

Brother Satyananda
Regain Your Divine Heritage
Lake Shrine Temple
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To feel the sweet embrace of God's immortal presence is a comforting thought. It is something that we need...this comfort and strength that comes from within. Life is full of insecurities and is constantly changing. We don't know what are plans will be tomorrow so we feel a natural insecurity about life and our future. That is why we seek comfort and strength in communion, in meditation...prayer within. If we take time to sit still, relax and let go of our worries, our concerns about our lives, then there is a deepening stillness that comes.

Paramahansa Yogananda brings actual methods and techniques that we can use to take the mind and heart away from its normal orientation toward an upliftment in spirit. So, if every day we do a little esoteric activity, we will find a peace and comfort growing from within. Something that we can take with us in our daily life.

There is a teaching that comes from ancient India where the masters have pulled this tale or illustration for their disciples. It is called the "Teaching of the Gold Bar." It is said that in a king's treasury there are gold bars. The king requested that one gold bar be brought to him in the throne room. It is wrapped in a silk cloth and placed carefully in a royal basket. The king gives the gold bar to a foreign diplomat, to deliver to a friend of his, another monarch in a neighboring kingdom. The gold bar in the basket is transported by the diplomat on board a ship. While sailing on the ocean the ship is accosted by pirates. The pirates board the ship and along with other valuables, they take the gold bar inside the basket. It is thrown into a chest becoming part of their pirate treasure. They take off to another city and at a distant port they hock the gold bar for cash to a merchant. The merchant takes it out of the chest and very carefully puts it inside a lacquered box. Then, by chance, he makes a journey back to the original kingdom and offers it to the king as a gift inside the lacquered box. The king takes the gold bar that's come back to him and puts it in his treasury.

The analogy here has been told for thousands of years and that is, that each one of us has a spiritual self, an immortal self, a soul, an atman, call it what you will. It is like that gold bar and, like the gold bar, gets encased in

different enclosures, like a basket, a lacquered box or thrown into a trunk. This represents the different life experiences that we have. The different adventures that we have as a soul. Yet, the gold bar in all of its travels does not lose its value. It retains its value; it is immutable in that regard and so are our souls, our spiritual self. Our higher self never loses its value...it is immortal...even though it goes through many experiences.

This is our highest consciousness...our sense of self. "I am; I exist; I am aware" this never dies. It is immortal. The scriptures teach this. The saints and sages of all religions testify to it from their revelations and mystical experiences that this is who we really are. That we have an immutable goal within us that never perishes.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says: *"The Soul is never born, nor does it ever perish... Birthless, deathless, changeless, thus is the Soul declared."* The Lord Jesus said in the New Testament to his disciples: *"Ye are gods and the spirit of the Father dwelleth within you."* Jesus here referred to himself in a dual nature. He called him sometimes, Jesus, the son of man and at other times, Christ, the son of God.

He was acknowledging this dual role that we as souls play. We have both a mortal and an immortal nature. We have both a humanity and a divinity. We know the mortality of the humanity all too well with its limitations. We have not yet discovered the most beautiful part of ourselves. This remains to be uncovered. Meditation, spiritual living, the teachings of Self-Realization Fellowship [SRF] are the cosmic adventure of discovering within ourselves our greatest personal potential.

Paramahansa Yogananda has said: *"Self-realization means to know the Self as a soul made in the image of God. As soon as we learn in meditation to love God we shall love all humankind as we love our mortal family."*

This morning Brother said because devotees had been encouraged to bring family members or anyone who might be interested in the teachings of SRF to the service, he'd be giving a sort of snapshot overview of Paramahansa Yogananda, his purpose in founding SRF and what the teachings are all about. That it's just an overview to allow us to see the big picture and, perhaps, appreciate everything that is offered here. If anyone feels within themselves the need to know and experience more, there is much more available to them.

We are in this process of personal growth and self-improvement. We are normally working on our personality, our outer presentation to world and, yet, there is an inner resource that we can cultivate that makes us beautiful in every regard. This is the purpose of SRF. It teaches esoteric meditation according to scientific techniques and, also, balanced, dynamic spiritual living. It is a spiritual life style that we embrace. One that gives us strength and spirituality.

Paramahansa Yogananda grew up in Calcutta, India at the turn of the century...between the 19th and 20th. At that time Calcutta was a much smaller city then it is now. It was called, by the British, the Garden City of India...a very stately city. Paramahansa Yogananda grew up in a middle class family. Perhaps the early wave of middle class in India that now has expanded. When we go to India now, we see something very different than even ten years ago. There's a growing middle class in India. Yogananda's family was middle class. His father worked for the British Railroad and was fairly well-to-do. Like many Indian families it was large and socially complex.

Yogananda writes in his *Autobiography of a Yogi* [AY] how he needed to get out beyond the limitations of the family and all the expectations in order to follow his own personal aspirations...to find a guru, a teacher, to follow a spiritual path and, most of all, to have direct contact with God or Cosmic Spirit. In his book, a spiritual classic of fifty years now, the AY, he talks about his early years of seeking God. Walking and traveling around every time he heard of a saint or a sage. If he was attracted to people, he would meditate and learn with them. His family was always trying to get him interested in school, developing a professional vocation but he ended up becoming a spiritual teacher, founding his own monastic order.

Brother said that in some ways he thought many of us could relate because we walked away from the American middle class dream, somewhat. It seems to have expectation that limit our own dreams and ambitions. We feel that we want something more and that there must be a higher purpose in life. There must be people that we can find, associate with and resonate with according to our dreams. As the old saying goes "home is where they understand you." We find fellowship and truth with the people around us who share the same goals as we have.

Even from his earliest years, Yogananda was guided by inner revelations and spiritual perceptions that were quite profound and unusual in any human life. Eventually, it led him to finding his own guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar and through his guru, teacher, he not only received spiritual training but also, a much sought after experience, what he called Cosmic Consciousness, where human consciousness expands to embrace all of life in the universe and beyond.

We have this sense of what Yogananda described as melting in spirit...it is expansive, it is joyful, it is very blissful. SRF teaches this as the goal of life, called yoga, or supreme yoga, or union. This union is the union with all life in which our consciousness expands. The teachings of this path are centered around certain lifestyle practices that facilitate our ability to see this kind of spiritual experience.

Brother told a new form of an old joke in which a novice Tibetan monk went to his teacher and said: "Sir, is it okay for Tibetan monks to do email?" The old man smiled and said, "Yes, of course, but no attachments." Brother went on to say that attachments come at him faster than he can get rid of them! Also, that if Yogananda was alive today, he'd be using email, just as we all do...we're plugged in digitally. It's a wonderful way to communicate.

In the 1920s, Paramahansa Yogananda came to the United States with a very forward vision to spread the teachings of the ancient science of yoga, specifically called *Kriya Yoga*, which is the yoga of divine action. It is a technique that we practice in our meditations for attaining direct perception of God. He founded SRF as an organization to carry on the dissemination of his teachings showing, as you see and experience in our Temple services, a unity between Christianity or Jesus Christ in the Bible and the teachings of Bhagavan Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita from India.

SRF united these two teachings into one spiritual instruction showing the unity of all Truth in all religions. Yogananda founded SRF headquartered in Los Angeles and temples throughout California and meditation centers around the world as well as the Yoga Satsanga Society, a sister organization, in India. Also, in the last forty years there has been an explosive growth of meditation centers in cities and small towns around the world. Brother continued by saying that part of his role as a minister is to travel, visit and conduct programs at the various centers throughout the world.

Brother explained that he'd spoken with members in Maui who are trying to build up their meditation center. In fact, right now in Hana, Maui they are meditating together and said that they would be meditating for the Lake Shrine congregation during this service. If anyone would like to combine a spiritual retreat with a vacation, a retreat is being organized in Maui for October and everyone is welcome to check it out.

Teenagers often ask what they can say to their friends when asked what kind of church they go to. Brother said he tells them to make it simple and sweet! "I go to a church that teaches dynamic spiritual living combined with meditation and prayer." Then if they ask for me give them more. Keep it simple.

Yogananda also called SRF a church of all religions. SRF doesn't practice all religions practices but does teach that there are universal cosmic principles that are part of all faiths and there is one God that all religions worship and that God can be directly experienced through scientific meditation. We try to go to the heart, to the essence, to the original inspiration behind all religions. They all have commonalities.

SRF also teaches that heaven is not something that one must die first to attain but that we can experience heaven now. In fact, anticipating perhaps, our highly mobile culture, Yogananda introduced a term, which he called "a portable paradise." It has nothing to do with a smartphone but everything to do with daily mediation and cultivating a sense of peace in the heart and taking it along throughout the day. When that is done, we will find that every day's meditation will generate a vibration that goes with us when we enter into activity, when we engage in our duties. It strengthens and awakens our intuitive faculties. There are many perks for daily meditation.

It is said that three nurses found themselves together at St. Peter's gate. St. Peter was admitting them and he asked the first nurse: "What have you done to be eligible for heaven." She said: "Well, I served the poor and orphaned children in a clinic on earth." St. Peter said: "Very good! You may go into heaven." He asked the second nurse the same question. She said: "I was with the missionary corp that brought healing and comfort for the diseased natives in the Amazon." "Oh," St. Peter said, "that's fantastic! You've earned a place in heaven." The third nurse when asked what she

done said: "I was a nurse for an HMO." St. Peter said: "Okay, you can go to heaven but you can only stay three days."

SRF doesn't teach such limitations if you work for an HMO! Heaven talks to us in our consciousness in daily life. For this purpose, Paramahansa Yogananda composed, during his lifetime, an incredible spectrum of teachings -- commentaries, two world-class scriptures, spiritual poetry, affirmations for healing of body, mind and spirit. Also, he gave us the SRF Lessons, which is a full spectrum teaching on meditation techniques, methods of healing, spiritual life attitudes, self-improvement from the inside out, healthy lifestyle recommendations on developing quality relationships, building beyond the superficial into understanding ourselves from the inside out.

Brother invited anyone who was new to take a look at the SRF Lessons, to talk to an available monastic and even to sign up for the first course. There are many things that can be learned. For example, Paramahansa Yogananda says that we can completely free ourselves from worry. The SRF Lessons offers some very practical, as well as inspirational teachings on learning to free ourselves from worry from the inside out. He says that we can try for even just short periods to be completely worry free. We know from our own lives that we spend time obsessing about worries. Things that we have no control over but we worry about them anyway. When things work out well, we say that worry was what made it work out. We justify to ourselves. Yet, Yogananda says that we can live a much happier or liberated life free from these worries. He says, just as we might go on a fast to cleanse the body, we can go on a mental and emotional fast of worry to cleanse the mind and body.

He says when we first wake up in the morning that the mind will be completely free for at least a few seconds and encouraged us to jump on those few seconds to plan to be worry free for fifteen minutes. Once we've done it for fifteen minutes we can work up to half an hour. We will feel good and when thoughts come up we can tell ourselves that we will deal with them later. If we can be worry free for thirty minutes, why not an hour. Then the Master says to try for half a day.

Not long ago Brother determined that one day each week was going to be his no worry day. Of course, he said that all the worries attacked that day trying to make that day the worst day of his life. But he hung on and soon

the worries began to give up and he started to look forward to that no worry day. It was almost like he was gradually programming himself.

Then once we've accomplished the one day we look around and say what about the other six days. These are exciting and adventurous ways that we can make major improvements on the quality of our daily life, making ourselves worry free.

An Indian girl whose family was set on arranging her marriage said: "My old aunties used to come up to me at weddings, poke me in the ribs and laugh telling me your next. Now they've stopped because I started to do the same thing to them at funerals." A useful suggestion!

In all the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda have practical purposes. We have the teaching about becoming free of worry. It really helps to liberate the heart and mind. It gives us a higher quality of life. There is a higher purpose in becoming free of worry in our daily life and that is, to deepen our meditative experience. The more free of worry we are in our daily lives, the freer we will be in meditation.

Paramahansa Yogananda advocates overcoming anything and gives some methods for working on overcoming anger within ourselves and becoming more peaceful. That is good for us; it is good for our daily lives; it's good for life experiences...we keep our friends but these not the most important perks. Overcoming anger cleanses the system and helps us to enjoy meditation more when that time comes...a closeness with God in prayer... because we learn that anger can be an obstruction to our sweet relationship with God.

Yogananda advocates being a vegetarian in diet. It is not a requirement for being a member of SRF but we can all name a number of good benefits. We don't have to kill animals for your diet. It's a healthier diet when we're vegetarian, less nervousness and more peace and relaxation. That's all very good but the highest reason for being a vegetarian in diet is that it is conducive to meditation. When we sit down to meditate the body is more at rest, more in harmony and we can feel the difference.

The teachings of Yogananda and SRF are like a wheel with spokes that go toward the center and the center is meditation. All the teachings relate back, enhance and amplify our experience in meditation. This overall brings

great order and harmony to our lifestyle because it has a purpose. All the components have a purpose and we can feel ourselves living in concert with that purpose. It puts an end to the chaos that so often we feel and we can find that order and that beauty in our daily lives by the way we conduct our lifestyle. This is Brother's definition of dynamic spiritual living.

The Master said: *"The aim of Self-Realization is to teach the practical methods, the exact techniques of widening the channel of human consciousness so that truth might flow continuously, endlessly without obstructions or dogma or unproved beliefs."*

There are three important points to remember when we want to have an enjoyable daily mediation. It is very simple. The first thing is relaxation of body, heart and mind. The next point is stillness -- relaxed stillness. We cannot be still if we are not first relaxed; then concentrating our whole being and lifting our eyes to the center point between the eyebrows, which is called the spiritual eye.

There is a profound teaching that comes from the ancient scriptures of India about the states of human consciousness and the corresponding position of our eyes. We start with the eyes open looking forward...the position of being awake. When we're awake we are processing through the senses. That is, we're receiving signals through the senses and processing them with the cognitive mind, responding with the emotion, which is our normal waking state. It is called the conscious state and the corresponding position of the eyes is looking forward.

When we go to sleep and dream or we have our eyes closed and are perhaps fantasizing or imagining. This is called the self-conscious mind. It is the sub-conscious state where we have memories, imagination, fantasy dreams and the associated position of the eyes is turned downward. Sometimes we can check this while sitting and relaxing with eyes closed and thinking of something in the past or imagining something in the future, check the position of the eyes. They will be downward.

So we have the position of the eyes forward, downward and there is a third position that is not widely taught where the eyes are lifted up. When the eyes are lifted up they are focused at the spiritual point it is associated with the superconscious mind. We can facilitate the entrance into that superconscious mind just by lifting and holding the gaze and the mind

steady at that single point. That in itself is an important technique. When we close the eyes and look up, first we see darkness. Then when we steady our minds and our gaze we will start to see a little bit of light. Maybe first a ball of light out of the darkness. Then the ball of light will expand and become a golden ring. Then a blue field appears and out of the blue a white five pointed star. From the East this is called the Star of the East, the *Kutastha Chaitanya*, the spiritual eye, the Christ Consciousness Center.

We gave two physical eyes to behold the outer world and God has also given us a spiritual eye to behold the world of spirit. All of us can see this. It is all the same. In fact, it is so beautiful in little children. Brother shared that mothers have told him that in little children when their eyes are kind of lifted and asked what they see they say: "I see a beautiful star." Offer the teachings. It's natural. It's organic...it's there within us.

When newborn babies eyelids are pulled back while they're sleeping, there eyes are turned up. When a human being leaves this world in death, if you have not noticed, at the last breath the eyes go up. This is a teaching of a soul returning back to its superconscious womb. This is the teaching of the three positions of the eyes and the three states of consciousness.

From the prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament: *"Afterwards he brought be to the gate; even the gate looked toward the East and behold the glory of the God of Israel looked towards the East and His voice was like the noise of many waters and the earth shined with His glory."*

Yogananda says: *"Through the divine eye in the forehead, the East, the yogi sails his consciousness into omnipresence. Hearing the word of Aum, the divine sound of many waters, and the vibrations of light that constitute the soul quality of the creation."*

Brother suggested that all who had come for the first time, as an introduction, to have a good experience in meditation and that it is something that can be brought into our daily lives every single day, no matter what faith is practiced, what church attended or if you want bring that sacredness into your own home and your own life experience.

Brother then guided everyone through a short meditation.

From the Easwaran Upanishads: *“When the Truth is known the universe is realized as the Spirit that dwells in all hearts.”*

Yogananda: *“When the Spirit is known and we know ourselves as Spirit, there is no land or sea or sky. All is He. A melting of everything in Spirit is a state no one can describe. The great Buddhist felt eternal fullness, joy, knowledge and love.”*

Remember these steps: relaxation, stillness and lifting the gaze and the mind. Let it begin with a moment of sacred time each day. We will find that it will become a very important time for us, especially if we are sad and sorrowful. We will feel our strength restored and renewed. Instead of worries and anxieties, we will feel a great flow of peace. In just a few moments we can transform, not only our consciousness, but our personal life experiences. Brother suggested we try it on a daily basis and that we will find everything else will enrich us and all our fears will be wiped away.