



# Self-Realization Fellowship

Founded in 1920 by Paramahansa Yogananda

*"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."*

— Paramahansa Yogananda

Dear Friends,

Some of you have inquired about a matter that is of concern to all of us who care deeply about Gurudeva's work: a legal situation involving SRF and a group called Ananda. Since January 1990, when Ananda reincorporated under the name "Church of Self-Realization," we have been faced with a challenging situation that could have a significant effect on Gurudeva's work—both now and in the future.

We had briefly alluded to this matter in our Spring 1990 Voluntary League Appeal, and have spoken with or written to some of you individually since that time. Though it was not Gurudeva's way to talk about organizational problems, in order to create understanding he would sometimes gather the devotees around him and informally discuss such matters. In the same spirit, we would like to address the concerns some of you have expressed, and let you know why we eventually used legal means to try to resolve the issues involved. We feel the best way to do so is to share with you, as members of our spiritual family, some of Gurudeva's intentions for his work of Self-Realization. To understand our concern over Ananda's change of name, one would need to have some background.

## A Sacred Trust

From the very beginning of the mission that brought him to America, Gurudeva poured his divine love, enthusiasm and energy into conveying to receptive souls the Kriya Yoga teachings of his guru and paramgurus. He shared freely with all the inspiration that flowed from his communion with God. But Guruji was also endowed with a far-sighted practicality. Knowing that even divinely ordained teachings have been changed over time

through personal interpretation and innovation, he took steps to perpetuate his own teachings in their original purity and integrity. It was for you—his students and disciples—that he created a single organization to fulfill the mission he was ordained to carry out by his guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and by Mahavatar Babaji.



As our Guru later recounted in his *Autobiography*, Self-Realization Fellowship was chartered under the laws of the State of California in 1935 as a nonprofit corporation, "designed to exist perpetually." In this organization Gurudeva vested the sum of his life's work, by preparing and signing a Will and an Assignment (of rights). Having placed in the keeping of SRF the fruits of his divine inspiration and lifelong efforts, he said at the first Convocation in 1937:

***"I have been glad to dedicate all my books and all things that I had to this cause of Self-Realization Fellowship. I am spiritually connected with the cause, and of course, I am also on the Board of Directors. But everything has been dedicated to the cause."***

A personal letter in his own hand affirms this:

***"All the proceeds of all my books and magazines I never take, but are owned by Self-Realization Fellowship — to spread our work and maintain our institutions."***

In 1949 he bound his intentions into the By-Laws of Self-Realization Fellowship, which state in part:

***"Upon the incorporation of the Self-Realization Fellowship Church, all funds, properties, tangible and intangible, of every kind held by Paramahansa Yogananda were turned over and transferred to this corporation (SRF)."***

Building a worldwide organization was a role far removed from the simplicity of hermitage life in the ancient land of India. But Gurudeva willingly shouldered that responsibility for the sake of the souls who would be drawn to these teachings. Those who were with him knew him not only as a beloved Guru and friend, but also as a dynamic leader—one who set the pattern he wanted for his own organization, and who neither founded nor authorized any other. As SRF grew and developed under his direction, he took an acute interest in every aspect of the work—even the legal and administrative\*—so that those to come might know his wishes.

He chose for the name of his organization in the West (his international society) a distinctive translation of the name he had given to his society in India—Yogoda Satsanga. "Yogoda" (a word he himself had coined) means "that which the science of yoga imparts," and "Satsanga" means "association with God, with Truth, with good people." He translated this name as "Self-Realization Fellowship," and explained: *"Through Self-realization we have fellowship with God; and in that fellowship, we give divine friendship to truth-seekers in all religions."*

Today, the Self-Realization Fellowship name is known by hundreds of thousands of members and friends throughout the world, who associate it with the organization Gurudeva established almost 75 years ago and with his message of Kriya Yoga.

\* You will be interested to know, for example, that Gurudeva originated the Center Bulletins, and the Lessons Application and Pledge, and began the practice of communicating with Lessons students at certain points in their study. To this day we follow the many precedents he set.

## The Teachings of Kriya Yoga

The fact that Gurudeva endowed a single organization with his nonsectarian teachings in no way takes away from his universal all-embracing spirit. His love is unconfined by boundaries and will ever reach out to those who turn to him with sincerity and devotion, regardless of organizational affiliation. But for those who enter the sacred guru-disciple relationship, his spiritual help is available in special measure through Kriya Yoga. A profoundly effective method of God-communion, Kriya Yoga is also a divine covenant between the Guru and his disciples.

Kriya Yoga as given by Paramahansaji is the sacred science he received from his Guru, which had been passed down from Mahavatar Babaji to Lahiri Mahasaya. To assure its purity and to maintain the link between himself as the Guru and succeeding generations of disciples, Gurudeva carefully specified how it should be imparted thereafter. "I am the last in this line of Gurus . . ." Paramahansaji said. "When I am gone, the teachings will be the guru. Through the SRF teachings you will be in tune with me and with the Great Gurus who sent me." He emphasized the unique role SRF was to play in safeguarding his Kriya Yoga teachings. A disciple of Gurudeva since 1931, our revered president, Sri Daya Mata said:

*"One of the greatest responsibilities that Guruji placed upon the shoulders of Daya Ma and his other disciples was this: 'As I have brought this teaching to you and kept it pure as it was given to me by God and my guru, so I give you this responsibility; keep it pure, undiluted by anything'... And that is why you see that neither Daya Ma nor any of these other disciples have attempted or presumed in any way to change or to dilute with personal innovations what he taught."*

## The Unique Role of Gurudeva's Organization

Gurudeva had keen understanding of human nature. He knew that many would tend to interpret his teachings in their own way, and form their individual opinions about the direction his work should take. He recognized, therefore, how vital it was to prevent fragmentation of the world-redeeming message he was inaugurating. To this end, he unified and directed all the varied activities involved with his mission under the banner of Self-Realization Fellowship. On July 8, 1948, shortly after his great *samadhi*, Gurudeva wrote the following words to the SRF Center leader in Mexico City:

*"After the great visitation of Divine Mother I see more clearly how She wants this work to be directed and therefore I write this letter.... we must remember that in the second or third generation of our work everything must be centralized here at Headquarters, otherwise divisions will begin and our work will fall apart. You and those with me now are of the first generation, and I do not worry about you for you have had contact with me and know how the work should be spread, but those to follow after us will make mistakes unless all the work is centralized under one department — under the Mother Center."*

Through these many years, the Mother Center has remained the fountainhead from which Gurudeva's teachings flow out to countless people around the world. Because of the

universal appeal and practical merit of his teachings, many of his thoughts have been incorporated into the work of a number of religious teachers. This is to be expected with the passage of time. As Gururji taught us, the world is big enough for all. His aim in founding SRF was to guarantee that regardless of how many groups present his teachings in varied forms, there would always be one clearly differentiated, original source from which seekers could obtain them as he intended they be given. Presented in this way, Gurudeva's Kriya Yoga teachings offer a balanced course in the art of living, as well as a complete path to God. Thus he gave specific direction that Self-Realization Fellowship not affiliate with other organizations (however worthy in their own right), in order to maintain SRF's distinctive identity and ensure that his society not be diverted from its own mission.

### The Need for Legal Action

For many years we have received inquiries as to whether Ananda is affiliated with Self-Realization Fellowship. Some individuals have actually mistaken it for a branch of SRF, though they later find there are differences in practice and approach between the two organizations. Why are those differences not recognized at first? We have heard various reasons—for example, the use of Gurudeva's name, photographs, and words in certain contexts. Also, some of Ananda's advertisements and other materials at times closely resembled those of SRF.

Because of the confusion already present, our concern increased when we learned that Ananda had taken the new name, "Church of Self-Realization"—a name very similar to "Self-Realization Fellowship" and our legal name, "Self-Realization Fellowship Church." We felt that the use of this name — by a group that had already been mistaken for SRF — would blur the distinctions between the two groups still further, causing increasing confusion, not only for our established worldwide membership and friends, but also for new seekers and business contacts. (*compare inset example*)

Early attempts to exchange views with Ananda were unproductive. We then had to consider that if we were to defend SRF's right to distinguish itself as a separate organization, our only recourse was to apply for protection under trademark law. Because of Ananda's increasing commercial use of SRF publications, photos and recordings without permission, we also considered seeking the additional remedies provided by copyright law. Never before had we been faced with such a troubling decision, and we prayed deeply for guidance. Out of our profound desire to honor and uphold Gurudeva's intentions, our course was charted.

**SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP**  
 Paramahansa Yogananda, Founder  
 4830 Sunset, Hollywood—8:30 & 11 a.m.  
 192 E. Channing, Fullerton—11 a.m.  
 1700 W. Sunset, Pacific Palisades—8 & 11 a.m.  
**HAPPINESS  
 THROUGH ATTUNEMENT  
 WITH CHRIST**  
 "Celebrate the birth of Christ in the circle of your consciousness during the Christmas season."—P.Y.

**CHURCH  
 OF  
 SELF  
 REALIZATION**  
**TEACHINGS OF PARAMHANSA  
 YOGANANDA**  
*Mystical Christianity Combined with  
 Meditation Tradition of the East  
 Inner Communion with God*  
 9 a.m. Meditation  
 10 a.m. Worship Service  
 10 a.m. Sunday School  
 299 California Ave. #208, Palo Alto  
 (415) 323-3363

**Court Rulings** As of this time, the lower court has ruled that Ananda may use the name "Church of Self-Realization" if they preface it with the word "Ananda," and suggested they make mention of the fact that they are not affiliated with Self-Realization Fellowship. Some people, however, have continued to mistake Ananda for SRF, and this court decision has been appealed.

The potential for such an innocent yet significant mistake has been reinforced by the fact that Ananda has recently published their own printing of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and we understand they will release their own version of Gururji's commentaries on the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. They have opposed Gurudeva's intention that his writings and other works should belong to and be disseminated by Self-Realization Fellowship. It appears to be their wish to publish and disseminate them under their own aegis. At the present time, with respect to some of the works created by Gurudeva, the lower court has ruled that his intent that SRF own all the rights to these works cannot be enforced. This matter will also be appealed. We understand that the courts will be further reviewing Gurudeva's intent, expressed in the legal documents mentioned earlier and in numerous other writings and talks dating from SRF's founding to his *mahasamadhi*.

On February 20, 1952, just two weeks before his *mahasamadhi*, Gururji thoughtfully acknowledged a report from a loyal disciple in Mexico. In his reply, Paramahansaji expressed his concern for the progress of the work there—a concern that encompassed even the fate of a mimeograph machine en route to the Center. In matters great and small, our Guru was not only a source of limitless help and blessings to his disciples, but also the divine advocate of his organization. To protect the Fellowship, he requested in that same letter that all articles and magazines be copyrighted in the name of Self-Realization Fellowship. (On occasion, Gururji copyrighted his publications in his own name, with the understanding that through his Assignment of 1935 he had transferred to SRF any rights he might have.)

Through the years, we have received many requests to use portions of our Guru's writings, from individuals in all professions and walks of life. It is our joy to see increasing recognition of Gurudeva's broad humanity and spiritual stature, and we welcome this interest in his thoughts and ideals.

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 in any other manner which would likely confuse members of the public about the source of goods or services. It has nothing to do with 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.

It remains our wish that this matter might be resolved outside the courts. A judicial mediator has attempted to arrange a resolution of the issues, and it is our hope and prayer that future attempts will be made, and that these will be successful.

In this world there will always be a diversity of spiritual paths, resulting from the varying goals of different teachers, and responding to the diverse temperaments of individuals.

It is not our aim to judge the merits of other paths, but rather to uphold the distinctive place of Gurudeva's society among them. We feel a responsibility to the truth-seekers of the future, who will be confronted with more and more choices as the years pass. How will they be able to single out what he himself taught from the many variations available from others? This is a question that takes on particular importance with a teaching as comprehensive and explicit as Gurudeva's. *The heart and soul of this legal matter is thus very simple: to lovingly safeguard what he began — a work bearing the unique imprint of his divine love and wisdom.* We know that as devotees of our beloved Guru, you pray as we do that the final court decisions will take his documented wishes into consideration.

### The Guru's Writings

Most of you have come to know our Guru through his writings, and your lives have been touched by them because his words carry the vibration of his love and God-consciousness. We know you would want to be certain that whatever you read of Gurudeva's fully reflects his thoughts—that it bears his "imprimatur."

Paramahansaji gave to his faithful disciple Tara Mata the assignment of editing and preparing his talks and writings for publication. To succeed her, he began to train and work with Mrinalini Mata. He entrusted these chosen disciples with the sacred responsibility of compiling and editing the manuscripts following his directions, so that his teachings would be published for the ages in faithful accord with his wishes.\*

When the *Autobiography of a Yogi* appeared in 1946, it had been more than 20 years since Tara Mata had begun serving as Gurudeva's editor. Referring to her editorial work, Paramahansaji wrote: *"Only so illumined a chela as my Laurie [Tara Mata] could raise such fine knot-points of scriptural controversy."* On many other occasions he praised her inner attunement, saying, *"Laurie never changes my thoughts."*

After the passing of Tara Mata, Mrinalini Mata became Editor-in-Chief, as directed by Paramahansaji. From the time she first came to his ashram with her family as a young girl of 14, Gurudeva prepared her for this role. During the final years of his life when he was working almost uninterruptedly on his writings, she was with him daily and received his personal training and instructions. His thoughts and wishes are being passed on to others in his society who are being similarly trained to carry on in the future.

During our Guru's lifetime, a number of devotees other than Tara Mata and Mrinalini Mata were occasionally given various temporary editorial tasks. Because he did not have

<p>WESTERN UNION</p>	
<p>NO DL LOS ANGELES CALIF 10 354A</p>	<p>NO 00 10 47 91</p>
<p>LAURIE PRATT*</p>	<p>9925 41 ST LONG BEACH CITY 57*</p>
<p>CANNOT EXPRESS WHAT HAPPINESS YOU BROUGHT US WHEN FOUR BOXES OF 160 BOOKS ARRIVED. SELF-REALIZATION WILL MARCH ON THRU AGES THRU THIS DIVINE BOOK AND YOUR EFFORTS DEATHLESSLY EMBEDDED IN IT. CEASELESS LOVE AND BLESSINGS FROM ME AND ALL. IF YOU ALREADY SENT THURSDAY, WRITE—</p>	
<p>YOGHAYDA.</p>	

In this telegram, Guruji is referring to his *Autobiography*

\* We look forward to sharing with you in the near future news of upcoming publications as well as new cassette and video releases—additions to the growing library of Self-Realization teachings.

full confidence, however, that these individuals would retain his spirit or his meaning, he would sometimes preface such assignments with the remark, "Edit this, but don't change my words." Indeed, Paramahansaji was dissatisfied with some of the early attempts made by well-meaning disciples (such as were published in some of the early SRF magazines), and he gave specific instructions for the clarification and correction of those writings.

As you may know, the SRF/YSS lotus emblem was designated by Paramahansaji to officially represent his society and has been used ever since to identify its publications, recordings, buildings, activities, etc. In addition, we have recently adopted a distinctive new design, or "trade-dress," to further help readers identify the editions of Paramahansaji's writings published according to his own editorial instructions. This design—which includes an arch-shaped border with a logo at the bottom identifying Self-Realization Fellowship as the society founded by Paramahansa Yogananda—will appear on the covers of SRF publications. These publications are reviewed by the SRF Publications Council, whose members are trained in the Guru's ideals and teachings.



### A Foundation for the Future

Gurudeva realized that the future of his work would depend not only upon the spiritual legacy of his writings and talks, but upon the inner attunement of those who would carry out his wishes. That is why he gave so much care and attention to the training of monastic disciples who, being free of other responsibilities, could devote their lives unreservedly to seeking God, to disseminating his teachings, and to serving his growing spiritual family of Self-Realization Fellowship. Drawing around him those souls in whom he saw the deepest receptivity, Paramahansaji shared the nuances of his wishes for every facet of the work. These disciples, who lead the SRF work today, include the only living disciples who were daily in the Guru's presence—even until his last moments on this earth.

Knowing that devotees in the future would ask how they could be sure that his work was being guided in attunement with his will, Gurudeva foretold: *"There will always be at the head of this organization men and women of divine realization. They shall serve as my spiritual successor and representative in all spiritual and organizational matters."* In this capacity, the President of Self-Realization Fellowship acts on behalf of the Guru in authorizing those who may teach his techniques of God-communion and give the sacred Kriya Initiation.



Gurudeva expressly spoke of his trust in Sri Daya Mata, whom he was training for the role of future President. Just days before his passing, he told one of the senior disciples: *"Follow her [Daya Mata]. She has followed me with 100% devotion, 100% obedience, 100% loyalty. She is in tune with me. I can work through her."* Through the years she has flawlessly fulfilled Gurudeva's trust, guiding his organization with unwavering regard for his ideals and standards.

## The Future of Gurudeva's Organization

Paramahansaji noted with wry humor, referring to the founding of his society: "The fulfillment of the sacred trust has not been devoid of difficulties." As his mission continues to unfold, so too do the difficulties! When a great light radiates goodness and truth in this realm of duality, contrasting shadows are inevitable. Yet the difficulties to be faced along the way are insignificant compared to the world-transforming good that accompanies the spread of Gurudeva's Kriya Yoga teachings.

We have written to you in the love and dedication that unites us as a spiritual family, feeling that you would wish to know the reasons for the course we have taken. The touchstone of our decisions has been and will always be: "What does Gurudeva want for his work and for you, his disciples?" He was broad and accepting of the viewpoints of all, but was firm in safeguarding his teachings and the spiritual welfare of those who choose SRF as their path.

In Gurudeva's beautiful words at the beginning of this letter, he has declared his eternal bond with the organization he founded and nurtured. That bond is our certainty, and it will endure, whatever conclusions the courts may draw. Self-Realization Fellowship will always have this mandate given by God and Guru: to make available to all truth-seekers the pure teachings of Kriya Yoga and to carry on the high ideals and standards set for this society. Guruji told one of the disciples, "Be steadfast, and remember that the seeds of this work have been planted in the ether by God Himself."

In the magnanimous wealth of divine wisdom embodied in our Guru's work, we have everything we need to know God in this lifetime. As we and all future disciples strive to follow in Gurudeva's footsteps, his spiritual legacy will remain vivid and compelling for the centuries to come. His message is destined to uplift and transform our individual lives and our world. That is indeed the reason for which he founded Self-Realization Fellowship.

In the divine love and friendship of God and Guru,

*Mother Center*

SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP

