear Kriyananda,

When you were removed from your official position in SRF, I encouraged you to go on serving Master. I even encouraged you to go on lecturing about Master (if that was all you knew and all you wanted to do), and to spread his name and his work by introducing others to SRF as the channel Master established for the dissemination of Kriya Yoga and the other SRF yoga techniques and principles....

There is so much you can do, even on the outside, to really serve Master by serving his work in harmony with its directives, if you are really of a mind to do so....All you have to do, Kriyananda, is to let your actions demonstrate your words of loyalty to and devotion for Master and SRF and there will be the harmony and divine friendship desired by both you and SRF.\*\* Had you been able to do this these many years you have been outside SRF, the proposals in your letter might well have been considered without reservation—much to the mutual joy of yourself and SRF, and you know (I hope) how much lighter it would have made my own heart. Today is determined by past actions; the future, by present actions. I can only say it is up to you.

I pray always for you and for your highest spiritual good. My love and friendship never change.

In Guru's love and service,

Daya Mata

SRF leaders have corresponded with Mr. Walters and have also met with him personally on a number of occasions since his resignation, in an effort to seek harmony. Such correspondence has occurred even recently, despite Ananda's disparaging public letters. For example, Daya Mataji wrote to him in 1994: "In all these years, there has never been a similar attempt by SRF's leaders to publish or circulate any derogatory information about you or Ananda....We harbor no ill will toward you or anyone at Ananda. We seek peace, and justice for Master's work, yet want to live

\* Ananda's September 30, 1995 open letter claims that Mr. Walters was dismissed unfairly, and that this decision was based on an "emotional analysis of his motives for action." Such a claim forces us to clarify, however, that it was not a subjective analysis of his motives that led to his dismissal, but specific actions of his—his basic pattern of behavior—and that the situation was discussed with him on many occasions in the months before his departure. One such conversation, for instance, is documented in a letter Sri Daya Mata wrote from India to the Board members in America on August 25, 1961:

"We talked with Kr. [sic], pointing out to him all the complaints of the Board against his behavior....and we even made it clear that we were prepared, if necessary, to take steps to remove him from the Board."

\*\* In a letter written during the time Mr. Walters was in charge of coordinating the activities of our centers and meditation groups, he himself explained very clearly the principles by which SRF abides—principles he now apparently rejects:

"...As an organization, we are forced to take certain stands that would not be necessary for us if we did not have the welfare of other members to consider. When, for instance, an SRF teacher misuses his position as a representative of the Fellowship to undermine the faith of other devotees, how can we continue to recognize him as a teacher? It may be said that the teacher is not undermining people's faith in the Gurus—only in their organization. But can we *truly* love Master and not love his work? Can we be truly loyal to Master and not be loyal to his work? Can we honestly presume that those whom he spent years training and testing do not know what he wanted, or that they do not have the best interests of his work sincerely at heart?..."

"For us, this is not a personal issue...Let people criticize us, if they like; let them even condemn us. They have our good will regardless of their attitude toward us. But when they start to spread inharmony among the members, it ceases to be merely a personal matter. The welfare of others and of Master's precious work becomes involved."

in harmony with devotees such as yourself. We would hope we can respect one another's right to disagree, but also endeavor to meet on some common ground. May that be our goal."

## **Preserving a Society's Unique Identity**

There are many teachers and paths available to spiritual seekers today—many avenues from which to choose in one's journey toward God-realization. Even among those societies that draw inspiration mainly from our Guru's teachings, there is a wide range of interpretations and applications of his principles and methods. Self-Realization Fellowship, however, as the organization founded by Paramahansaji himself, has a unique identity and mission.

Years earlier, his guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar, had impressed on him the importance of this work:

*"Could you or anyone else achieve God-communion through yoga if a line of generous-hearted masters had not been willing to convey their knowledge to others?" He added, "God is the Honey, organizations are the hives, both are necessary. Any form is useless, of course, without the spirit, but why should you not start busy hives full of the spiritual nectar?"*

*His counsel moved me deeply. Although I made no outward reply, an adamant resolution arose in my breast: I would share with my fellows, so far as lay in my power, the unshackling truths I had learned at my guru's feet. "Lord," I prayed, "may Thy love shine forever on the sanctuary of my devotion, and may I be able to awaken Thy love in all hearts."*

—Paramahansa Yogananda, in *Autobiography of a Yogi*

It was to his own organization, and to none other, that Paramahansaji personally entrusted the responsibility of preserving and spreading his teachings according to his express wishes. One of the distinctive features of Self-Realization Fellowship is that from its founding in 1920 until Paramahansaji's *mahasamadhi* in 1952, all of SRF's activities and organizational matters were personally directed by our Guru himself. Thereafter, the leadership of his work passed to Rajarsi Janakananda, a close disciple of Paramahansaji's chosen by him to serve as president of SRF. Sri Daya Mata, the current president, joined the SRF Monastic Order in 1931 and underwent more than 20 years of spiritual training under our Guru's loving guidance before becoming president after Rajarsi's passing in 1955. She is assisted by a Board of Directors composed of several other direct disciples of Paramahansaji, who were similarly trained by him.

Another essential characteristic of SRF is that, in conformance with its founder's wishes, its work is guided by the monastic order established by Paramahansaji along the lines of the ancient monastic tradition of India. The monks and nuns of SRF (among whom there are still many who were with the Guru during his lifetime) take formal vows of renunciation and are responsible for serving SRF members and friends worldwide and for guiding the activities of the society.

## **DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA'S SRF AND J. DONALD WALTERS' ANANDA**

Naturally there are differences between SRF and Ananda, as both societies have developed along separate lines. But while their purposes, practices, and activities may be dissimilar—SRF implementing Paramahansaji's wishes for his work and Ananda following J. Donald Walters' ideas for the development of his own organization—we feel this fact in

*"Meditate and draw others to this path of Self-Realization. That is the highest service you can perform.*

*These are my happiest days. I am happy for two reasons: I have been able to please God, and I have been able to fulfill the pledge that I gave to my guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar, to build this work of Yogoda Satsanga/ Self-Realization to spread the message of Kriya Yoga."*

—Paramahansa Yogananda  
in *The Divine Romance*



**Mrinalini Mata, vice-president of Self-Realization Fellowship; disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda since 1945**

*(Speaking to SRF members in 1993)*

*When Gurudeva took incarnation one hundred years ago, the world little knew what a divine one had come—bringing a message of universal love and light, a message that would touch the farthest corners of the globe....*

*Emerson said, "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man." Self-Realization Fellowship is indeed the extension of our blessed Guru's life. Those of us around him saw how profoundly he gave of his life, his joy, his love, his enthusiasm, to build this institution for your benefit and mine. He created a worldwide temple in which a "crowd of souls" could gather to drink deep of God's love, wisdom, and joy.*

*I was thinking before I came tonight, "Yes, the organization is an extension of Master, but the heart within that institution that will always keep the blessed Guru alive in this work is each individual member." It is your efforts in sadhana, your sincerity in seeking God; it is the tears of longing for God you shed when you meditate, the joy and upliftment you feel when you read and study Gurudeva's words; it is the kindness and the love of the Guru you share with one another, with your families, with all who cross your path—that, my dear ones of blessed Master, is his heartbeat in this organization. That is his life. That is his spirit. And as long as that is there, in even one or a few, there will be a Self-Realization Fellowship.*

itself should not be a cause of discord between the two societies. SRF's only concern has been that the two organizations be clearly distinguishable from one another in the public eye.

Through the years since the founding of Ananda in 1969, some of that society's editorial, advertising, and other promotional practices have tended to increasingly blur the distinctions between SRF and Ananda. When in 1990 Ananda's officials decided to change its name to "Church of Self-Realization"—a name very similar to that of Self-Realization Fellowship Church—the lines of distinction were blurred even further. (Anyone desiring more information about this may request a copy of the 8-page letter we prepared last year to address those issues.)

Regardless of the differences between SRF and Ananda, we respect all Ananda devotees who are sincerely striving to live by the teachings of our Guru. Our responsibility is simply to uphold the distinctive place that Paramahansaji gave to his own society, so that truth-seekers will always be able to single out what he taught from the many variations available from others.

### **Ananda's Accusations Against SRF**

Ananda's recent open letter claims to present the facts about a miscellany of events that occurred over the past 30 years, collectively offered in support of Mr. Walters' allegations about Self-Realization Fellowship and its leaders.

The accusations are related mainly to the following matters:

- SRF's organizational practices;
- SRF's editorial policies as the publisher of Paramahansaji's works;
- SRF's administrative decisions involving providing material assistance to certain individuals;
- the dismissal of Mr. Walters from SRF over 30 years ago;
- SRF's decision to seek legal protection for its name and its publications through the current lawsuit between SRF and Ananda;
- a lawsuit filed by a former Ananda member against Ananda.

Before addressing any of Ananda's specific charges against SRF, it is worth noting the way in which quotations are used in Ananda's letter. We have found that frequently the words Mr. Walters attributes to SRF leaders in no way reflect the thoughts actually conveyed by them. Rather, all too often thoughts are rephrased or elaborated upon—or are presented completely out of context, drastically changing their intent and meaning. Readers who have had some contact with Daya Mata and the other disciples quoted will recognize how extremely uncharacteristic are the thoughts and feelings ascribed to them in these letters—and will naturally question the validity of allegations that are based on such quotations.

### **SRI DAYA MATA AND THE LEADERSHIP OF SRF**

Regarding Ananda's personal attacks on our president, Sri Daya Mata, and her actions as leader of Paramahansa Yogananda's work, we would only say that these allegations are in direct opposition to the testimony of those who know her. Throughout the more than 40 years in which Daya Mataji has served as *sangbamata* of Paramahansaji's worldwide society, countless souls have found in this great disciple the fulfillment of the Guru's counsel to her, "Inspire all with your spiritual motherliness...." and have experienced in their own lives the transforming effects of her divine love, wisdom, and compassionate understanding. India's former Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Binay R. Sen, wrote in 1990: "Those who, like my-

self, were privileged to have met Paramahansaji find reflected in Daya Mataji that same spirit of divine love and compassion that so impressed me on my first visit to the Self-Realization Center almost forty years ago."

In considering the characterization of Daya Mata in Ananda's recent letter, it is also worth noting that it represents a startling contradiction of the one given by Donald Walters in his own autobiography "The Path," (published in 1977):

*"Of the nuns, Daya Mata was the one I got the opportunity to know best, and also the one from whom I drew the most inspiration. I found her always fair-minded, gracious to all, humble, childlike in her spontaneity. What inspired me most about her was her utter devotion to God and Guru. She had no desire I ever observed except to do Master's will."*

—J. Donald Walters, in *The Path*

Those of us who have been blessed to serve under the leadership of Sri Daya Mata know that, in any decision guiding the direction or activities of Paramahansaji's work, Daya Mataji's first and only concern is always: "What would our Guru want done?" Never has she allowed any other principle or pursuit to preempt this one.\*

Mr. Walters and Ananda claim that SRF "has lost its way." However, the many direct disciples who today carry on the work of Self-Realization Fellowship had the unique blessing of being personally trained by the Guru himself (some for as many as 20 years) and know his guidelines and wishes for his work through firsthand experience. Mr. Walters was not present on the numerous occasions when Paramahansaji conveyed his guidance for the future, and was not among the close disciples to whom the Guru entrusted the direction of his work.

It is under the supervision of these direct disciples that the SRF monastics continue to fulfill Paramahansa Yogananda's mission through the various services and activities he initiated many years ago: publishing and distributing Paramahansaji's teachings; overseeing temples, meditation centers, retreats, and youth programs; providing spiritual counsel and guidance—by letter, telephone, and in person—to students of the Self-Realization teachings; conducting lecture and class series in cities all over the world; and coordinating the Worldwide Prayer Circle, a network of individuals and groups dedicated to praying for those in need of physical, mental, or spiritual aid and for global peace and harmony.

#### **ANANDA'S ALLEGATIONS ABOUT THE LAWSUIT FILED BY SRF**

Since the beginning of the SRF/Ananda lawsuit, Ananda has maintained that the issues raised in it "have a purely religious significance" and has accused SRF of using the litigation as an "excuse" to bankrupt Ananda as a "rival religious organization." This accusation led to Mr. Walters' being questioned about it under oath during his deposition in January 1994:

**Lawyer:** "Apart from its attempt to enforce its copyrights, is there anything else that you think that SRF has done to attempt to destroy Ananda?"

**Mr. Walters:** "I wouldn't say so."

—and—

\* In the Sept. 30 newsletter, Ananda makes much of the guideline ascribed to SRF's leadership: "In any situation that arises, we must be guided by one consideration only: 'What is best for the work?'" Ananda states: "Self-Realization Fellowship has unfortunately interpreted the phrase 'What is best for the work' to mean 'that which will help Self-Realization Fellowship to survive at any cost.'" In actuality, to monks and nuns of Self-Realization Fellowship the phrase "Whatever is best for the work" expresses the humble prayer of any true disciple to follow the Guru's wishes, and not the desires or dictates of one's own ego. The effort to discern "what is best for God's work" is in fact a basic principle on the spiritual path, synonymous with seeking God's will in everything, which is the very essence of all spiritual endeavor.



**Letter from Paramahansa Yogananda to Sri Daya Mata on her birthday, January 31, 1946**

*"Many years God has travelled us together working for Him. Your birth has been important in the family of SRF and the family and parents who brought you up. Your sincere joyous intelligent service to SRF and to God has been extremely pleasing to me. May you be born in the Cosmic Mother and inspire all with your spiritual motherliness only—only to bring others to God by the example of your life. Happy Birthday to you. Blessings eternal."*



**Uma Mata, SRF/YSS Board member,  
disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda  
since 1947**

*The main thing about Gururji was that you were aware of the divine presence of God. He reflected that presence of God, and you felt God's presence there. It was living. It wasn't just something that people talked about; you actually felt it.*

*In one of his talks at the temple he said: "It is my duty and privilege to be here with you in this garden of souls and to speak to you of God. When you enter these grounds, speak no evil, bear no evil, see nothing negative, and you will feel the sacred vibrations that are always present. I have never talked of anything negative here. That is why the vibrations are so pure. I want you to observe this also—to be only positive and pure-minded, for in such temples of the mind God loves to come and to stay."*

*And even today, when people go to the various SRF temples, or visit Gururji's ashrams, that same presence is there, and we see that when they go there to meditate or to pray or to ask for guidance, they do receive it. His ever living presence is so much a part of the temples; it's very tangible. It's as though you can reach out and touch it—it's there for anyone to take.*

*And from that standpoint, I feel that Gururji will always be alive.*

**Lawyer:** *"Apart from your opinion formulated on your own that the lawsuit was an attempt to bankrupt you (Ananda), do you have any information at all to support that view?"*

**Mr. Walters:** *"I have my opinion. No information."*

Ananda's characterization of the matters at issue in the litigation needs clarification. Regarding Ananda's use of the term "Self-realization," we want to explain that our concern extends only to its use in the Ananda name and any other manner that would likely confuse members of the public about the source of goods or services. It has nothing to do with the use of the term in a purely religious context. Nor do we wish to deny anyone the use of Paramahansaji's name or photograph in religious services. Our legal action has rather to do with trademark and copyright protection—not the religious practices of others.

Ananda's allegation that SRF "has long had a history of trying to fight its battles...through lawsuits" is groundless in the face of the fact that in the more than 40 years since Paramahansaji's passing, SRF has filed only one lawsuit—the current one with Ananda. (A lawsuit was filed in India by YSS, having to do with the ownership of an ashram property.)

### **PROTECTING THE SPIRITUAL LEGACY OF A MASTER**

The words of every great master who, like Paramahansaji, has brought a liberating message to the world, are not intended to reach only those who were with him during his lifetime, but also the countless spiritual seekers who will be drawn to his teachings for generations to come. To preserve his legacy for the ages in all its original power and purity—to insure that it will not be diluted, fragmented, or distorted with the passage of time—is the great responsibility of those disciples who are entrusted by him with this sacred mission.

For the sake of all who would be drawn to Paramahansaji's teachings in the future, our Guru took steps to safeguard the integrity of his works and to prevent the original meaning of what he spoke or wrote from being altered or even lost. He wanted to make certain that his works would reach the public only after they had been properly edited and prepared for publication according to his guidance. It was for this purpose that he trained two of his close disciples (Tara Mata and Mrinalini Mata) to serve as his editors (please see page 10)—and made what provisions he could to insure that the right to publish his works would remain with his own society, Self-Realization Fellowship.

In the course of the current litigation, Ananda's lawyers have resorted to every legal technicality available, in an effort to disprove and distort Paramahansaji's express intent regarding the ownership of his works by SRF. Regardless of whether or not Ananda succeeds in persuading the court, the truth remains that every close disciple of Paramahansaji who was privy to his wishes about the development of his work knew that it was the Guru's express intention that the rights to all his works belong to the society he founded. Paramahansaji made this clear in countless ways throughout his life, including his numerous oral as well as written statements to this effect.

In its open letter, Ananda claims that one of the goals of SRF's lawsuit is "to debar Ananda from quoting any of the writings or sayings of Paramahansa Yogananda...without the express permission of SRF." Our aim, however, has never been to prevent Ananda from merely *quoting* from SRF literature in their lectures or public presentations—or even, on a more limited basis, in their publications (within the reasonable parameters permitted by law).

We resorted to the legal system only to prevent the reediting and republishing of substantial portions of SRF's publications—as any author and publisher would do in a similar situation.

As we have discussed in our earlier letter on this subject, the heart of this legal matter is solely to safeguard Paramahansaji's legacy for the ages.

#### **LAWSUIT AGAINST ANANDA BY A FORMER ANANDA MEMBER**

Ananda's letter refers in general terms to another recent lawsuit, allegedly being funded and promoted by SRF in order to harm Ananda. The truth is that SRF has had nothing to do with this matter.\* The suit was filed against Donald Walters and one of the other senior Ananda ministers by a former Ananda member. While Ananda's letter claims that this lawsuit has "a purely religious significance, and [is] therefore non-justiciable in a court of secular law," in actuality the charges are of sexual harassment.

The *San Jose Mercury News* reported on the case in its November 25, 1994 edition:

*"According to the complaint, Walters has used the church as a 'mechanism for the sexual exploitation of women' since 1969 while claiming to be celibate and a 'direct channel to God.'*

*"The suit identifies eight other women, either by name or initials, as victims of sexual harassment in the church."*

We understand that this lawsuit is still in process.

#### **AID TO OTHERS:**

In their most recent letter, Ananda charges SRF with a lack of charity, and with unresponsiveness to those in need. In attempting to support this claim, they disclose very personal circumstances regarding the lives of a number of people, including relatives of Paramahansa Yogananda. It has been our way to respect the privacy of anyone with whom we have contact, and we regret that Ananda has discussed—in a publicly distributed letter—matters that are so private to these individuals. For those who may have been concerned by Ananda's alarming description of these matters, we wish to state briefly the simple facts here:\*\*

- Ananda claims that SRF has been callously indifferent to the needs of Meera Ghosh and other relatives of Paramahansa Yogananda. In fact, for many years Meera Ghosh and her family have been living rent-free in a house owned by Yogoda Satsanga Society. YSS has made it possible for them to continue to do so for the remainder of her life, and has helped her with needed medical assistance. Financial aid is also given to other members of our Guru's family.
- Ananda's letter inaccurately states that when Sananda Lal Ghosh (who was one of Paramahansaji's younger brothers) became ill, SRF—having freely benefitted from his authorship of *Mejda*—refused to provide any assistance unless Sananda deeded to YSS the family home on Garpar Road in Calcutta. The truth is that SRF has for over 40 years



*...The more you are in tune with me and refrain from fussing about little things, the better you will be. A steady stream of divine power will flow to you, for the Great Ones sent me here. When I am gone you will realize this truth with greater impact. I am here only to deliver their message. Little by little a spiritual change will come to the true followers of this path, and their influence will spread over the world. Self-Realization is one of the greatest spiritual movements ever sent to help mankind. It has been blessed by the Great Ones—Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar—in communion with Christ and Krishna. The grace of these masters is not gone from the earth. They are waiting to help you and to help the world.*

—Paramahansa Yogananda  
in *Man's Eternal Quest*

\* SRF filed a legal declaration with the court on February 16, 1995, categorically refuting Ananda's allegations of our involvement with this lawsuit. The documents pertaining to this case are a matter of public record at the San Mateo County Courthouse in California.

\*\* In conformance with SRF's Articles of Incorporation as a nonprofit religious organization, any distribution of funds to individuals is governed by certain legal constraints under tax laws. SRF has always done whatever it can under the law to offer material support to those in special need.



**Brother Bhaktananda, minister-in-charge of Self-Realization Fellowship Hollywood Ashram Center and Temple; disciple since 1939**

*One man came to me and said, "I used to have the presence of God and I used to feel Master's presence, but I don't have it any more, and I don't know why." And I asked him, "Do you meditate regularly?" and he said "Yes". Do you practice Kriya? "Yes". Do you read the Lessons every day?" "Oh, no, I'm all through with the Lessons." And I asked him to go back to reading the Lessons and see if that wasn't his problem.*

*About a month later, he walked up to me with a big smile and said, "You know, there is something about reading the Lessons that gives you the attainment with the Guru. Now I have it again. Thank you so much."*

*In reading those Lessons, we are in tune with Spirit. Those words come from Spirit. Those words and ideas, do not come from a little human mind. Master was always in tune with Spirit when he wrote, when he talked. So this we have to realize: we are in tune with Spirit at that time. When we read the Lessons we are sitting at the guru's feet, figuratively speaking. He is speaking to us through the Lessons. That is the reason he said the Lessons will be your guru, because it's the guru's teaching right there—complete.*

regularly sent funds to help support the family of Sananda Ghosh and assist them in maintaining the home on Garpar Road, in which our guru lived as a boy. SRF paid Sananda a sum of \$20,000 for the publication rights to *Mejda*, the book he authored containing stories of Paramahansaji's early life.

On learning of Sananda's illness, SRF immediately wrote to him of our desire to help and began looking for ways to provide for his treatment. We cabled Sananda about arrangements for medical care. Unfortunately, we received no reply to the cable or to several letters, and we learned later that Sananda passed away several weeks after this correspondence. Deeding the Garpar Road home to YSS was not a condition of our providing him help. Sananda had twice on his own initiative expressed his intention to give the home to YSS. To this day the home is with the family, and it is our hope that it remains so.

- Another claim is that after the publication of the book by Kamala Silva, formerly a householder minister of Self-Realization Fellowship, SRF stopped communicating with her; and that when she became ill in her later years, SRF refused to help. In actuality, through the years we have had a warm relationship with Kamala. She continued to join us for our annual Christmas festivities, for example, until age would not permit her to travel. When SRF learned of Kamala's medical condition, we sent funds each month to help with her needs, during her temporary stay at Ananda. SRF supported her in this way until Ananda advised us that this support was no longer necessary.
- Ananda accuses SRF of "ruthlessly dismissing" Helen Erba-Tissot over a disagreement in policy, without acknowledgment for her years of service. In reality, Mrs. Erba-Tissot's resignation was her own decision. After first accepting it in a necessarily brief cable, Sri Daya Mata warmly acknowledged her service to SRF in a letter:

*"I want to express our fondest hopes that you will be happy and successful in whatever work you undertake. We cannot adequately express our thanks for all you have done over the years to spread the SRF message in Europe, and we know that God and the Masters will ever bless you for it."*

SRF also expressed its deep gratitude to Mrs. Erba-Tissot for her loving service in public announcements made in all European centers where she had been active. Friendly communication with Mrs. Erba-Tissot continued. Following a stay as a guest in our ashram ten years after her resignation, she wrote, "I have been so happy with you all, and I want to thank you very, very heartily for the great kindness with which you have received and surrounded me...."

- Ananda claims that SRF refuses spiritual help to prisoners. In fact, however, SRF corresponds regularly with a number of prisoners, offering prayer support and spiritual counseling. We send large numbers of complimentary SRF books, tapes, etc. to prisoners and prison libraries.

All those who came to Paramahansaji felt his loving concern for their all-round spiritual, mental, and material welfare; among the aims and ideals of SRF is "to serve mankind as one's larger Self." While our primary effort is toward spiritual service (including the work of our Prayer Council), SRF through its Voluntary League regularly contributes to various relief organizations specifically chartered to provide charitable aid to individuals.



## SRF ALTAR PICTURES

Ananda takes issue with SRF's having changed the order specified by our Guru for pictures on our altars. The reasons for this change were discussed in an SRF Center Bulletin in 1970: "The honored Indian tradition of respect to the guru is expressed, in one way, by the central placement of the guru's image on one's altar. This was observed by Paramahansa Yogananda when, in his devotion and humility, he gave the more central position, in the horizontal SRF altar arrangement, to the photo of his guru, Swami Sri Yukteswarji, and asked that his own photo, placed on the altar by his disciples, be positioned at the end of the altar. As Paramahansa Yogananda is our guru, and his guru is our paramguru, it is fitting that we, the disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda, show to him the same respect he gave to his guru. [Therefore] the photograph of Paramahansa Yogananda has been more centrally placed."

Ananda's letter also claims that the picture of Bhagavan Krishna was added to SRF altars in disregard of Paramahansaji's guidance. However, Ananda's presentation of these facts is not accurate. From Paramahansaji's very earliest years in Boston, he included Bhagavan Krishna in the invocation to our line of Gurus. An example is the initiation pledge that the Master asked all his students to sign. The pledge used during the Boston years (1920-23) begins:

*"In the presence of God, Jesus Christ, Lord Krishna, your holy preceptors Babaji, Labiri Mahasaya, Sriyukteswar Giriji, and you my spiritual guide, I promise and take a solemn oath...."*

When our Guru built his Golden Lotus Temple in Encinitas in 1939, he placed on the altar likenesses of Krishna, Jesus Christ, and his own Gurus. That expressed his intention in this regard, for one of the aims of SRF is, "To reveal the complete harmony and basic oneness of original Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ and original Yoga as taught by Bhagavan Krishna; and to show that these principles of truth are the common scientific foundation of all true religions."

Paramahansaji knew that to most Westerners at that time, Lord Krishna was not understood as a God-illuminated avatar. Paramahansaji's mission was to teach the universal essence of religion. He therefore concentrated on the *teachings* of Krishna, to educate the West in the highest principles of religion that he taught. It is true that for a period of time during Paramahansaji's life the image of Krishna was not included on SRF altars. However, it was the Guru's express wish that the Board reinstate Krishna's picture when the time was right.

In the 1950s, not knowing the private guidance given to the Board by Paramahansaji on this matter, certain SRF representatives erroneously assumed that the altar arrangement without Krishna was to be a permanent policy, and consequently communicated this on occasion to our centers and groups. This misunderstanding was later corrected.

When in later years there was a deeper appreciation of the ancient teachings of India (owing in no small part to the influence of our Guru's teachings in Western countries), our Board of Directors determined the time was right for us to do what Paramahansaji originally did when he built his first temple, and what he intended to resume doing: to place the likeness of Sri Krishna on all our altars, along with that of Christ and the other Gurus of this path.

## TRANSLITERATION OF THE TITLE "PARAMAHANSA"

In an effort to show a lack of forthrightness on SRF's part, Ananda has stated that the spelling of the word *Paramahansa* in our Guru's signature



*"Those who have come to Self-Realization Fellowship truly seeking inward spiritual help shall receive what they seek from God. Whether they come while I am in the body, or afterward, the power of God through the link of the SRF Gurus shall flow into the devotees just the same, and shall be the cause of their salvation....  
"Implicit in the SRF techniques and teachings are the help and blessings of the SRF line of gurus. Devotees who conduct their lives according to SRF principles will be blessed with the hidden and open direction of the SRF line of gurus. The ever-living Babaji has promised to guard and guide the progress of all sincere SRF devotees. Labiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswarji, who have left their physical forms, and I myself, even after I have left the body—all will ever protect and direct the sincere members of SRF-YSS."*

*—Paramahansa Yogananda*



**Tara Mata (1900-1971)**

**Self-Realization Fellowship  
Vice-President and Editor-in-Chief**

*Describing her work with Paramahansa Yogananda on his writings, Tara Mata wrote the following to an acquaintance in 1937 (at the time, Paramahansaji was composing commentaries on the scriptures):*

*"He gets it entirely from inspiration. In fact, it is only through him that I know what 'inspired books' really means. He will come to a passage which is so obscure that it defies all possibility of plain interpretation. He will look blankly at me or one of his other secretaries for a while, close his eyes, and presently out will come the whole plain meaning. I tell you it has been an education and a privilege to help with this wonderful book. My end is pure grammar, arrangement, etc. None of the interpretation is anyone's but Swamiji's."*

was deceptively altered. However, SRF has included an open and thorough discussion of this matter in the Publisher's Note of *Whispers From Eternity* (First Version/1981 printing).

The correct spelling of his Sanskrit title in English is *Paramahansa*, not *Paramhansa*. Although the common practice for Bengalis is to drop silent or near-silent *a*'s in such spellings, the omission of the *a* in *Paramahansa* is misleading, giving an entirely different meaning from the title actually bestowed upon our Guru. To retain the *Paramhansa* spelling would be to permit sentiment to rule rather than a true reverence and regard for our Guru and his rightful place among the great ones. A correction was therefore made in the spelling of his title, so that there would be no doubt about its intended meaning.

#### **THE EDITING OF PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA'S WORKS**

Tara Mata (Laurie Pratt) was among those disciples who were drawn to Paramahansaji from his very first years in this country, and she was a pillar of strength in helping him to carry out his mission.\* We are saddened by Mr. Walters' repeated attempts through the years to tarnish the memory of this disciple whom Paramahansa Yogananda held in such esteem that he entrusted to her the responsibility of compiling and editing his talks and writings for publication. The Guru often expressed publicly his recognition and appreciation of Tara Ma's attunement with the spirit of his message and her unique ability to edit his works. "Nobody but Laurie could do the editing to my highest satisfaction," wrote Paramahansaji to Rajarsi Janakananda about Tara Mata's work on his *Autobiography*. "The Lord will bless her with redemption for the immortal service she has given."

Tara Mata's editing of the Guru's writing is now being impugned by Mr. Walters, and he has at the same time claimed that it was Paramahansaji's wish that he serve as an editor of the Guru's writings. None of the close disciples who were in daily contact with Paramahansaji and who served as his assistants for years, recording his directions for every aspect of the work of his society, recall the Guru ever expressing the intention that Mr. Walters should edit his works. By contrast, several disciples vividly remember the Guru's lavish praise of Tara Mata's editing, and his express wish to have Mrinalini Mata succeed her as editor of his teachings.\*\*

In his autobiography, Mr. Walters himself refers to Tara Mata as "the older disciple to whom Master had given the real responsibility for editing," and describes the miscellaneous tasks, such as cutting and pasting copy, proofreading, etc., that Paramahansaji had assigned to him for a brief period. He also recalls the Guru's stern admonition to him, "Edit, but don't change a word!"

\* Paramahansaji said of her: "Laurie is like a child: without guile, innocent, trusting, loving. But once she begins to see deviousness in anyone toward Self-Realization Fellowship, watch out! she is like a lion, roaring." An account of Tara Mata's life as one of Paramahansaji's principal disciples can be found in the Summer 1971 issue of *Self-Realization* magazine. In addition, a remarkable description of the exalted state of expanded spiritual consciousness she enjoyed is recorded in the booklet, *Forerunner of a New Race*.

\*\* Mrinalini Mata, now vice president of SRF, is also editor-in-chief of Self-Realization Fellowship publications.

To Rajarsi Janakananda in March 1950, Paramahansaji wrote of Mrinalini Mata (who was still a teenager at the time) and of the editorial work he had assigned to her: "[She] was destined for this work. God showed this to me when I first saw her spirit. Many wondered at me for putting her in the job. But now they don't, seeing her wonderful work, as I wanted."

Of Mrinalini Mata's responsibility as editor, Sri Daya Mata has written: "Gurudeva made clear to all of us the role for which he was preparing her, giving her personal instruction in every aspect of his teachings and in his wishes for the preparation and presentation of his writings and talks.

"One day toward the end of his life on earth, he confided: 'I am very worried about Laurie. Her health will not permit her to finish the work on my writings.'

"Knowing the Guru's great reliance on Tara Mata, Mrinalini Mata expressed concern: 'But Master, who then can do that work?'

"The Guru replied with quiet finality: 'You will do it.'"

After Paramahansaji's passing in 1952, Mr. Walters wrote: "In the time Master was here, since I first arrived I spent more than half of my time on *momentarily* profitless work. While there were important projects pending—the building of India House, for one—he would put me off in a corner studying the Praecepta [SRF Lessons], or working on the Gita, or rewriting the Highest Achievements [free pamphlet], when he had no intention of using my labors—showed not even the slightest interest when I told him I was through."

Under the supervision of Tara Mata and Mrinalini Mata, a wide variety of new books by or about Paramahansa Yogananda and his teachings has been brought out by SRF—and this work goes on continuously. 1994, for example, saw the publication of Paramahansaji's acclaimed *Wine of the Mystic*; and in 1995 his massive translation and commentary on the Bhagavad Gita was completed.\*

Ananda also claims that a letter by the Guru praising Tara Mata's efforts in helping him revise *Whispers from Eternity* was forged by her. This is untrue. The "letter" in question was actually an Author's Note written in 1951 by Paramahansaji:

*"It has given me great satisfaction to revise Whispers from Eternity. When first published the book contained unedited writings and a number of verbatim transcripts of prayers composed by me in my yoga classes in various cities.*

*"For many years I have wished to edit these invocations but was prevented by the pressure of other duties. During the last three years I have taken time now and then to revise the book.*

*I am immensely grateful to a Self-Realization Fellowship student who gave me invaluable aid in the work of editing, revision, and rearrangement.*

Paramahansa Yogananda

November 30, 1951

Twenty-Nine Palms, California

Those who knew and worked with Tara Mata remember her as utterly disinterested in receiving public praise or recognition. In fact, she tried very hard to dissuade Paramahansaji from even mentioning her name in his acknowledgments at the front of *Autobiography of a Yogi*; but he insisted that her invaluable assistance should not go unrecognized.

#### CHANGES TO AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI:

Another charge of Ananda's is that SRF has significantly revised the text of our guru's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and made certain additions—purportedly after Paramahansaji's *mahasamadhi* and without his express permission.

Again, the accusations are not supported by the actual facts. Two questions must be addressed regarding these allegations: whether the revisions or additions were made at Paramahansaji's behest; and if not, whether they were really "significant" or merely involved what a publisher would normally do in the way of editorial adjustments (e.g., the addition of footnotes, photos, captions, front and back matter, etc.) in subsequent editions of a book that has remained continually in print for many decades.

\* We would like to clarify that in 1994, Donald Walters brought out a book called *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam Explained*. *Library Journal* reviewed this book in their September 1994 issue, saying in part: "Walters has eloquently rendered a Rubaiyat commentary expanding his guru's metaphysical approach. This is a complete rewriting and restructuring of Yogananda's much briefer serialized version that originally appeared in the 1937-44 issues of *Inner Culture* magazine. Due to Walters' constant paraphrasing, even in the glossaries, the reader may prefer Yogananda's final edition, *Wine of the Mystic* (*Library Journal*, July 1994), published by Self-Realization Fellowship. The latter's historical notes upon Rubaiyat translations are superior...Walters' rendition may be acceptable to those not familiar with Yogananda's own edition."



**Mukti Mata, minister serving at the Mother Center; disciple since 1946**

*You can never describe the Guru's presence—the omniscience of it all is beyond our human comprehension...But at the same time, he was human beyond compare. He understood everything that human beings have to go through. And as a result you never were fearful of anything he might know because you knew he knew everything anyway. He had such incredible understanding—human understanding. But saturating all that, above and beyond and in between, was the Divine Presence—that incredible presence of the Divine in him, which uplifted us so much that nothing else in this world really mattered that much—nothing.*



"Tell me truly, Paramahansa, has it been worth it?" This laconic question was put to me one evening by Dr. Lloyd Kennell, a leader of the temple in San Diego. I understood him to mean: "Have you been happy in America? What about the falsehoods circulated by misguided people who are anxious to prevent the spread of yoga? What about the disillusionments, the heartaches, the center leaders who could not lead, the students who could not be taught?" "Blessed is the man whom the Lord doth test!" I answered. "He has remembered, now and then, to put a burden on me." I thought, then, of all the faithful ones, of the love and devotion and understanding that illumines the heart of America. With slow emphasis I went on: "But my answer is yes, a thousand times yes! It has been worthwhile, more than ever I dreamed...."

—*Autobiography of a Yogi*

Foreseeing the vital role that *Autobiography of a Yogi* would play as his messenger to future generations of spiritual seekers, Paramahansa spoke of it as a book that was destined to change the lives of millions. It was in response to requests from readers that the guru himself endeavored to clarify and rephrase, in editions after the first, certain passages that he felt had not been fully understood.

Three editions of Paramahansa's autobiography appeared during his lifetime. In the third edition, published in 1951, he made significant changes—revising the text thoroughly, deleting material, amplifying various points, and adding a new final chapter, "The Years 1940-1951" (one of the longest in the book). Some further revisions made by him after the third edition could not be incorporated until the publication of the seventh edition, which was released in 1956. As explained in a Publisher's Note to that edition, these changes had not been made earlier because for some years the typesetting and printing of the book had been done by a New York publishing house, which did not wish to go to the expense of re-typesetting the pertinent pages. After SRF was able to take over all aspects of publication, it was then possible to incorporate the remainder of Paramahansa's revisions.

All of the changes, deletions, and additions between 1946 and 1956 were made at Paramahansa's request. Other minor editorial revisions were made some time later, according to guidance given by him before his passing to his longtime editor, Tara Mata, who had worked closely with him for over 25 years.

Because he was aware that this work would become a living scripture, he instructed his editors to add—in the way of footnotes, pictures, captions, etc.—whatever might be necessary in order to keep the book up to date.

Ananda has alluded to over 100 new "mentions" of SRF since the first edition. Comparing the current (twelfth) edition released in 1981 to the first edition, published in 1946, one will find approximately 50—not 100—additional references to SRF, and virtually all of these were added by Paramahansa himself—43 in the new final chapter alone. The few references added by SRF appear in photo captions, the list of illustrations, Publisher's Notes, the Forest Lawn testimonial (which obviously could not have been included in the first edition), etc.

As for Ananda's objection to SRF's removing 14 lines from the "Samadhi" poem in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, the guru himself approved Tara Mata's editing this poem for the *Autobiography* to make room in the book for the additional material he wanted added in editions after the first. He confirmed this authorization while reviewing his manuscripts in 1949. (Note: Readers who prefer the longer version may still enjoy it in the Lessons and other SRF publications currently in print, such as *Songs of the Soul* and *Whispers from Eternity* [First Version]).

Ananda has raised questions about changes in the *Autobiography* relating to three other subjects: the rights to Paramahansa's writings, World Brotherhood Colonies, and the giving of Kriya Yoga. In each case, the changes were made to reflect our Guru's stated intentions.

### **The Rights to Paramahansa Yogananda's Writings:**

Ananda has asserted that SRF has edited in its favor the passage about SRF owning the rights to Paramahansa's writings. They imply that the Guru intended only the proceeds from the writings to go to his organization, but not the copyrights.

However, as mentioned earlier, until the end of his life the Guru repeatedly stated, verbally and in written documents beginning at the time

of SRF's legal incorporation in 1935, that the rights to all his books, writings, lectures, and other works belonged to Self-Realization Fellowship. To cite one example, the following notice appeared at his request in the November 1939 issue of SRF's magazine:

*Paramabansa Swami Yogananda renounced all his ownership rights in the Self-Realization Fellowship when it was incorporated as a nonprofit religious organization under the laws of California on March 29, 1935. At that time he turned over to the Fellowship all his rights to and income from the sale of his books, writings, magazine, lecture, classes, property, automobiles and all other possessions. The corporation, whose affairs are managed by a Board of Directors, does not pay Yogananda any salary.*"

### World Brotherhood Colonies:

Mr. Walters has also objected to the removal from *Autobiography of a Yogi* of the references to world brotherhood colonies. Not having been on the Board of Directors during the Guru's lifetime, he was not aware of all the organizational guidelines and priorities that Paramahansaji gave, including those about spiritual communities.

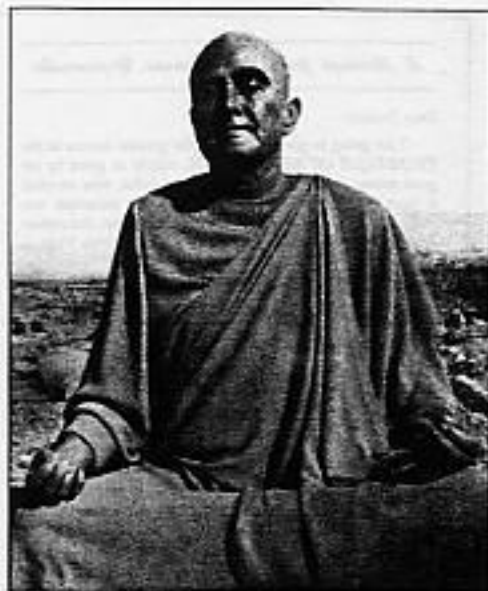
Throughout the 1940s, Paramahansaji's ideas for spiritual communities underwent considerable evolution. In the beginning he accepted for residence in the Encinitas colony married couples and families in addition to the renunciants who were already there. However, it wasn't long before he determined that to properly organize spiritual communities for families along the lines he envisioned would take much more time than he then had available—time that he felt needed to be devoted to the more important aspects of his work. From then on, the Encinitas center, like the Mt. Washington headquarters, became primarily a community of monks and nuns wholly dedicated to the monastic ideal. Paramahansaji did, however, continue to speak of his ashrams as model "world-brotherhood colonies"—demonstrating the life of outer simplicity and inner searching for God that would bring the greatest happiness and fulfillment whether one were pursuing the monastic path or that of the householder. After his plans for the Encinitas World Brotherhood Colony had changed, Paramahansaji removed from *Autobiography of a Yogi* the passage describing world brotherhood colonies, and replaced it in the 1951 third edition with a much briefer description of activities at the monastic ashram center.

In a satsanga with members in 1975, Sri Daya Mata was asked about SRF's plans to found world brotherhood colonies. After describing the evolution of the Guru's plans with regard to such communities, she concluded:

*He said to us that his mission was to bring the message of Kriya Yoga. There will be plenty of time in the future when such colonies and other ideas can be put into effect. His mission was to bring the teachings; our duty is to spread them. He told us this will require a great deal of time and effort. Our duty is to establish his message, to build his work, and to spread it—and that is what we are doing.*

*How vital it is that we concentrate on this as our first priority. The world is hungry for what Master gave. Look at the state that the world is in today. Master's message was not just for communities of two or three hundred individuals; his is a mission to the whole world, and people are hungry for it!*

Self-sustaining SRF communities for families will come into being in future, when the time is right. In the meantime, Paramahansaji did encourage the formation of SRF householder "communities" in another sense: He urged members to settle in the vicinity of our temples and centers, having their own homes and businesses, participating in SRF activities and creating a helpful spiritual environment through mutual association and fellow-



**Rajarsi Janakananda, president of SRF/YSS from 1952-1955**

**To the monks in our Guru's ashrams in America, Rajarsi wrote in 1954:**

*"Many of you have asked questions, and I have been waiting to receive answers to them from Master. The Masters don't always answer when we expect them to do so, but rather when they feel the time is ripe.*

*"To those of you who have asked or who have aspirations to go out into the field and give SRF classes as traveling teachers, I pass this message on to you. The other evening, March 1st to be exact, Sri Yukteswarji came to me during meditation with this message: 'I don't want teachers who have personal ambitions, or who are seeking flattery, or who have selfish aims. I want only true devotees to give these teachings: those who are unselfish, who love God only, and who have some realization. None but these should go out to teach.'*

*"Therefore, dear ones, please study hard, attend all the classes, and improve yourselves in every way. Be steadfast in your unselfish purpose, and, above all, meditate deeply so that you will be ready to serve God and Guru through SRF. This is a time of preparation, meditation, and study, as well as self-discipline.*

*"I send Master's love and blessings to you, one and all. May God be with you always."*

### *A Message from Paramahansa Yogananda*

Dear Student:

I am going to give you one of the greatest lessons in the **TECHNIQUE OF REALIZATION**, exactly as given by my great master, Swami Sri Yukteswarji of India, who received it from his master, Lahiri Mahasaya. This technique was rediscovered by the great Master Babaji. Further description of its benefits can be found in the chapter on Kriya Yoga in my book *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

It is a spiritual accelerator, which helps to quicken your spiritual progress whenever you use it during the periods of your spiritual stagnation, which may arise while practicing any other technique of progress.

This technique is mathematical in its results and, having it, you will feel that you have the key to continuous self-improvement and self-realization right in your own hands during the periods of my absence. It will be a source of perpetual help in times of your greatest physical, mental and spiritual emergencies. If all other things fail you, this Special Lesson properly used will give you the help that nothing else can give.

This will be your only opportunity to receive this lesson for a long time to come. Self-Realization students who have already taken it are specially invited to receive again this uplifting lesson on Realization.

With unending blessings for your all-round good,

Very sincerely yours,

*Paramahansa Yogananda*

ship. This has indeed come to pass. Communities of hundreds of SRF families have developed around our temples in Encinitas, Hollywood, and Richmond, as well as near our Hidden Valley and Front Royal retreats.

### **The Teaching of Kriya Yoga**

Ananda claims that Paramahansa Yogananda's original guidelines regarding the teaching of Kriya Yoga were altered by Self-Realization Fellowship in order to insure that the Guru's society would control the giving of Kriya. To support their allegation, reference is made to a certain phrase in *Autobiography of a Yogi* regarding who is authorized to give Kriya Yoga initiation, which was purportedly changed without Paramahansa's authorization. The fact is that the wording in the first edition of the book was subject to misinterpretation, and Paramahansa authorized the change in later editions to more clearly express his meaning.

### **Who Is Authorized to Give Kriya Yoga Initiation?**

The Kriya technique is the spiritual baptism of the SRF path, and with the Kriya Pledge the devotee enters into the eternal guru-disciple relationship with Paramahansa and the SRF line of Gurus. Because Kriya is so central to Paramahansa's mission, his instructions on this subject were well-known to Sri Daya Mata and the other devotees he was training to guide his work.

Owing to the shortage of monastics in the early years, Paramahansa gave permission to a few householder disciples to give Kriya under the auspices of Self-Realization Fellowship. As his life on earth drew to a close, and he saw the need to clarify the guidelines that would set the course for the future, he stipulated that Kriya was to be given only by monastics of the SRF Order from then on. The policy originated by him, which has been in effect since 1952, states:

*"Only the president, as the channel of Paramahansa Yogananda, has the authority to initiate in the Kriya Yoga. By virtue of the spiritual authority vested in the president, [he or she] may designate an ordained minister of the Church to conduct a Kriya Yoga ceremony, such designation to be reviewed annually."\**

From a letter written by Mr. Walters on behalf of our Center Department in 1957, it is evident that he was well aware at that time of Paramahansa's wishes on this matter:

*"...It is our policy to permit only ordained ministers to give the Kriya Yoga initiation. Master said that after his passing he wanted only SRF renunciates to be ordained as ministers, and at that only after a minimum of seven years in one of our colonies..."*

Ananda also writes about SRF's policy "formulated after Yogananda's passing, of requiring applicants for Kriya Yoga initiation to sign a pledge renouncing all other church affiliation and accepting exclusive membership in Self-Realization Fellowship Church." To clarify this, following is the actual wording of the pledge:

*"I will practice Kriya Yoga faithfully and regularly to the best of my ability. I will not reveal its techniques to anyone without written permission from*

\* A number of teachers are including in their work some of the techniques that Paramahansa taught, including Kriya Yoga. We leave it to each individual to follow the spiritual path in his or her own way. Those who come to Self-Realization Fellowship receive from us the teachings of our Guru, including Kriya Yoga, according to the instructions he left with us. Our sole aim is to walk in his footsteps, following his guidelines. We are not able to vouch for the activities of others who are also teaching in his name. But we hold goodwill toward all who are striving to help others.

the Mother Center of Self-Realization Fellowship at Los Angeles, California. In my path toward God, I accept you as my Gurus, O Jesus Christ, Bhagavan Krishna, Mahavatar Babaji, Labiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Paramahansa Yogananda. To God, and to you my Gurus, I offer my unconditional devotion and loyalty. With this spiritual baptism of Kriya Yoga Initiation I now become a member of Self-Realization Fellowship, and pledge that I will do my best to exemplify the ideals and promote the aims of this path."

It was Paramahansaji himself who established this from the earliest years of his mission, when he would ask those who attended his Kriya initiations to repeat a pledge of loyalty and devotion upon entering the guru-disciple relationship. On numerous occasions he referred specifically to the importance of a Kriyaban's link with the SRF Mother Center. Writing to Tara Mata about some material he was sending her for inclusion in one of his books, he said:

"I am sending to you immediately the wonderful things that came to me about Kriya Yoga and pranayama. Please strictly refrain from describing the technique of Kriya Yoga, which is indelibly a part of our work for disciples only...Kriya Yoga indeed has a very popular appeal...Everybody is anxious to receive it after reading the book [Autobiography of a Yogi], and I am giving it to them only after they have received their foundation in the Praecepta [SRF] Lessons...The science of Kriya Yoga is mentioned in the book but the art of Kriya Yoga will be learned from SRF Headquarters."

In a handwritten note titled Kriya Yoga (see photo, this page), Paramahansaji expressed the thoughts to be conveyed to new initiates about the close association between Kriya, SRF, and the line of Gurus:

"This is not the end of your relationship with SRF or Kriya Yoga—but the beginning. Keep contact with headquarters and you will be linked with the Masters, by which salvation is reached quickly...Some take Kriya Yoga and become fully satisfied and forget all about the link of masters—they never will reach God.

"Kriya Yoga is the fastest airplane route to God, but it has to be piloted by the gurus—SRF teachings regularly received."\*

A God-realized guru can help his disciples whether or not he is in physical form. Out of his love for the countless generations of truth-seekers to come, Paramahansaji left in his Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons a spiritual legacy infused with his divine power and blessings. He promised that disciples who came after his passing would have the same opportunity to find God-union as did those who knew him personally—through practice of his teachings as given in the Lessons. "These SRF Lessons," he said, "are impregnated with the spirit of great masters. If you study them with reverence and deep attention, along with the practice of deep meditation, you will be in touch with the divine link of our masters, and will be lifted into the kingdom of Cosmic Consciousness."

Thousands of loyal members of Self-Realization Fellowship/Yogoda Satsanga Society of India revere Paramahansa Yogananda and his line of Gurus as their eternal link with God. We know from countless letters re-

Kriya Yoga  
1. 4 + 2 lessons in auxiliary Kriya Yoga  
2. The way Kriya Yoga you are learning now  
3. There are 2 or 3 out of 4 Kriya Yoga instructions which all students do well continue with the SRF/Headquarters studies (or SRF revelations) sent out from headquarters every week.  
\* This is not the end of your relation with SRF or Kriya Yoga—but the beginning. Keep contact with headquarters & you will be linked with Masters—by which salvation is reached quickly  
SRF SRF Lessons about SRF. gurus of SRF. C. from 4-6-61

Some take Kriya Yoga & forget because fully satisfied & forget all about the link of masters—they never will reach God.  
Kriya Yoga is the fastest airplane to God but it has to be piloted by the gurus—SRF teachings regularly received. Swift progress in discipline will do—it can be done. Experience will do. Save so time with the fast airplane way of Kriya Yoga.  
4. You will be notified about the next convention. Hope you all can attend.

\* Reflecting an understanding of Paramahansaji's guidance in this regard, Mr. Walters (in 1954, when he was serving in the Center Department at our International Headquarters) wrote the following to a leader of an SRF center:

"You know, perhaps, that a teacher of SRF is not expected to send out lessons on his own...That any member should be permitted to consider the lessons of one of the teachers to be more important than the lessons of the Guru seems to us unbelievable...If we permit such laxity this work would never grow as the Masters intended it shall."

In recent years Mr. Walters has apparently abandoned this view. We understand that though he refers to the members of his Ananda Community as disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda, Mr. Walters now requires them to study his own course of lessons, "Fourteen Steps to Higher Awareness," and discourages them from studying Paramahansa Yogananda's Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons.



**Brother Anandamoy, SRF/YSS Board member; disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda since 1949**

Paramahansa Yogananda came with a world mission; he came to bring again to humanity the sacred science of Kriya Yoga. Kriya had been forgotten during the Dark Ages, and was known only to a few. Lahiri Mahasaya was the first to openly teach Kriya in modern times—but he forbade his disciples to start an organization to spread the teachings of Kriya Yoga, because he knew that God and the Great Ones had assigned that task to Paramahansa Yogananda—not only to spread the teachings of Kriya Yoga throughout the world, but to keep those teachings pure.

We are too close to the beginning of the Self-Realization Fellowship work to appreciate its greatness and the influence it will eventually have in the world. "Millions will find God through these teachings," the Master once said to us. And when one of the monks looked at him questioningly, as if to say that he must have been exaggerating, the Guru's answer was very emphatic: "And I do not mean thousands. I mean millions!"

ceived at the Mother Center that the guidance, intercession, and ceaseless blessings of these divine ones is an ever-present benediction in the lives of SRF Kriya Yogis all over the world.

### THE LINK OF THE GURUS

Ananda's letter, however, reflects a very different view of Paramahansa Yogananda and the link of SRF Gurus. The letter states:

*"It should be pointed out that Kriya Yoga is widely taught by other lineal disciples of the SRF gurus, of which Yogananda was only the fourth guru even in the SRF line..."*

*"It is, moreover, an outrageous presumption...to claim a monopoly on teachings [Lahiri Mahasaya] brought into the world, as though only Yogananda's presentation of those teachings, out of those of all of Lahiri's spiritual grandchildren, had validity."*

The content and tenor of these statements is in marked contrast with the principles we uphold and practice. Most importantly, they reflect a significant dissimilarity between the beliefs of members of SRF and Ananda concerning the role of Paramahansa Yogananda in spreading the science of Kriya Yoga. In Self-Realization Fellowship, we have the utmost respect for the fact that, as a special divine dispensation, it was Paramahansa Yogananda who was chosen by Mahavatar Babaji as the one ordained to spread the teachings of Kriya Yoga worldwide. Paramahansaji was spiritually baptized as a child by Lahiri Mahasaya and trained—at Babaji's direction—by Lahiri Mahasaya's disciple Swami Sri Yukteswar in preparation for the Self-Realization Fellowship work he undertook at the behest of these gurus.

In accordance with the wishes of our Guru, we are dedicated to upholding the teachings of the distinctive path that is the unique contribution of Paramahansaji and his line of Gurus to the spiritual welfare of the world. Our Guru's guidance to this effect is lovingly expressed in the following words, written to a disciple in 1947:

Your letter's assuring words of devotion and loyalty to this Cause and the masters deeply touched me. While we must pay homage and give all due respect to all religions and all religious followers, still, we must remember our supreme loyalty and devotion must be one-pointed -- given to one path only. You have given that already to Self-Realization Fellowship and to guru. One should become firmly grounded in the teachings of his choice before studying the merits of other teachings, else he will become confused and lose sight of his goal, which is not theological knowledge, but actual God-union.

I always enjoy your letters - so sincere and sweet.

With deepest blessings to you and your good wife,  
Very sincerely yours,  
FY:fw *Paramahansa Yogananda* with unconditional love & blessing PG.

Self-Realization Fellowship members honor, as did our Guru, all true teachers who are striving to do good in this world. We are aware that Kriya Yoga is also taught by other disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswarji, and we respect each individual's right to choose and follow whichever teacher he or she finds most spiritually fulfilling.

Although Paramahansaji indicated that he would be the last in the line of SRF/YSS Gurus, with the founding of his society he insured the perpet-



As I love you so, so I am writing this - As a son should be loyal to his father so a disciple to his guru in every way. I never question your love & loyalty - I feel you nearer & nearer to me - that is why I venture to ask you to follow

(1) 100% P.C. Self-Realization & the living link of the gurus & not divert your mind to any other teachings or work - Make Kriya your whole life with Kriya Yoga.

(2) Passing out literature of other teaching confuses & unsettles the minds of new & even old students. So I shall be happy if you concentrate minds of students only on SRF.

(3) All meetings strictly should be around SRF & practice of meditation.

If the above rules are followed you will find the great gurus showering blessings on you & you will feel a living connection with the living link of gurus.

uation of his mission as well as the preservation of his teachings. The Guru said that after his passing the president of SRF would serve as his spiritual and administrative representative; and, he promised, "there will always be at the head of this organization men and women of realization." Rajarsi Janakananda, whom our Guru had publicly proclaimed as a *siddha*, one who had attained final liberation, was the first to fulfill that prophecy.

Brother Anandamoy recalls how clearly the words Rajarsi spoke at the first Self-Realization Fellowship Convocation after Paramahansa's passing confirmed the Master's wishes for his work, and his power to guide and bless all faithful disciples:

"Many members (not knowing that Master had declared that it was God's will that he be the last in the line of SRF Gurus) expected that Rajarsi would assume the role of Guru, because they thought they had to have a guru in the body, one whom they could see and hear. It would have been very easy for Rajarsi to have proclaimed himself Guru because of his great spiritual power and magnetism. But what he said at that gathering firmly established the course of Self-Realization Fellowship for all future generations. Very simply, in a quiet voice, he told the members, 'There will be no other guru. Master will always be our guru.'

"Then he said, 'He is here.' He wasn't referring to the Master's physical presence, but to his omnipresent spiritual presence. 'Just feel and receive.' As he said these words a wave of divine power flowed over the whole audience—a tremendous surge of spiritual upliftment—and no one could doubt that he was right: 'The Master is alive.'"

## Toward Harmony and Truth

In this letter we have shared with you the history and facts relating to the allegations made in the letter distributed by Ananda. Mindful that harmony and truth cannot be nurtured by rancor and rhetoric, in responding we have tried to keep before us the example set by Gurudeva, who said:

"It is natural to love others who love you and are kind to you. But Jesus said to give love even to those who abuse you. I have lived that philosophy. I have learned to love people in spite of their behavior. For those who fail this test, it is their doom. The fault lies with self, not with others. No matter how perfect you try to make a place, you will see that there

**Left: Extract from handwritten letter from Paramahansa Yogananda to a disciple, 1947:**

"As I love you so, so I am writing this—As a son should be loyal to his father so a disciple to his guru in every way. I never question your love and loyalty—I feel you nearer and nearer to me—that is why I venture to ask you to follow:

1) 100 percent Self-Realization and the living link of the gurus, and not divert your mind to any other teachings or work. Make Praecepta [SRF Lessons] your whole life with Kriya Yoga.

2) Passing out literature of other teachings confuses and unsettles the minds of new and even old students. So I shall be happy if you concentrate minds of students only in SRF.

3) All meetings strictly should be around SRF and practice of meditation.

If the above rules are followed you will find the great gurus showering blessings on you and you will feel a living connection with the living link of gurus."

*"You make each of us feel special, as if we were the only ones. Usually when the numbers increase, the personal touch decreases; but in SRF it is always there. How much Master's presence is tangibly felt; it is as if he himself is there serving and greeting us."*

—R. and R. D., Colorado

*"...so much love, so much kindness, so much concentrated effort to offer us the best, with spontaneity and affection....Only a deep love for a divine cause could have produced a work of this magnitude."*

—D. and A. C., Brazil

*"The Master's words, spoken to Sri Daya Mata shortly before his mahasamadhi, were, 'Only love can take my place.' I humbly suggest that during this Convocation, love did not just take his place but confirmed his presence."*

—D.G., Trinidad and Tobago

*"I have never felt so much love, anywhere, ever."*

—H.L., California.

*will always be somebody coming to interfere. That is the law of this world. How many have tried to shake me and disrupt the harmony of my work, but have not been able to do so. Why? Because I follow the laws of Christ."*

Our Guru assured us that those who sincerely desire God will be drawn to the path that is right for them, and find there the upliftment they seek. If the individuals at Ananda experience in their lives and community the peace and fulfillment their souls are seeking, we are indeed happy for them. We wish them well on their chosen spiritual path.

It remains our wish not to dwell on these matters, or on the unfortunate way in which they have been presented. We did, however, feel it incumbent on us to dispel here any misunderstanding that may have circulated with Ananda's letter. We want to assure each of you that you are welcome to write or call us if any questions or concerns about these matters should arise in future.

We know that people come to SRF because they feel here the Guru's love and transforming joy as a direct, personal experience. This is his organization, not ours; and we have always felt if we sincerely try to do our best in following what Paramahansaji asked of us as a society, the divine love and blessings of God and Guru will continue to be the life and spirit of Self-Realization Fellowship.

### ***"...A Divine Purpose"***

In closing, let us return to the beautiful thoughts of our Guru quoted at the beginning of this letter—and to the pure spirit of inspiration that drew each of us to this path and sustains us all along the way.

*"The dreams I have had, and have worked for, God has fulfilled—and much more than I had planned. It is because Mt. Washington Center has always striven to be the instrument of God that those plans have been realized...."*

*"It was for a divine purpose that I came to America, and it is through God's grace that this work has grown. What I have been blessed to witness in my lifetime has been beyond my dreams. We have our beautiful centers here at Mt. Washington and Encinitas, our temples....and beautiful places in India....It has been a great dream, an epic of joy."*

In this special anniversary year of Self-Realization Fellowship, that epic of joy continues—the divine light kindled by Paramahansa Yogananda 75 years ago is glowing more brightly than ever. And in the months and years to come, we look forward to sharing with you many blessings yet to come, as the divine work begun by Paramahansa Yogananda continues to unfold.

"It is not my wish to develop a large, mechanical organization, but a hive filled with the spiritual honey of God," Gurudeva said. "Do your part. Spread the work of Self-Realization through your words and example, through your devotion....I see the great avalanche of truth that is passing through this humble self, and I am very grateful that God would honor such an insignificant one as I with the duty to spread his message. Those who will sincerely follow this path will surely find redemption."

In the divine love and friendship of God and Guru,

*Mother Center*

SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP