



Self-Realization

MAGAZINE

FOUNDED IN 1925 BY PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

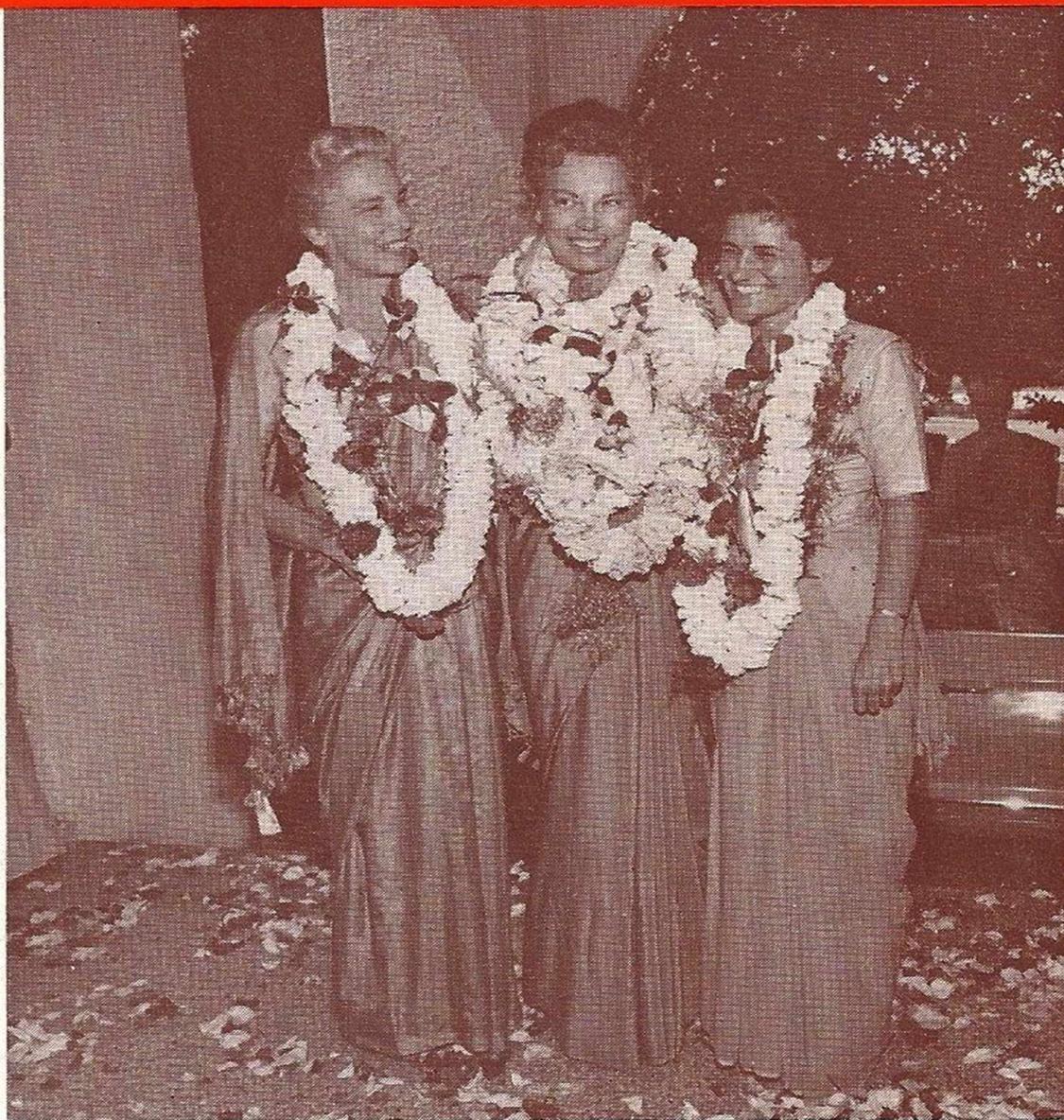
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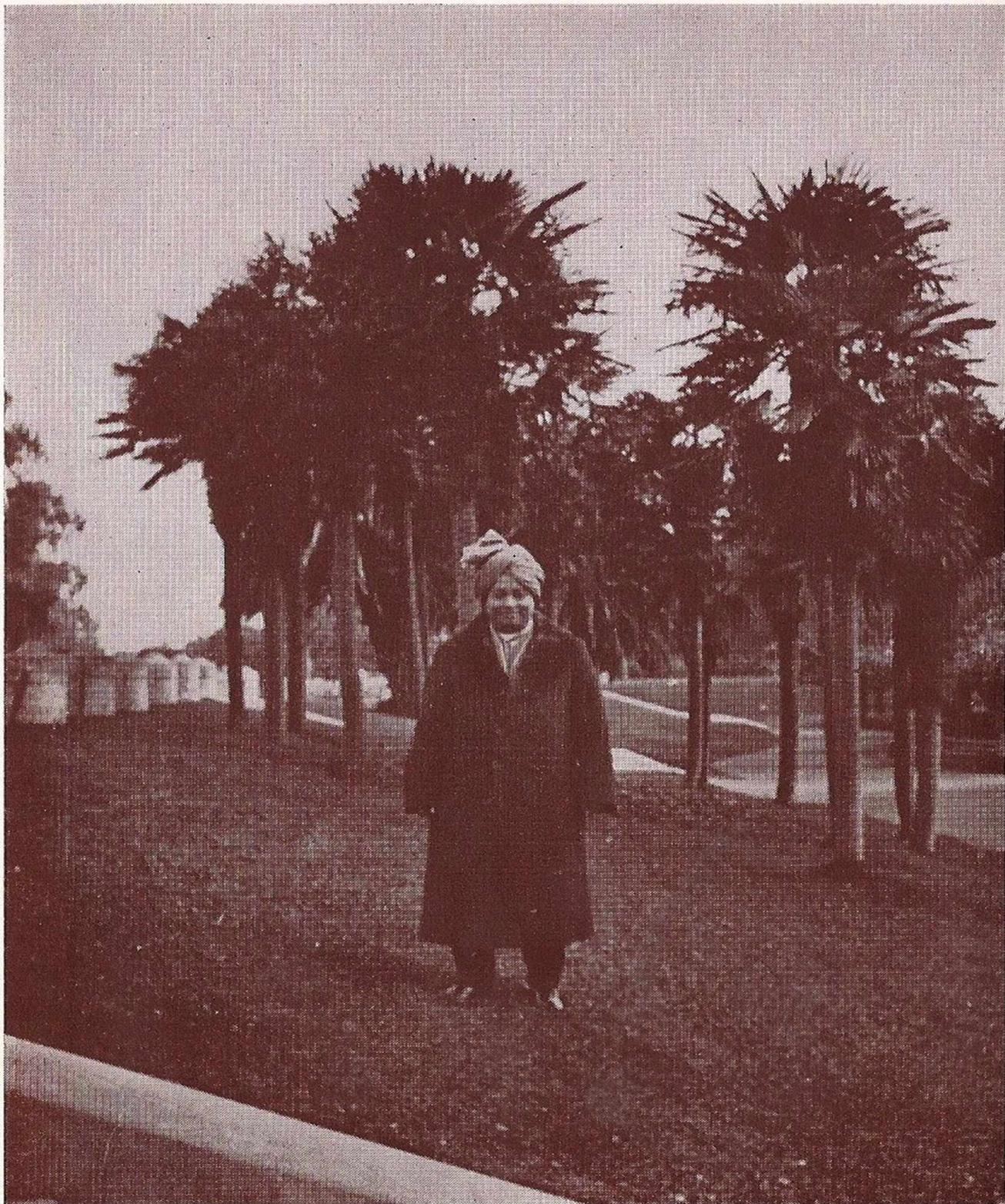
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Sri Daya Mata (*center*), president of Self-Realization Fellowship, with Ananda Mata (*left*) and Uma Mata on their return from India to SRF headquarters in Los Angeles on July 20th. Residents of all SRF colonies in California gathered to welcome them with a shower of rose petals and garlands of fragrant flowers.



PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, California, October 1924

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July-September 1964

Vol. 35, No. 4

The Divine Art of Making Friends	3
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
Union With God	8
<i>By St. Theresa of Avila</i>	
Spiritual Stories from India	9
<i>Edited by Chaman Lal</i>	
Soul Whispers	17
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
Yoga Postures for Health — <i>Suptavajrasana</i> , the Diamond Pose	19
<i>By Bernard Tesnière, M.D.</i>	
Commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita	25
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
No Birth, No Death — Adi Shankaracharya's Song	29
<i>Western musical adaptation by Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
Installation of 144th Shankaracharya of Puri	31
Daya Mata's Homecoming Speech	32
Peace — Divine Weapon Against Worry	35
<i>By Paramahansa Yogananda</i>	
Book Review — <i>Meditation: The Inward Art</i>	36
Letters from Self-Realization Fellowship Class Students	43
Directory of SRF Centers	57
Index to Volume 35	63

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Paramahansa Yogananda, founder. Sri Daya Mata, president.

Second-class postage paid at Los Angeles, California.

Issued quarterly. Single copy, \$0.25. Subscriptions: 1½ years, \$1.50 (6 issues); 3 years, \$2.50 (12 issues). No extra charge for foreign postage.

Subscribers will please send notification of a change of address one month in advance. (Post Office does not forward magazines to a new address unless subscriber arranges with P.O. for that service.)



Rear view of *Yogoda Prakasan Karyalaya*, YSS ashram in Dakshineswar on the Ganges near Calcutta, India, established by Paramahansa Yogananda in 1938. Outbuildings are additional living and dining quarters.

The Divine Art of Making Friends

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



Extracts from a talk given on January 22, 1939, in Encinitas

Friendship is the noblest human expression of God's desire to show His affection to man. God showers affection on the baby through the father and mother, but their feeling for the infant is inborn; our Creator has ordained that our parents can't help but love us. But friendship comes to us as a free, impartial expression of His love.

Two strangers meet and by the instantaneous choice of their hearts want to help each other. How does this happen? Have you ever analyzed that? The spontaneous mutual desire to be friends comes directly from God.

When this impulse is pure it is uncontaminated by selfishness or attraction to the opposite sex. But often it is tainted. Friendship grows on the tree of our innermost feelings; it is desecrated by unwholesome desires and selfish actions. If you put the wrong kind of fertilizer on the roots of a tree, the fruit that develops will be poor; and when you water the tree of human feeling with the emotion of selfishness, the fruit of friendship will be blemished by unworthy motives. To feel friendly toward someone just because he is rich or influential and can do something for you is not friendship. And to be attracted to someone primarily because that person has a beautiful face is not friendship. When that face loses its youthful attractiveness, the "friendship" will evaporate.

Recognizing Friends from Past Lives

It is true that you cannot find friendship everywhere. Some persons you see every day and never know, and others you feel you have known always. You should learn to recognize that inner cue. Wherever you are, always keep your eyes open, and if you feel divinely attracted to someone you should develop friendship with that person, because he has been your friend in some life before. There are many friends whom we have known in past lives, but those friendships have not yet been perfected. It is better to start building on a foundation

that has already been laid than to dig for a foundation on the sands of temporary acquaintances. It is easy to think that one has many friends, until they do something hurtful to you, and then you feel deeply disillusioned.

Many people make mistakes about friends because they are deluded by the outer appearance. The only way to recognize real friends is to meditate more. You should try to find friends the divine way, and that is to purge your consciousness of all thought of facial or other appearances as factors in determining your feelings about others. If you do this, one day you will feel yourself free of delusive likes and dislikes, and you will be able to discover true friends all around you. You will feel God's friendship through those humble human channels that do not resist Him. Through the pure of heart the divine light of friendship will flow to you.

To Find Friends, Banish Selfishness

You cannot attract true friends without removing from your own character the stains of selfishness and other unlovely qualities. The greatest art of finding friends is to behave divinely yourself — to be spiritual, to be pure, to be unselfish — and to start friendship where the foundation of friendship has already been laid in a past life. That is the way to find true friends.

Friendship should exist in all human relations: between parents and children, between husbands and wives, between men and men, between women and women, and between men and women. It is unconditional. When you have the impulse to befriend others, it is the presence of God that you feel. Friendship is a divine impulse. God is not satisfied to look after His human children only in the guise of parents and other relatives. He comes as friends to give us opportunity to express unconditional love from our hearts.

The more your human shortcomings drop away and divine qualities come into your life, the more friends you will have. Was not Lord Jesus a great friend to all, and Lord Buddha, and Lord Krishna? To be like them you must perfect your love for others. When you can convince others of your friendship; when you are sure, through the tests of time and many shared experiences, that a person really feels for you from the soul, and you feel for that person in the same way — not for any gain but solely because of the divine impulse of friendship — you will behold in that relationship the reflection of God.



Construction of a new well begins on spacious grounds of Yogoda Satsanga Society headquarters, Ranchi, India. So far, five wells have been dug, and a sixth will be undertaken soon in cooperation with a land-development program of the Government of India.

Do not allow your friendship to remain locked up in one person, but gradually establish this divine relationship with others of noble ideals. If you try to build friendship with a wrong-minded person you will be disillusioned. Be friends first with the truly good, then go on being a friend to others until you can feel friendship toward everyone, until you can say: "I am a friend to all, even my enemies." Jesus felt only friendship even toward those who were crucifying him. Thus he could say: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

A Basis of Freedom and Spiritual Equality

True friendship is divine love, for it is unconditional and it is real and lasting. You can talk freely with a friend without being misunderstood. But friendship can never develop if there is any hint of demand of one on the other. Friendship can be built only on a basis of freedom and spiritual equality. Therefore you should treat everyone in that

divine light, in the consciousness that each person is an image of God. If you mistreat someone you will never know friendship with him.

Many people go through life without friends. I can't imagine how they are able to carry on. Real friends never misunderstand, or at least rarely, and if they do it is only for a little while. Should someone abuse your trust, go on giving love and understanding just the same, as you would hope to receive it. But if that person continues to behave spitefully, then inwardly say: "Since you go on slapping the extended hand of friendship, it is better to withhold my hand for a time."

Friendship should start at home. If there is in your family someone who is particularly in harmony with you, develop friendship with that person first. Then, if you feel drawn to someone of similar ideals among your acquaintances, develop that relationship. Banish all desires born of selfishness or sex compulsion. In giving pure friendship you will see the guidance of God. Develop friendship with good persons, and the more you meditate the more you will recognize friends of the past. Meditation awakens "sleeping memories of friends once more to be." Many persons whom I had seen in vision I later met; and here in America I have found many that I saw in vision on the ship as I was first coming to this country in 1920.

Friendship is a great universal force. When you have a desire for friendship, then if the particular person who is attuned to you lives at the South Pole, the magnetism of friendship will nevertheless draw you together. Only selfishness can destroy that magnetism within us. He who thinks all the time of himself and no one else wrecks friendship. Such persons cannot attract friends; they cannot expand their consciousness to behold and receive the good in life.

God gave you a family that you may learn how to love others, and then to give that love to all. Our dear ones are taken away from us by death and other circumstances that we may learn not to love persons in merely human relationships but to be in love with Love Itself, which is God, the Being behind all human masks.

Friendship means investing your love where there is no prejudice of human relations. In married life there is the compulsion of sex and in family life there is the compulsion of racial instincts. But in friendship there is no compulsion.

Let us give our love to all. Let us pray that we meet our friends of the past and prove our friendship with them, so that we can under-

stand and merit the friendship of God. Unless we are united with all His children through a spirit of friendliness, we will not be united with God.

I know no strangers. What a great state of happiness and joy! Even the greatest enemy cannot make me feel that I am not his friend. When that awakening comes you are in love with all. You see that everyone is your Father's child, and the love you feel for men and women never dies. It goes on increasing until you feel in the love of friends the love of God.



Daya Mata greets colony resident during reception in honor of the president's homecoming from India; SRF headquarters, July 20th

Union With God

By ST. THERESA OF AVILA

When I see people very anxious to know what sort of prayer they practice, covering their faces and afraid to move or think, lest they should lose any slight tenderness and devotion they feel, I know how little they understand how to obtain union with God, since they think it consists in such things as these.

No, sisters, no; our Lord expects *works* from us. If you see a sick sister whom you can relieve, never fear losing your devotion: treat her with compassion; if she is in pain, feel for her as if it were your own, and when there is need, fast so that she may eat. This is the true union of our will with the will of God.

If someone else is well spoken of, be more pleased than if it were yourself; this is easy enough, for if you were humble it would vex you to be praised. It is a great good to rejoice in your sister's virtues' being known and to feel as sorry for the fault you see in her as if it were yours, hiding it from the sight of others.

I have often spoken on this subject elsewhere, because, my sisters, if we fail in this I know that all is lost; please God this may never be our case.

If you possess fraternal charity, I assure you that you will certainly obtain the union I have described. If you are conscious that you are wanting in this charity, although you may feel devotion and sweetness and a short absorption in the prayer of quiet — which makes you think you have attained to union with God — believe me you have not yet reached it.

Beg our Lord to grant you perfect love for your neighbor, and leave the rest to Him. He will give you more than you know how to desire if you constrain yourselves and strive with all your power to gain it, forcing your will as far as possible to comply in all things with your sister's wishes although you may sometimes forfeit your own rights by so doing.

Forget your self-interest for theirs, however much nature may rebel; when opportunity occurs take some burden upon yourself to ease your neighbor of it.

Do not fancy it will cost you nothing and that you will find it all done for you. — *From "The Interior Castle,"* v, iii, 11-12.

Spiritual Stories from India

Edited by CHAMAN LAL



A certain king was in the habit of asking every sannyasin (*wandering monk*) that came into his country who was the greater man: he who had given up the world and become a sannyasin, or he who lived in the world as a householder. When some of them asserted that the sannyasin is the greater man, the king demanded that this assertion should be proved, and when they could not prove the proposition they were ordered by the king to marry and live as householders.

There came one day a young sannyasin who, when he was asked who was the greater man, said, "Each man, O King, is great in his own place." When the king demanded proof, he said, "I will prove this to you if you will come and reside with me for a few days." The king accompanied the sannyasin and came to another kingdom, in the capital of which a great ceremony was going on. There were signs of a great celebration in the streets, the noise of drums and music, the shouts of criers, and they found that a proclamation was being made.

The crier proclaimed that the princess, daughter of the king, was about to choose her husband. Many princes had put on their gayest attire and assembled in the hall where the princess was to make her selection. Some of them had attendants who were to enumerate their merits and virtues and the princess was taken round on a splendid throne, stopping before each prince. She carried in her hands a garland of flowers which she was to throw around the neck of the prince whom she selected.

The princess had no brother or sister, and her husband would be the ruler of the kingdom after her father's death. The sannyasin and the king went into the hall where the ceremony (the choosing of her husband) was to take place. The princess's palanquin was stopped before the princes one after another, but she did not care for any one of them. There was, however, another young sannyasin who was in the midst of the young men assembled and who outshone all the others by the radiance and splendor of his personality. When

the palanquin of the princess came near him, the princess stepped out and threw the garland over his neck.

The young sannyasin, however, threw aside the garland, exclaiming, "I am not one of the suitors, I am a sannyasin. What is marriage to me?"

The king of the country then came up to the sannyasin and said, "My son, do you realize that you will get half of my kingdom now with my daughter and the whole kingdom after my death?" Saying this, he again placed the garland on the sannyasin's neck. The young man threw it aside again, saying, "I have not come here for a marriage." He quickly walked out of the assembly. The princess, however, had fallen madly in love with the young sannyasin and followed him in order to bring him back. The other sannyasin who had brought the king there proposed that they should follow the pair and they also left the assembly hall. The young sannyasin walked several miles and then entered a forest duly followed by the princess. The sannyasin went into one of the intricate paths in the forest and disappeared. The princess tried to find him out and, being unsuccessful in her search, she sat down under a tree and began to weep. Our sannyasin and his companion, the king, came there and tried to console her. As it was too dark to find the way out of the forest they proposed that they all should rest under a big tree which stood there and on the next morning proceed to find out the path which would take them out of the forest.

Spiritual Stories from India, edited by Chaman Lal, is a recently published collection of 29 stories and fables. The author writes: "India is the home of fables, which are usually associated in the Western mind with Aesop, the Greek slave mentioned by Herodotus. Few people realize that these stories, their special form and technique, can be traced to very remote sources in India. . . . When God made the world He gave many virtues to different nations. To India He gave wisdom as a special gift. The stories presented in this book are full of wisdom. They illustrate what miracles can be wrought with faith in God. They tell us what we can learn from nature; what tolerance and love can bring to humanity."

Spiritual Stories from India may be ordered from the publisher: Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., Rutland, Vermont, \$3.50.

Now a little bird had built a nest on the top of that tree and lived there with his wife and three chicks. Seeing the three persons sitting under the tree, the bird said to his wife that they ought to do something for the guests. As it was winter he thought of making a fire for the comfort of the guests, and flying out, he brought a small quantity of dry grass in his beak and dropped it before them. They soon made good use of it and lighted a blazing fire.

Then the little bird again said to his wife, "My dear, these people have nothing to eat; it is our duty to feed anyone that comes to our house." Saying this, he plunged into the fire and perished. The wife of the bird, also, feeling that her husband's body could not provide sufficient food for the guests, fell into the fire. The little chicks decided to follow their parents and all of them plunged headlong into the fire. The three persons at the foot of the tree understood the purpose for which the birds had given their lives. They could not bring themselves to partake of the food offered by the birds, and in the morning the king and the sannyasin showed the princess the way out of the forest to enable her to go back to her father.

Then the sannyasin said to the king, "O King, you have now seen that each is great in his own place. If you want to live in the world, live like these birds who were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of others. If you want to renounce the world, be like the young sannyasin to whom the most beautiful woman and a kingdom meant nothing. Each is great in his own place, but the duty of the one is not the duty of the other."

A MOTHER'S HEART

Arjuna brought before Draupadi his preceptor's son, Aswatthama, who had assassinated in cold blood Draupadi's five sons while they were asleep. Draupadi looked at Aswatthama and her anger vanished suddenly. The mother's heart overflowed with compassion and Draupadi said to Arjuna, "My Lord, set him at liberty. I do not seek his life. He is your preceptor's son. If he is killed, his mother — your preceptor's wife — will also be plunged into sorrow at her son's death, just as I am over the death of my five sons. My sons are not going to come back to life. I, therefore, do not want to make some other mother sorrowful like myself, just for the sake of revenge. I forgive him. You too should forgive him."

Draupadi's words produced a great effect on the Pandu brothers. They set Aswatthama at liberty. Feeling ashamed, he left the place.

A COMPANION IN JOY AND SORROW

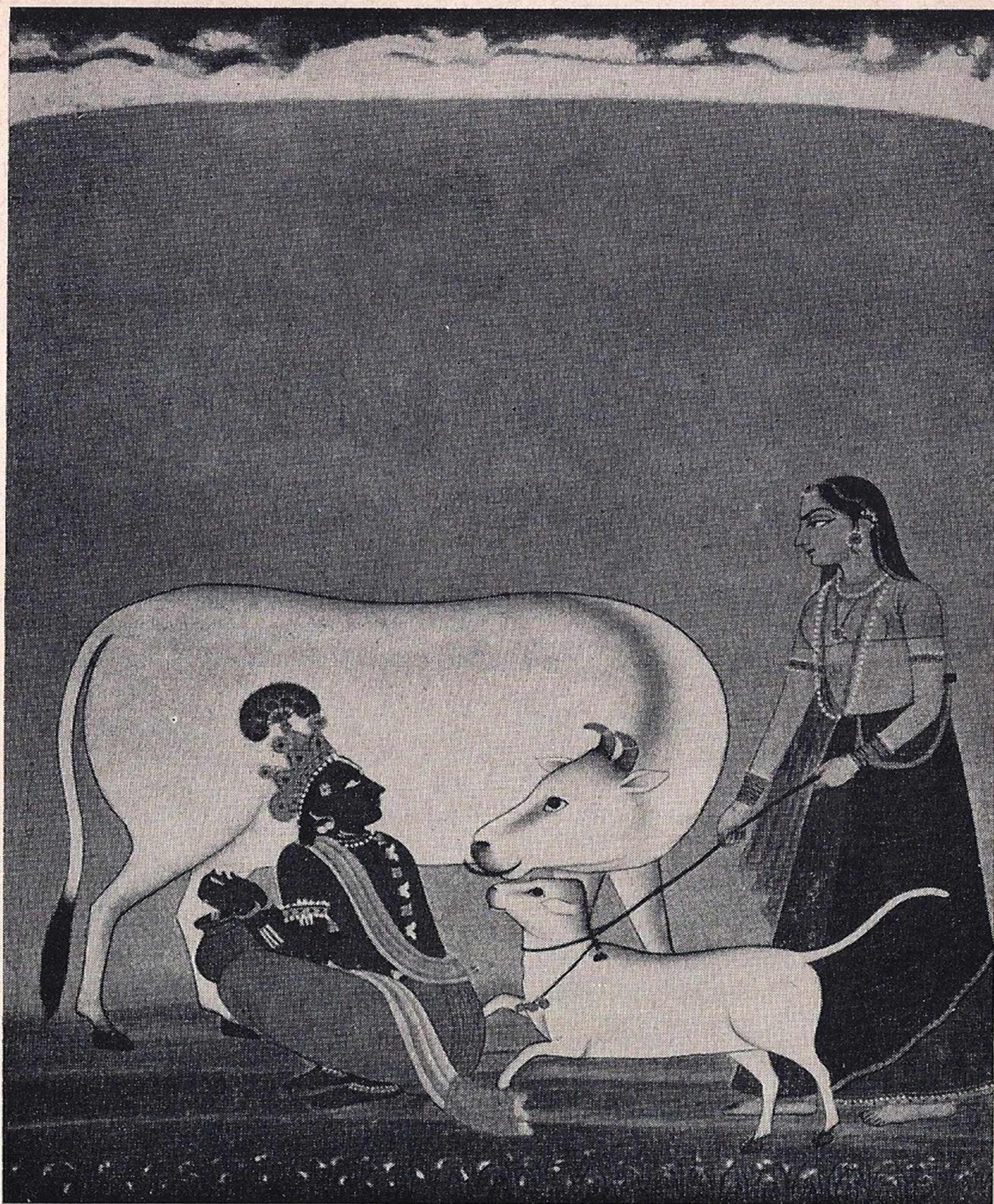
A hunter discharged his poisoned arrow at a deer. Missing its mark, the arrow pierced a big tree. The poison affected the whole tree; its leaves dropped and it began to dry up. A parrot had lived a long time in a hollow of the tree. The bird had become very attached to the tree and so it did not leave the tree. It gave up coming outside the hollow and, for want of anything to eat and drink, was itself reduced to a skeleton. The pious parrot made up its mind to die along with its companion — the tree. The parrot's generosity, fortitude, evenmindedness in pleasure and pain, and spirit of self-sacrifice produced a great change in the atmosphere. The god Indra's attention was drawn toward it, and he appeared before the bird. The parrot recognized Indra. Thereupon Indra said, "Dear parrot, this tree has neither leaves nor fruits. No bird roosts on it now. There is a vast forest near you, which contains thousands of beautiful trees laden with fruits and flowers, as also innumerable habitable hollows covered with leaves. This tree is now about to die; it can no longer bear fruits and flowers. Considering all this, why should you not move to some green tree, leaving this withered one?"

The pious parrot replied in words expressive of commiseration for the tree, "O king of gods, I was born and brought up on this tree; I also learnt some good things here, and it always looked after me as a child. It gave me sweet fruits to eat and also protected me from the attacks of my enemies. Now where should I go for my pleasure, leaving it in such a pitiable plight? Having enjoyed pleasure with it, I shall endure sufferings too with it. It is a matter of great delight to me. Being the lord of the gods, why are you giving me this wrong advice? When it was strong and prosperous, it supported

PICTURE ON OPPOSITE PAGE

Krishna, a divine avatar, and Radha, his most exalted disciple, are both historical and allegorical figures. Often the two aspects are intermingled in pictorial art. From the allegorical standpoint, Krishna symbolizes Spirit and Radha symbolizes Nature or Creation, which appears to be separate from, yet is only a manifestation of, the indivisible Spirit.

In this painting the artist selected a subject familiar and appealing to the millions of farmers in India. Krishna is shown milking a cow, which gazes at him with affection, while Radha restrains the playful calf.



— "Karmaveer"

THE LORD'S CREATURES BEHOLD HIM WITH LOVE
Eighteenth-century Basohli illustration for the *Bhagavata-Purana*
(See opposite page)

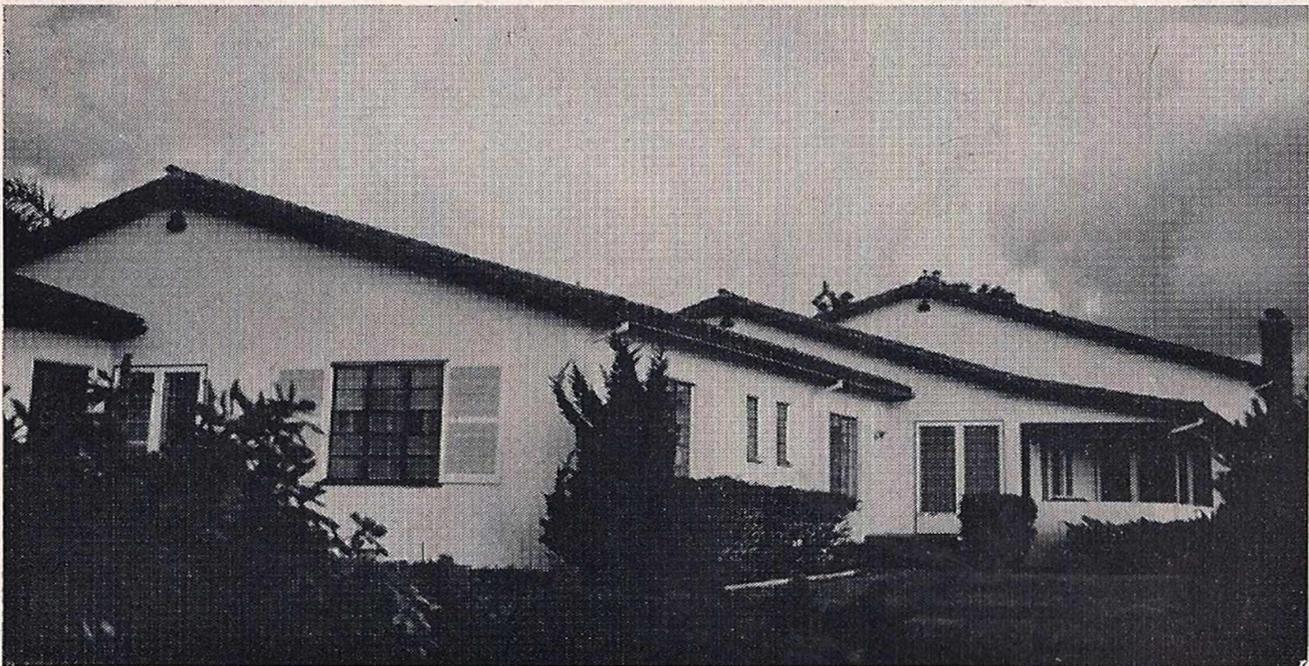
me, and now when it is powerless and ruined, how is it possible that I should go away, leaving it to its fate?"

Indra was very pleased to hear these sweet and attractive words. He was moved with pity and said, "Parrot, ask any boon of me." The parrot replied, "As you are disposed to confer a boon on me, please grant that this tree so dear to me turns as fresh and green as before." Indra watered the tree with a shower of nectar. The tree again bore new branches, leaves, and fruits. It attained its full bloom as before. The parrot ascended to heaven on the expiry of its life as a reward for this ideal behavior.

ROAD TO FREEDOM

Once there was a family so poor that all made their living by rag-picking. The father was lazy and unhappy. He complained all day long about his hard life. His wife was a cheerful woman who tried diligently to make a living for her family, and never complained about the hard life she had to live. She was a woman of kind disposition and a good wife and mother. She was sorry for her husband and wished that she might know of some way to make him happy.

One day this woman went out to collect rags and old clothing, and found an old coat someone had thrown away. In one of the



North wing of Self-Realization Fellowship Hermitage, overlooking the Pacific Ocean at Encinitas, California. Porch opens off dining room.

pockets of the coat was a bag of wonderful jewels. She tried hard to find the owner and return the jewels to him, but she never found him. So, finally, she sold the jewels for a large sum of money, and bought a beautiful house for her family. They were able to live very comfortably, but the father of the family was still discontented.

At sunrise one day, Sakradevaraja, king of the gods, looked down from his heaven and saw this good woman going cheerfully about her duties. He decided to reward her for her virtues, so he suddenly stood before her and told her she might have any wish she cared to express. At once this good woman asked Sakradevaraja to make her husband happy. A sad look came over the face of the king of the gods, and he answered: "That is one thing even the gods cannot do for another: each must make his own happiness for himself. I can give you houses, lands, cattle, and many other things, but even Lord Buddha cannot make anyone happy. Even he can only show us the way by which we can make ourselves happy."

WISDOM FOR THE YOUNG

Once during their wanderings, we are told, the Pandu brothers suffered greatly from thirst. Nakula, the youngest, was sent to look for water. He found a lake that was clear as crystal. As he bent over it, a voice said: "Stop, child. First answer my questions. Then you may drink." But Nakula, in his desperate thirst, paid no attention to the voice: he drank, and immediately fell dead. His brother Sahadeva went out to look for him. He, too, found the lake, and the same thing happened. In this manner, four of the brothers died.

Last of all came Yudhishthira. He found the corpses, and began to lament. The voice told him: "Child, first answer my questions, and then I will cure your grief and your thirst." He turned, and saw Dharma, the personification of duty and virtue, standing beside him in the form of a crane.

"What is the road to heaven?" the crane asked.

"Truthfulness."

"How does a man find happiness?"

"Through right conduct."

"What must he subdue, in order to escape grief?"

"His mind."

"When is a man loved?"

“When he is without vanity.”

“Of all the world’s wonders, which is the most wonderful?”

“That no man, though he sees others dying all around him, believes that he himself will die.”

“How does one reach true religion?”

“Not by argument, not by scriptures and doctrines; they cannot help. The path to religion is trodden by saints.”

Dharma was satisfied. He revealed himself to Yudhisthira. Then he brought the four brothers back to life.

IMITATION — PLAGUE OF CIVILIZATION

A certain man had the peculiar ability to grunt expertly like a pig, and he did this so well that whenever he grunted where pigs were feeding, they would all turn around to see if another new member had come into their fold. This man’s fame spread abroad and he began to tour to obtain money by means of this art, erecting a pandal (a shed similar to a carnival booth) wherever he went and issuing tickets for admission. His success was tremendous, such was the eagerness of the people to hear him grunt.

While he was thus making money in a village, a sage happened to pass by with his disciples. It struck the sage that he could teach a good lesson to his disciples through this incident. Accordingly, he ordered a small pandal to be erected and advertised that better grunting could be heard there free of charge. The people were naturally eager to hear it and they rushed in.

The sage brought forth a live pig and by squeezing it a little made it grunt. Really, the grunt was much better than the man’s, but the people exclaimed with annoyance. “Pooh! Is this all? We hear this every day, but what is there in it? It is nothing wonderful.” And they went away. In spite of the loud tom-tom which the sage used to attract people, no one would enter his pandal, while that of the pig-imitator was crowded to suffocation every few minutes.

After all the people had left the sage’s pandal, he addressed his disciples, saying, “Here is a splendid lesson for us. Men seldom care for reality but always go in for imitation. That is why this world exists, a mere imitation, a reflection in the distorting mirror of *Maya*, of the great Atman. No external help is needed to see the Self, but very few want it and even if you eagerly advertise it, none will come to you except those who love Truth for Truth’s sake. Reflect on this.”

Soul Whispers

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



May I not wander on labyrinthine paths of religious formalities. O Lord, set Thou my feet on the one royal highway — realization of the Self; the road that leads straight to Thee.



O Omniscient Light Within! show me the solutions to all problems of life.



Lord, the veils of matter conceal Thee from me. How long wilt Thou remain invisible behind the lovely screens of lilies and roses, the clouds of burning gold, and the silent star-decked night? Though they hide Thee, I love them because they hint at Thy presence. Yet I yearn to see Thee as Thou truly art, Thy robes of creation laid aside.



O Divine Spirit, Thou didst create my body. It is well, for Thou art present in it. Thy Being is perfect. I am made in Thine image: I am perfect.



The dove of my love, winging through clouds of bewilderments, storms of distractions, and whirlwinds of destiny, yet will infallibly discover the way to Thee.



O Eternal Fire, Thou art shooting a little soul flame of individual human consciousness through each pore in the

Great Burner of Thy Universal Mind. Thou dost appear many, limited, small, divided, in these separate soul fires; but all are projections of Thy One Infinite Flame.



Divine Mother, as Thou findest delight in fashioning atoms, flowers, and universes, so teach me the secret of being creatively and cheerfully busy.



O Spirit, I bow to Thee in front of me, behind me, on the left, and on the right. I bow to Thee above and beneath me. I bow to Thee within and without, O Lord Omnipresent!



A million distractions, disguised as Thee, constantly delude us. Come, O Perfect Joy, into the waiting temple of our devotion! Be Thou the Polestar during our wanderings in the night of ignorance, leading us safely to our haven in Thee.



O Spirit, teach us to heal the body by recharging it with Thy cosmic energy, to heal the mind by concentration and cheerfulness, and to heal the disease of soul ignorance by the divine medicine of meditation on Thee.



O Eternal Conqueror! teach me to train noble qualities within me — soldiers of calmness and self-control. Be Thou their Divine General, like Krishna of yore, in the battle against the dark foes: anger, ingratitude, untruthfulness.

May I raise over the realm of my life Thy flag of invincible righteousness.

Yoga Postures for Health

By B. TESNIERE, M.D.

SUPTAVAJRASANA — THE SUPINE DIAMOND POSE

The principle of *Suptavajrasana* (Fig. 1) is to kneel and lie supine. One kneels as in *Vajrasana* (Diamond Pose), on folded legs with the buttocks cradled in the feet (Fig. 2). The trunk is then reclined, the word "reclined" being the exact translation of the Sanskrit *supta*.

Since the greater part of the body lies supine on the floor, *Suptavajrasana* bears some analogy to *Savasana*, the Relaxation Pose. In *Suptavajrasana*, however, the lower legs are sharply folded, rather than extended, hence the name *Ardha-Savasana* ("Half-*Savasana*") sometimes given to the Supine Diamond Pose.

It is also described as the Sleeping Pose ("asleep" being another meaning of *supta*), *Paryankasana* or Couch Pose, and Great Backward-Leaning Pose; but these names are used infrequently.

The Supine Diamond Pose is not described in the classical yoga texts. Neither the *Yoga Upanishads* nor the late-medieval yoga treatises (*Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*), which describe numerous yoga poses, mention *Suptavajrasana*, although they refer to *Vajrasana*. Information on *Suptavajrasana* is to be found only in modern asana literature both inside and outside India.

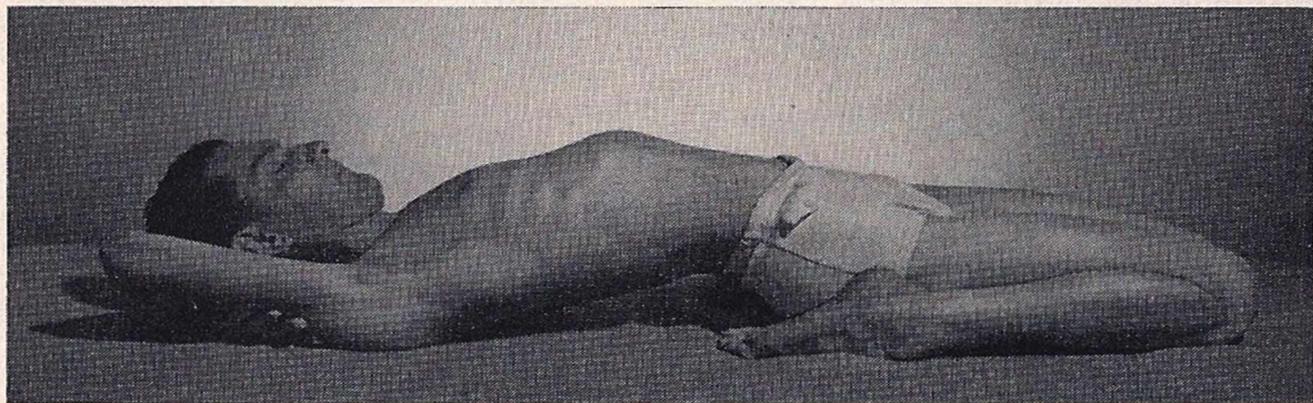


FIG. 1 — *Suptavajrasana*, the Supine Diamond Pose

This important posture is not easy to execute, but it looks more difficult than it really is. It can be practiced by men and women, old and young, and is beneficial to all. However, no one should attempt it who has not first mastered the easier Diamond Pose. Persons with weak abdominal walls or hernias should not practice *Suptavajrasana*. Some specialists recommend that hypersensitive people should practice it only for a very short time.⁶

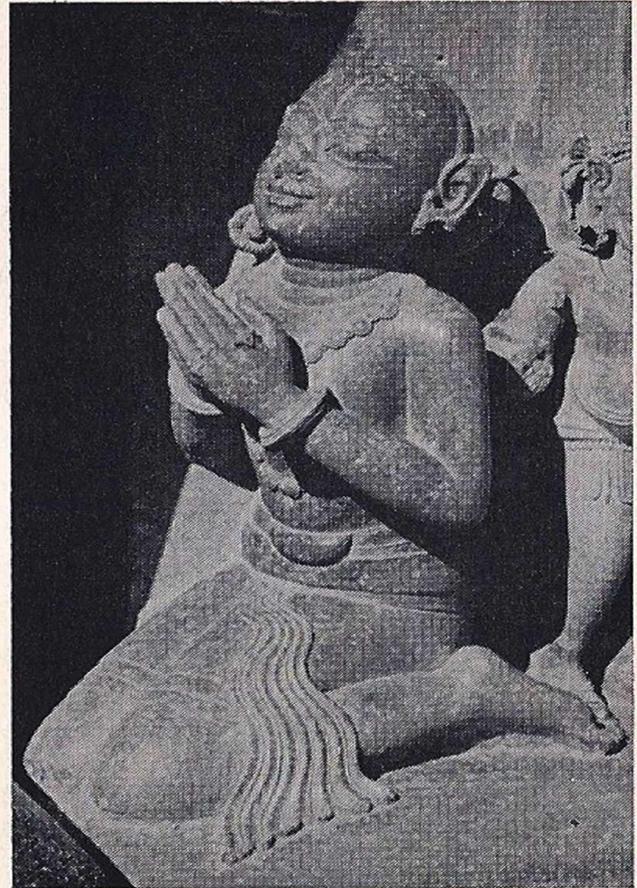


FIG. 2 — *Vajrasana*, the Diamond Pose, is shown in this figure of a kneeling *yakshi* (dryad) worshipping the Deity; Konarak Temple, Orissa, XIII century. (Photo Ella Maillart)

TECHNIQUE OF SUPTAVAJRASANA

The easiest and commonest way to assume the Supine Diamond Pose is as follows (Fig. 3):

(1) Sit in *Vajrasana*, the Diamond Pose. Lean backward, supporting the torso with the arms extended behind. This is *Ardha-Suptavajrasana*, the Half-Supine Diamond Pose.

(2) Lean farther back, supporting the trunk first on one elbow, then on both.

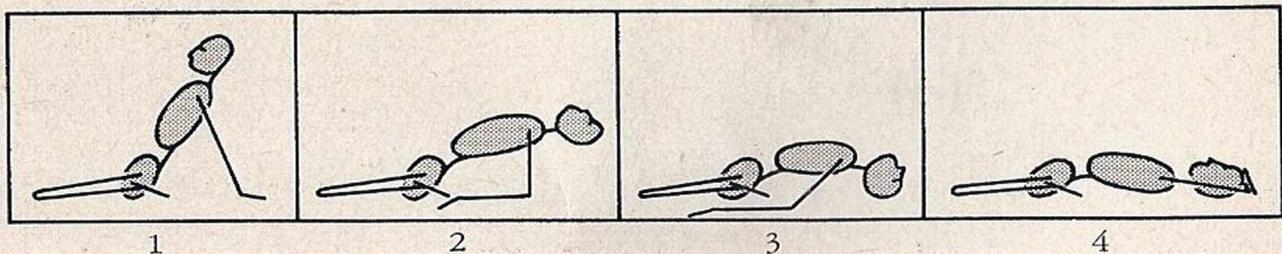


FIG. 3 — Easy way of entering *Suptavajrasana*

(3) Bend the head backward until the crown touches the floor, sliding the elbows forward to facilitate this movement.

(4) Flatten the arch of the back and neck until the whole trunk and back of the head rest on the floor. Place the arms around the head or by the sides of the trunk.

A more difficult but an artistic way to assume this posture consists in starting from a kneeling position with the body erect from the knees up and, keeping the torso as straight as possible, leaning backward until the body lies flat on the floor. Called the "knee-hinge" by professional dancers, this method requires strong thigh muscles and limber knee joints. The intermediary phase in which the trunk and head are held above and parallel to the floor is named *Natasirsha Vajrasana*, the Bent-Head Diamond Pose (*Fig. 4*).

The easiest way to rise from the Supine Diamond Pose is to bend the head backward until the crown rests on the ground; then tense the trunk muscles and raise the chest gradually, first supporting the upper torso on bent elbows, then with extended arms. A difficult but beautiful feat of strength and muscular control consists in reversing the knee-hinge to the upright position.

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS

The timing of the pose varies. In the beginning, *Suptavajrasana* should be maintained only for short periods, from fifteen seconds to

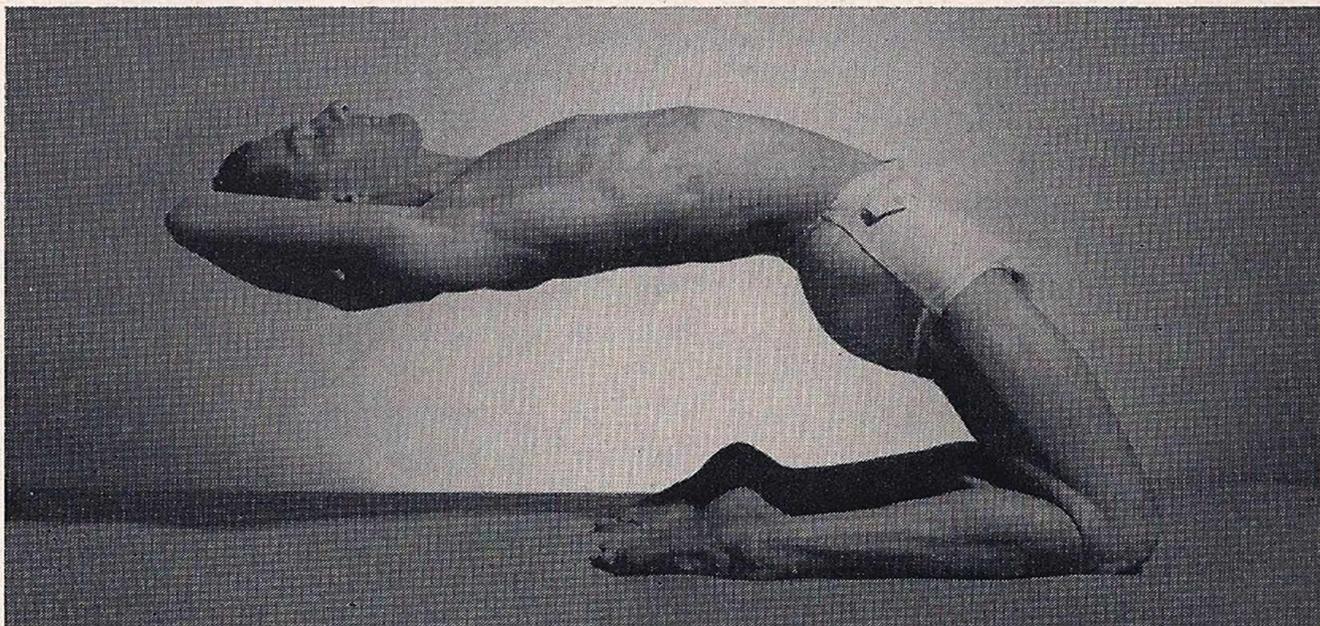


FIG. 4 — *Natasirsha Vajrasana*, the Bent-Head Diamond Pose

one minute. Later, as proficiency increases, one may hold the pose longer, from three to five minutes. When the pose is held for one minute, it may be repeated two or three times. When it is held longer, repetition is not necessary.

Breathing is normal. Some exponents recommend deep breathing, particularly in the variation wherein the arms are lifted overhead. If the tension in the throat makes it hard to breathe normally, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth may ease respiration.

One may concentrate the attention on the front thigh muscles or on the stomach region, where the stretching is pronounced. The eyes may be either closed or open.

For a perfect practice of *Suptavajrasana* the following keypoints should be observed: the knees should touch the ground and should be kept together; the whole spine should lie flat on the floor; the body should be relaxed as much as possible. The pose should be attempted gradually, smoothly, without any strain. Follow *Suptavajrasana* with *Savasana*, the Relaxation Pose, for an equal length of time.

HINTS FOR SUCCESS

Adults usually find it difficult to assume *Suptavajrasana*, which is more demanding on the ankles, knee joints, and thigh muscles than *Vajrasana*. In addition to the suggestions given for facilitating the practice of *Vajrasana*, experts propose the following measures for success in *Suptavajrasana*.

Try to perform the Supine Diamond Pose at first in the evenings, when the body is more supple because of its activities during the day; later practice the pose in the morning or evening as desired.

Prior to assuming *Suptavajrasana*, perform *Vajrasana* for several minutes to warm up the knees, using a cushion or folded blanket under the legs, if necessary, to avoid painful pressure.

Practice a few forward-bending exercises, such as *Padahastana* (Jackknife Pose) or *Paschimottanasana* (Posterior Stretch), and a few backward-bending exercises, such as *Dhanurasana* (Bow Pose) or *Chakrasana* (Circle Pose) to limber up the spine.

Lower the back gradually, resting it on a pile of books or pillows for the first few practices; the supporting books may be removed one by one over a period of days until the head finally touches the floor. Or one may hold onto a piece of furniture to check the backward leaning of the trunk before it reaches the point of strain.

It is usual at first for the back to be arched when one is lying on the floor. The more proficient one becomes in the pose, the more the back will flatten out. Beginners perform the pose more easily with the knees spread apart. The closer the knees, the more difficult is the pose. Likewise, the farther the ankles are from the buttocks, the more difficult the pose.

VARIATIONS OF THE POSE

The variations of *Suptavajrasana* may be classified under three headings: position of the arms, position of the spine, and position of the feet and legs.

Position of the arms. The arms can be placed in a number of ways: alongside the trunk, with palms flat on the ground or resting on the thighs (*Fig. 5a*); half-folded and crossed either on the chest or under the arch of the back (*Fig. 5b*); elbows pointing outward from each side of the neck, with the hands by the armpits, over the shoulders, or fingerlocked under the head (*Fig. 5c*); extended upward along each side of the head, either straight or bent at the elbows and crossed above the head or under it. The variation in which the arms extend straight sideways at shoulder level, or slightly upward, is called the Indian Breathing Cross (*Fig. 5d*).

Position of the spine. The spine may be entirely straight (*Fig. 5a*) or bent backward at either the neck region or the lumbar region or both (*Fig. 5b*). A backward-bent cervical spine constitutes a movement opposite to that found in *Sarvangasana* (Shoulderstand), hence this variation of *Suptavajrasana* is sometimes practiced complementarily after the Shoulderstand. The spine may also be bent sideways during *Suptavajrasana*, an exercise sometimes recommended for correcting lateral deviations of the spine.

Position of the feet and legs. The feet may be arranged in different positions, which are described here in the order of increasing difficulty: they can be placed at some distance away from the

(Continued on page 44)

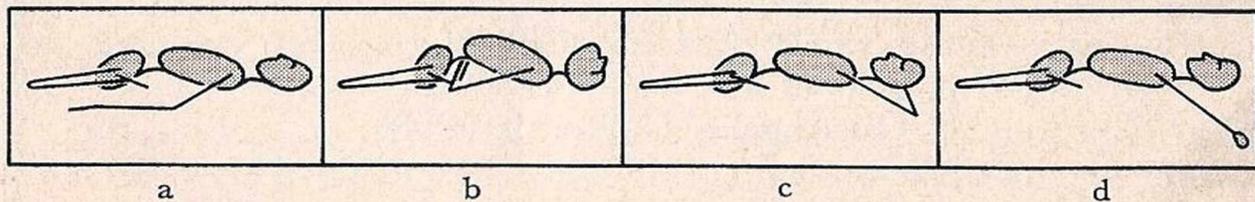


FIG. 5 — A few arm variations, including the Indian Breathing Cross (*d*)

A Spiritual Opportunity for Young Men and Women



Young SRF students of high spiritual ideals and harmonious temperament who are single and free of worldly commitments, and who would like an active, purposeful life in an SRF spiritual community, are invited to send for a free descriptive booklet, *Give Me thy Heart*. It outlines the history, aims, ideals, and rules of the monastic Self-Realization Order of Self-Realization Fellowship, and lists the requirements for entry.

The pioneering movement founded by the great master Paramahansa Yogananda offers a variety of opportunities to apply present skills and to learn new ones in the highest type of service: for God alone. Most important, life in an SRF ashram provides ample periods for meditation and offers priceless spiritual training that hastens the divine progress of those who are receptive and devoted.

Send for a copy of *Give Me thy Heart*, and feel free to write to us if you have any questions after reading it. Please address your inquiry to:

SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP

Personnel Department

3880 San Rafael Avenue

Los Angeles, California 90065

A SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE *BHAGAVAD - GITA*

(India's greatest scripture, a part of the "Mahabharata" epic)

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



Chapter XVI, Stanzas 1-2-3

The Blessed Lord said:

Fearlessness, purity of heart, perseverance in (acquiring) wisdom and in (practicing) yoga, charity, subjugation of the senses, performance of holy rites, study of the scriptures, self-discipline, straightforwardness;

Noninjury, truthfulness, freedom from wrath, renunciation, peacefulness, non-slanderousness, compassion for all creatures, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, lack of restlessness;

Radiance of character, forgiveness, patience, cleanness, freedom from hate, absence of conceit — these qualities are the wealth of a divinely inclined person.

Chapter XVI deals with the *sattwa* or good qualities that lead devotees to Self-realization, and with the *tamas* or evil tendencies that unfit men to attain divinity. Stanzas 1-2-3 list twenty-six ennobling qualities, as follows:

1) Fearlessness, *abhayam*, is mentioned first because it is the impregnable rock on which the house of spiritual life must be erected. Fearlessness means faith in God: faith in His protection, His justice, His wisdom, His mercy, His love, and His omnipresence.

Fear causes physical, mental, and spiritual disturbances. Extreme fear can stop the heart and bring sudden death. Long-continued fears give rise to psychological complexes and chronic nervousness.

Fear of death is foolish. Death comes only once, and after it has come the experience is over, without having affected our true identity or diminished in any way our real being.

Fear causes man's consciousness to be identified with mental or physical nervousness, thus keeping the soul concentrated on the ego, the body, and the objects of fear. The devotee should discard all misgivings, realizing them to be stumbling blocks that hinder his concentration on the peace of the soul.

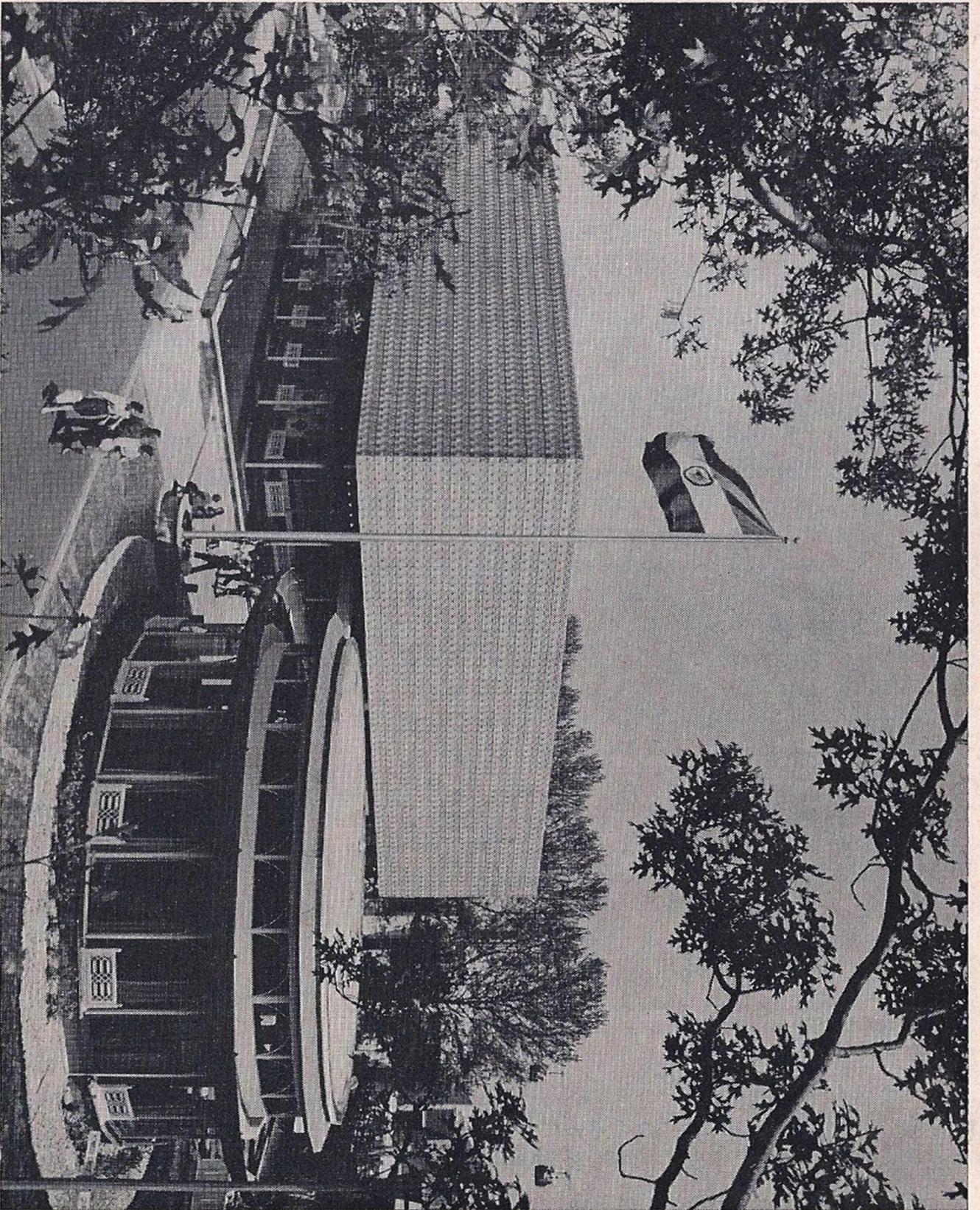
If a person meditates in a place inhabited by snakes or wild animals, his mind will be on fear and not on God. The devotee should therefore choose a site where he will not be subject to attacks. Of course, liberated men have no fear, for they see the Lord in everything, even in wild creatures. Snakes and tigers are conscious of the divine vibrations emanating from saints. However, even men of divine attainments seldom seek to disturb the privacy of dangerous animals. The wise devotee should be cautious, rather than afraid. He should cultivate a courageous spirit, without rashly exposing himself to conditions that may arouse apprehensions.

If a person falls ill he should earnestly try to rid himself of his malady. Then, even if doctors tell him there is no hope, he should remain tranquil, for by fear he shuts his eyes of faith to the unfailing Divine Presence. Instead of indulging in anxiety he should affirm: "I am ever safe in the fortress of Thy loving care." A fearless devotee, dying from an incurable disease, concentrates on the Lord and becomes ready for liberation in his next life. A man who dies in terror will attract, in his new birth, calamities similar to those that overtook him in his last incarnation. All men should realize that soul consciousness can triumph over all external disasters.

When subconscious fears repeatedly invade the mind, in spite of one's strong mental resistance, the devotee should divert his attention with thoughts of courage. Better still, he should confide himself completely into God's trustworthy hands. To be fit for Self-realization a man must be fearless.

2) Purity of heart (*sattwasamsuddhi*) means transparency to truth. One's consciousness should be free from the distortions of attachment and repulsion to sense objects. Likes and dislikes for externals taint the heart with gross vibrations. The heart or *chittwa* should not be influenced by the pairs of opposites; only thus may it enter the divine bliss of meditation. Jesus says: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (*Matt. 5:8*).

3) Steadfastness in seeking wisdom and in practicing yoga (*jnana yoga vyasvasthiti*) is essential for reaching liberation. In his daily life



India Pavilion (*left*) and Restaurant at World's Fair, Flushing, New York, 1964

the devotee should apply the guru-given or scriptural wisdom and should immerse himself in the peace born of the regular practice of yoga techniques. Wisdom guards the devotee by right reason and perception from falling into the pits of ignorance and sense pleasures.

4) Almsgiving (*dana*) or charity is meritorious. The true devotee wishes to share with others his possessions, knowledge, and soul insight.

To bestow money on poor persons who will use it to injure themselves by buying liquor instead of bread gives encouragement to sin. Similarly, pearls of wisdom should not be cast before mentally rebellious and unappreciative men. The devotee who shares his wealth, knowledge, and spiritual treasures with those who are worthy and receptive fits himself for liberation.

Control of the Senses

5) *Dama* is the power to control the senses when they are excited by the pleasant sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste, or touch. A devotee who is master of his senses is ready for emancipation. He who succumbs to the temptations of sex or greed will be entangled in sense objects and is not fit for soul knowledge. Every indulgence in any form of sense-lures reinforces the desire for that experience. Repetition leads to the formation of nearly unshakable evil habits.

6) Religious rites (*yajnas*) are enjoined by the *Vedas* and other great scriptures. A devotee, according to his state of development, may perform the symbolic physical rite of pouring clarified butter into fire, or the mental rite of burning wrong desires in the flames of wisdom, or the spiritual rite of banishing human restlessness in the fire of soul ecstasy.

7) Right study of the scriptures (*swahyaya*) leads to emancipation. A true devotee does not suffer with mental indigestion from having gorged himself on scriptural lore without understanding its meaning and without assimilating it by making it a part of his life. Theoretical study is helpful when it inspires a devotee to practice the holy teachings.

In all ages there has been ceaseless warfare between theoretical knowers of scriptures — the professional priests — and men of true spiritual insight. Those who lack inner realization but who boast of their theoretical knowledge are always jealous of and persecute the men of God who live the truth. Thus Jesus met opposition from the Pharisees, and many saints in India have been persecuted by learned pundits.

No Birth, No Death

SONG OF ADI SHANKARACHARYA (Ninth Century)

WESTERN MUSICAL NOTATION BY PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA†

$\text{♩} = 138$

No birth, no death, no caste have I. No I.

Fa - ther, moth - er, have I none.

I am He, I am He; bless - ed Spir - it, I am He.

Mind, nor in - tel - lect, nor e - go, chit - tva;*

sky, nor earth, nor met - als am I.

I am He, I am He; bless - ed Spir - it, I am He.

*Feeling or emotion: one of the elemental disturbances of the mind-stuff that prevents one-pointed concentration on the Spirit.

†Reprinted from *Cosmic Chants*, words and music of 60 Indian devotional melodies composed by Paramahansa Yogananda or adapted by him from ancient and modern Indian religious songs. Yoganandaji wrote in his *Autobiography* that he sang this song of Lord Shankara's when he took the vows of a monk of the Swami Order in 1914.



Three Shankaracharyas: the Jagadguru of Dwarka (*left*), the Jagadguru of Puri, and the Jagadguru of Joshi Math, Badrinath, in the Himalayas; at Gowardhan Math, Puri, July 2, 1964

144th Shankaracharya of Puri Installed

On July 2, 1964, the 144th Shankaracharya of Gowardhan Math in Puri, Orissa, was installed with ancient religious rites before a large gathering. The new Shankaracharya Jagadguru took the name of Sri Niranjan Deva Tirtha in accordance with the wish expressed in the Will of his predecessor, the beloved Shankaracharya Sri Bharati Krishna Tirtha. The latter, who died in 1960, visited America in 1958 under the auspices of Self-Realization Fellowship.

The sacred installation ceremonies for the new Shankaracharya of Puri were performed by the renowned head of Sharada Math, Dwarka, Sri Jagadguru Abhinava Sachidananda Tirtha. The latter, in a recent radio talk, said: "The Acharyas (Shankaracharyas or leaders of the four *maths* founded by Adi, the first, Shankaracharya) are chosen with the greatest care. Horoscopes of those disciples who show extraordinary gifts are studied very carefully. He who has the brightest *samskara* (karma) and who gives promise of attaining the highest spirituality and of becoming the worthy head of a *math* is chosen.

"Then a very strenuous course of education and training begins. The most eminent authorities in various disciplines teach him all the Vedic and spiritual lore. He goes through regular and rigorous spiritual practices to attain the poise, wisdom, and vision that are characteristics of religious leaders in India. These Acharyas are not recluses or ascetics in the ordinary sense of the word. They do not shun society. They are men of God and leaders of thought. They command unquestioned respect among the people. By dint of their extraordinary intellect, deep erudition, rigorous self-discipline, and dedicated devotion to God and to human service these Acharyas acquire a rare and sublime serenity and magnetic appeal by which they come to exercise unquestioned influence over the people. They are accepted as natural leaders of thought and spiritual resurgence."

The new Shankaracharya of Puri, who is 53, was formerly the principal of Rishikesh Brahmachari Ashram, Hardwar; a research scholar in Ayurveda Research Institute, Jamnagar; and the principal of Government Sanskrit College, Jaipur.

The picture on the opposite page was graciously sent by the secretary of the Shankaracharya of Puri for publication in *Self-Realization Magazine*.

Daya Mata's Homecoming Speech



Extracts from a talk to SRF colony residents following a banquet in Daya Mata's honor at SRF India Center, Hollywood, California, on the day of her homecoming, July 20, 1964

It is a joy to be back in your midst, after almost a year abroad — a year that kept us very, very busy in our ashrams in India. We gave numerous *Kriya* initiations, countless classes in the teachings of our divine Guru.

I wish I could tell you how much Master's *Autobiography* is doing in spreading the message of our divine Guru. It was thrilling to see so many devotees coming to the YSS ashrams. I often asked them, "How did you happen to learn about this work?" Then they would say, "Someone sent me a copy of the *Autobiography*." Or, "I found *Autobiography of a Yogi* in a bookstore."

All Men Are Seeking Inner Peace

I know beyond any doubt, and I know that each of you feels it too, that this work is gradually spreading around the world, and will eventually spread like wildfire, because the one thing that mankind is seeking is peace. In every country I have visited I have seen this. Everyone wants to know how to get inner peace.

The day I arrived in Bombay last October, I was invited to speak at the official residence of the Governor of Bombay. And during the course of my talk to these government officials I dwelt on this subject of peace. When I finished, several members of the audience asked me: "Are these teachings available?" In other words, how can we get these teachings before the people of India?

We have a fine center in Bombay, a wonderfully devoted group of people — such faithful devotees, filled with divine enthusiasm. It was inspiring to be with them.

From Bombay we went to Calcutta and visited our various ashrams in that area. I was so pleased to see how the Ranchi school is

growing, and how much has been accomplished in just the years since we left India in 1961. In all, I think that several hundred persons received initiation during our stay in Calcutta and Ranchi. And it seemed as if every time I went to our Dakshineswar or Ranchi Ashram it was necessary to give another series of classes — people kept coming, wanting to know more about the teachings. So we were extremely busy during that period.

On our way home from India we visited with devotees in Bangkok, and then I met with the devotees in Tokyo, teaching and giving initiation. I wish I could describe to you the enthusiasm of those devotees in Tokyo. It is a wonderful group we have there.

Spreading Knowledge of How to Find God

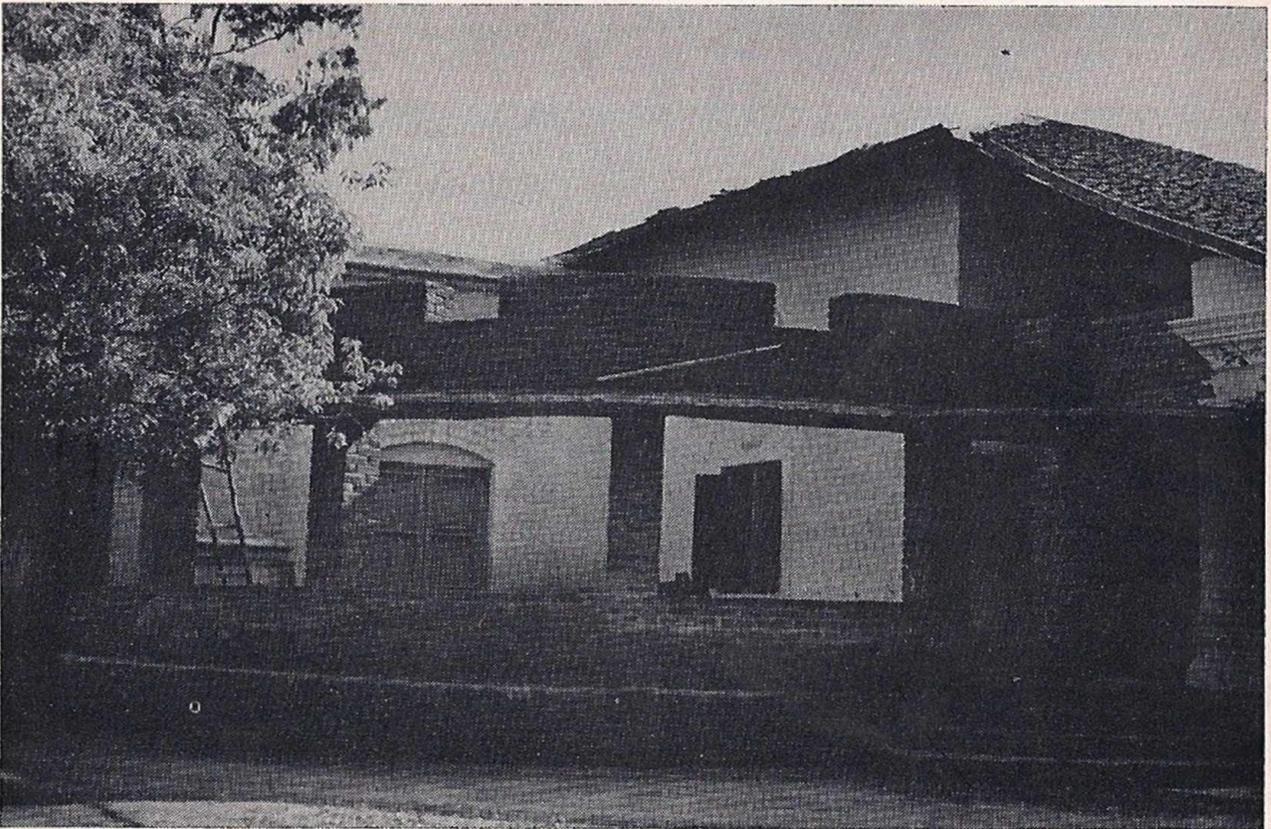
So, as I have said before, Master's work is growing, it is spreading around the world. But I often think this: We are not a proselyting group. Our primary aim is not to convert people, to draw in more and more members, but to teach people how to find God. That is what makes us different; we stress the need for God and then we show devotees how it is possible for them to taste of His divine con-



Daya Mata and Ananda Mata (*center, wearing saris*) with Tokyo SRF students and friends on grounds outside the *denpoin* (guest chamber) of Asakusa Kannon Temple, Tokyo. The group met there for spiritual discussion and meditation with Daya Mata on June 17, 1964.

sciousness by daily deep meditation and by practice of *Kriya Yoga*. This is what has impressed people all over this world whom I have met. We are, as I have said many times, the pioneers. Someday, after you and I have left these mortal shores, this tremendous message will be heard and followed by millions, as Master predicted.

But the SRF message is an individual one. It appeals to the individual. It tells him that it is not so necessary that he join another religion as that he make it a point to sit in the quiet temple within and there earnestly and deeply and with devotion to seek the Cosmic Beloved of our souls. Master used to say to us, "One moon gives more light than all the stars." So I say to each one of you, strive to be a moon in this world; a moon that reflects the great light of God. Shed your light in a greater way in this world. That shedding of light is reflected in how we behave, how we think, how we speak, how we express divine love in our actions.



Porch enclosure under construction at one end of Yogoda Math, headquarters of Yogoda Satsanga Society (SRF) in Ranchi, India

Peace -- Divine Weapon Against Worry

By PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



Whenever you are disciplining yourself you are feeling the presence of God. It is He who disciplines you through your own conscience. Whenever you have pure love in your heart, that also is the presence of God. Whenever you are really happy, remember, the Lord is smiling through you. Whenever you have good and noble motives, God's power is with you. Whenever peace comes, you are in communion with Him.

Peace is the altar of Heaven. It is not a negative state, a mere absence of mental and emotional disturbance; peace is a positive and divine weapon that destroys worries.

Peace is everywhere. You are swimming in an ocean of peace. Just as blood circulates in every tissue, so peace flows through every cell of the body. When you are conscious of this divine cohesive power by which the universe is maintained, you see beauty everywhere. Without peace your whole life becomes poisoned.

Peace is the breath of stones and stars. Nothing can live without peace. If God didn't hold fast to His peace and harmony, worlds would be thrown out of their orbits into chaos.

You have to find peace by distilling it in your heart. Meditation is the process. You may try everything else to find peace and yet you won't feel it; but meditate and immediately you become aware of divine joy. Meditation is the spring from which God's peace flows into your soul.

BOOK REVIEWS

MEDITATION: THE INWARD ART, by Bradford Smith. Cloth, 224 pp., \$3.95. Order from publisher: J. B. Lippincott Company, East Washington Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19105.

Mr. Smith humorously remarks that, being interested in meditation but unable to find a book on the subject, he wrote one himself. He was not unqualified to do so, having been predisposed to the mystical side of Christianity by a Quaker upbringing, and deeply impressed by what he learned of the advanced spiritual researches of Hinduism and Buddhism during two years spent in India. Familiar with the ideals and the rewards of "sitting in the silence," he was sensitive to the importance and scope of the inner achievements of India's great seers and saints.

The presentation of this book on the subject of meditation bespeaks the author's humanity. It is an eager sharing of the fruits of his own inner efforts and a generous offering of ways and means for others to cultivate their own personal harvest. His reflections are well worth reading, and the various methods he suggests for learning how to meditate are well worth trying. "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

However, meditation as discussed in this book might more accurately be described as reflective thought or introspection. Actually, true meditation cannot begin until the thoughts are totally stilled and the soul is in command of the mental and bodily kingdom. Such superconscious awareness is most easily attained by the average person through the use of a definite technique such as *Kriya Yoga*, the ancient science of India that Paramahansa Yogananda taught in America and other parts of the world.

Nevertheless, persons who engage regularly and deeply in silent contemplation do arrive at certain states of mental quietness, of subtle spiritual awareness that is not present when one's thoughts are wholly preoccupied in everyday affairs or when, during one's leisure hours, the mind is rambling aimless and uncontrolled. At such times of inner absorption come "intimations of immortality." With scientific meditation such as the ancient yogis of India developed, comes actual realization of immortality.

Mr. Smith's book is rich with perceptive observations about God, man, the universe, and the purpose of life, which is reason enough for reading it. Just learning something of what meditation is, and, by following the author's suggestions, how rewarding it is, will enormously benefit anyone who has never before had a clear concept of meditation, much less tried any form of it. We can keep sane and serene in this oftentimes nightmarish world by the practice of this inward art, for meditation, and only meditation, awakens us to Reality.

A selection of thoughts from the book follows:

To every man comes a time when he must face himself, but often it comes too late. The devices we have for avoiding this confrontation are many, and we are clever at finding them all. No chore seems harder than to look inward. Yet everyone who wants to live up to the standard of human possibility needs to look within. To open the door to this inner world, all we need is silence and a stout will. These together make meditation — it is as simple as that. And as difficult. To learn the art of confronting ourselves before it is too late — and to do this every day — is to discover a source of strength as wonderful as it is accessible.

No man is an island, nor is mankind a continent of itself. We are involved in all life, all geography, all energy. The charts of the seas and of the stars are as meaningful to us as the map of our own country, or the chart of our nerves and bones and veins, for sea and star are involved in our destiny, and we in theirs. There is no individual, no absolute individuality. We live by the grace of a universe that, as its name implies, is truly one.

But unless we practice, we cannot know this. Because we shirk the practice of oneness we are prisoned in self and cut off from the replenishing springs of life.

Most people have shallow thoughts because they are afraid of deeper ones. They fear to challenge the idea of God, of family, of nation, of brotherhood, of success, and of failure which various social pressures are always making them accept and conform to. It is as if all these pressures kept them pinned against a wall so that they could never look up or sidewise or down.

Meditation honestly pursued will free you from all that. Alone in the quiet fifteen minutes to half an hour which you give to yourself each day for the things that really matter, you can confront all these without fear, and with the exhilarating prospect of learning what you truly think and thinking what you truly know, deepening as you go.

In meditation you can free yourself from the trammels that bind you in your daily life. Progressively you will be able to transfer your findings

into living, until what confronts you there can be fearlessly dealt with in your time of meditation. The meditative habit will gradually work over into all activity. You will learn to evaluate as you go, to drop or severely limit activities that are meaningless, and to shape your life so that it conforms to the divinity that is within.

Then you will see that meditation is the truly active element in life, the gyroscope that keeps you in balance, an individual afloat in a universe that is either a hostile ocean or a mothering element, depending on how you adjust yourself to it. Meditation will become a habit, replacing the hasty, thoughtless decisions and passions by which most lives are governed. It will go like a shadow alongside all other activity, so that all experience comes to have meaning — a meaning which is constantly being plumbed and recorded and fed back into the stream of life to deepen it.

Meditation is a form of doing, a way of working. Its results should be seen in deeper awareness, fuller response, wiser decisions, more balanced living, clearer definition of goals and more success in reaching them. And in a feeling of knowing who you are and what you are about, as well as a sense of having expanded out of the narrow self into a world of which you are a working part. And in a mood of serenity and joy. Having learned to look at yourself as if you were someone else, you should also have learned to look at others as if they were yourself.

But beyond all this, meditation like music is an end in itself. It demands the best of those human qualities which because they are human are most like the divine. You meditate just as you play a violin or make love or write a poem or make a garden — out of a hunger for oneness, out of a desire to merge self with all, out of faith that what you feel in yourself will find a response in others, out of hope that there is indeed a bridge from the human to the divine.

When your meditation is over and you feel like setting it down, write it as you recall it, even if in telegraphic style. Don't be alarmed if it looks considerably less impressive in writing than you had supposed. This is the discouragement all writers learn to live with. Keep up the habit for months, for years, if it gives you pleasure.

Written meditations have several advantages. You will feel, for one thing, that you are accomplishing something — that your meditation time has not been wasted. Seeing your thoughts in writing will expose fallacies or weaknesses, and therefore lead to a strengthening of your meditative muscle. One meditation will nourish another, as organic compost from last year strengthens this year's garden.

Continuing practice in writing out your meditations will make your thinking grow more precise and seizable. The writing itself will improve, and this will help you in whatever field you express yourself. Better self-

Books by Paramahansa Yogananda

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI. 8th ed., 514 pp., \$4.00.

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expression will increase your confidence and sense of knowing who and what you are and what your goals are. And this will reflect back into each new meditation. You will note an improvement in wording, in precision, in the form the meditation takes. Instead of being, as at first, a rather formless ramble over a flat landscape, it will become a purposeful climb up the mountain of some mental, moral or personal problem to — or near — the summit of solution, or at least of clarification, which is a form of solution.

Most people burn themselves out worrying over crises that never materialize or avoiding problems that could be dissolved or at least improved if faced. One of the great benefits of meditation is that it teaches us to face problems, drawing upon the divine inwardness for help. Every meditation increases the inner strength.

India has experimented with meditation for thousands of years. But it is impossible to describe Hindu methods without first touching briefly on the religious principles they rest upon.

In Hindu thought, God alone is real. Brahman, the supreme reality, whose name means something like "the great one," is being, awareness, and bliss (*sat, chit, ananda*), and the ground of man's being, man's awareness, man's bliss.

"The man consists of his faith," says Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. "He is verily what his faith is." (A good starting point for a meditation.)

If God is the sole reality and man is what his faith makes him, it follows that man's greatest work is to reach God, realize God. It is not surprising therefore that the Hindus above all other religious practitioners have devoted themselves to meditation and to ways of perfecting it.

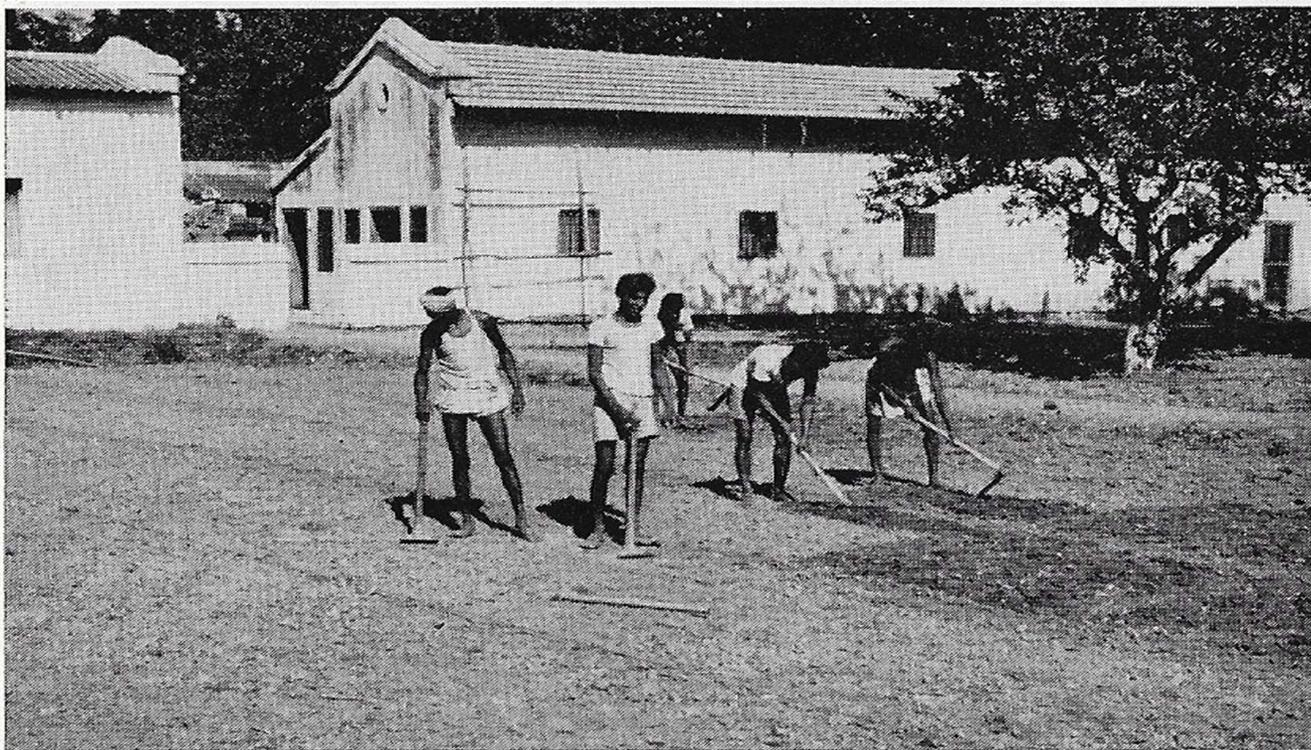
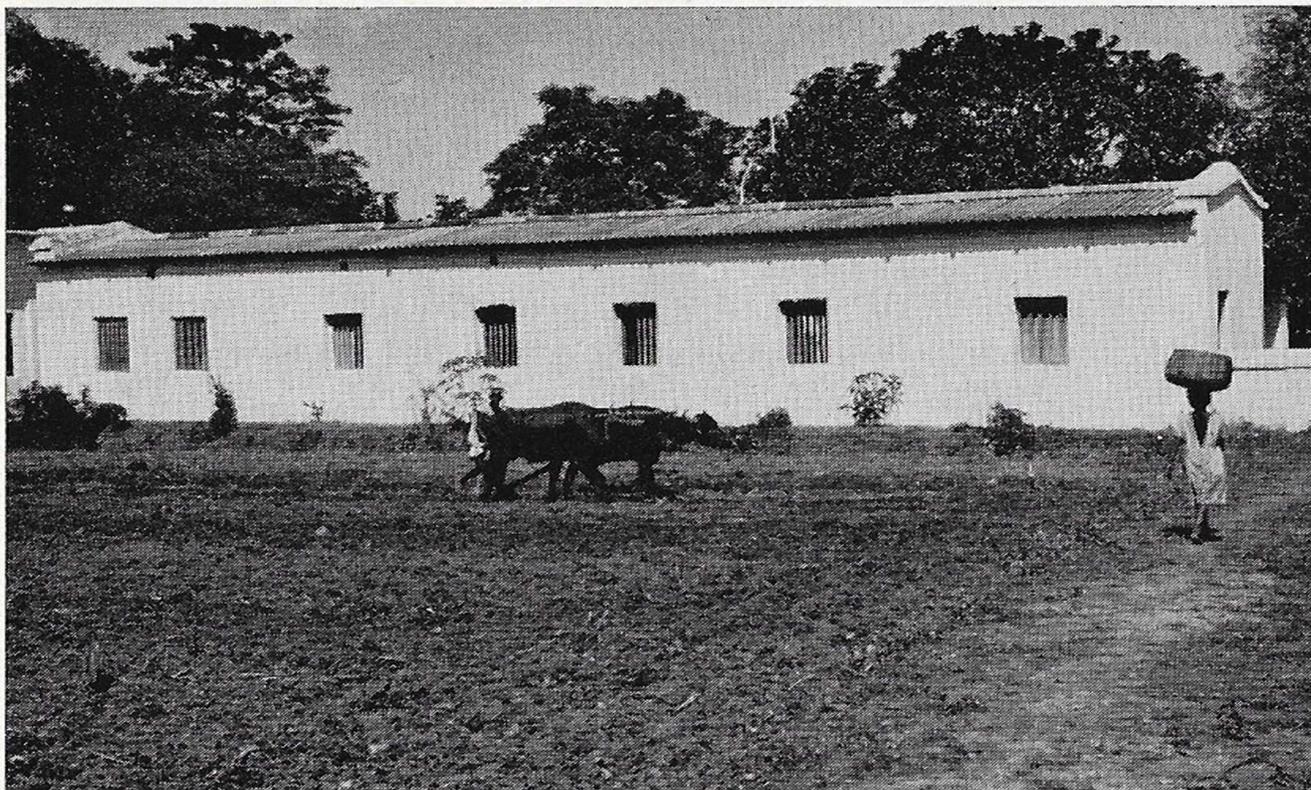
The Hindu concept of the divine is a grand one. The manifested universe forms only a minute portion of his being. For the most part he is unmanifested and immortal. But he manifests himself in many ways.

"It is one and the same Savior," said Ramakrishna, "that, having plunged into the ocean of life, rises up in one place and is known as Krishna, and diving down again rises in another place and is known as Christ."

Yet from another Hindu point of view the whole universe is one vast temptation — it is *Maya*, the divine illusion, the manifest aspect of the divine which man can see but which is the least part of the divine whole.

Hindu thought is fascinated by both unity and variety. Nowhere have men developed a stronger sense of the unity of life, yet paradoxically it is in India that religion exhibits the greatest variety. God is known by hundreds of names and through many manifestations and forms. Temples are raised to each of the many gods, and are adorned with a bewildering profusion of forms to illustrate the stories from the sacred books.

(Continued on page 55)



(ABOVE) Residential building for teachers at *Yogoda Satsanga Vidyalaya* (boys' school), founded in 1918 by Paramahansa Yogananda; Yogoda Satsanga Society headquarters, Ranchi, Bihar, India.

(BELOW) Building at right houses kitchen and dining area for students and teachers at the *Vidyalaya*. Considerable acreage is under cultivation.

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"Once again I have the privilege of offering thanks to SRF for the annual classes. It was, as always, a beautiful and unforgettable week. The three pilgrimages, the ever-new classes, the meetings with old and new friends, especially the renunciants with whom we feel so much at-one-ment, the inspiring talks, the chanting and meditations — all reminded us that 'He is nearer than breath or breathing, closer than hands or feet.' At Encinitas the word 'calm' flowed into my mind and poured through my being and all the room until it seemed that this was what I had come to find. How lovely, how timeless is that one week out of the fifty-two! How the vibrations of love poured out through our Guru's voice at the *Kriyaban* Ceremony, and how adoration burned in our hearts at the sight of his sublime face in the motion picture of the Lake Shrine Dedication." — *E.M., Beaver, Oregon.*

"I want to say 'thank you!' to everyone who contributed toward making the week of classes such a moving spiritual experience for all



Brother Anandamoy, Self-Realization Fellowship minister, lecturing on SRF teachings in Sherman House, Chicago, September 14th.

He will give lectures and classes in New York (Oct 9-23), Boston (Oct 30-Nov 9), and Philadelphia (Nov 13-23).

Brother Mokshananda of SRF headquarters will give lectures and classes in San Francisco (Oct 11-18).

of us who attended. The pilgrimages, the lectures, the meditations, the delicious food, and, best of all, the happiness of meeting so many of you — all this filled our days with joy and spiritual refreshment.” — *I.B., Santa Cruz, California.*

“I have returned home after a blessed four weeks of enjoying the activities at the Hollywood SRF Center. I had the good fortune to attend the asana classes and was greatly benefited. The Annual Classes were especially inspiring. The motion picture of our beloved Guru Paramahansa Yogananda was breathtaking, and when ‘O God Beautiful’ was chanted, the sound seemed gradually to expand from our locale into all of creation. I am still feeling the beat of the tremendous chorus and inwardly singing with it.” — *T.B., Orange City, Iowa.*

“At last I have attended a most wonderful week of SRF classes. I have waited many years to be able to do so. Every moment of it will be treasured always in my heart. The minute I entered India Center, I had a feeling of ‘coming home,’ and this feeling never leaves me. . . . My sense of completely belonging to Self-Realization Fellowship is very strong. The joy and peace that I feel are indescribable. My meditations, since I have returned to Pointe Claire, have been as they had never been before. I will never, if I can help it, miss going back to Los Angeles each summer to be with you again. My thanks go to Master continually for this blessing, and to the monks and sisters who are so privileged to do his work.” — *J.C., Point Claire, Canada.*

(Continued from page 23)

buttocks rather than next to them (*Fig. 6a*); instead of pointing straight backward, they can be turned outward so that the inner edges rest sidewise on the floor (*Figs. 6b and 7*); finally, the feet may be pointed backward except for the toes, which are sharply bent forward — a variation called the Bamboo Pose (*Fig. 6c*). These three variations (especially *6a* and *6b*) should be entered only from *Vajrasana* — never through a *knee-hinge* — for reasons given below.

A posture akin to *Suptavajrasana* proper is assumed by lying prone and jackknifing the legs, pressing the heels down with the hands until the insteps touch the floor (*Fig. 6d*). This type of variation, the most difficult of all, is really an inverted *Suptavajrasana* and may therefore be called *Adhomukha-Vajrasana*, the Prone Diamond Pose.

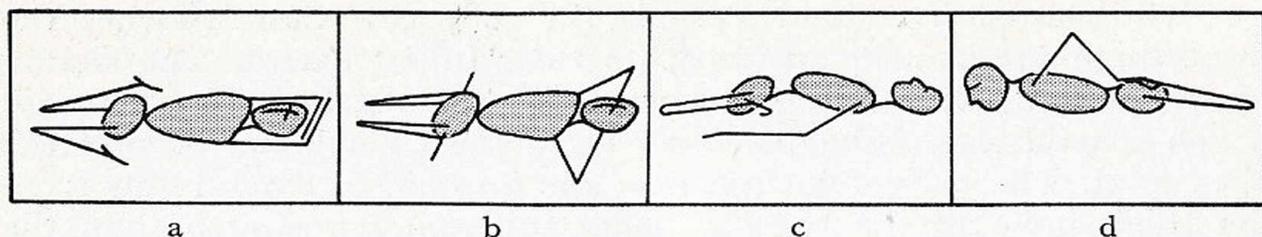


FIG. 6 — Various positions of legs and feet, one of which (c) is called the Bamboo Pose. The prone variation (d) is simply an inverted *Suptavajrasana*. It is called *Adhomukha-Vajrasana*, the Prone Diamond Pose.

BENEFITS QUADRICEPS MUSCLES AND KNEE JOINTS

The benefits of the Supine Diamond Pose on the joints, muscles, and the blood circulation in the legs are similar to those observed in the Diamond Pose, but more pronounced. The ankle and knee joints are exercised to the limit of their range of movement. The instep of the foot is made to form a straight line with the shank (an esthetic feature appreciated in beauty contests and show business). The pressure on the knees is greater, but perfectly safe, provided that the lower legs are in line with the upper legs and that one starts from the Diamond Pose when assuming the Supine Diamond Pose.

When *Suptavajrasana* is entered directly through a knee-hinge, as in drawing of two Chinese jugglers in Figure 8, two movements take place at the same time in the knee joints: flexion and torsion. We have seen in a previous article⁵ that such a combination of movements, if applied with sudden force, is likely to injure the cartilage formations inside the joint (the meniscus). The method of the Chinese jugglers, therefore, should be avoided; or if one wishes to assume *Suptavajrasana* from a knee-hinge, one should do so with the shanks strictly in line with the thighs.

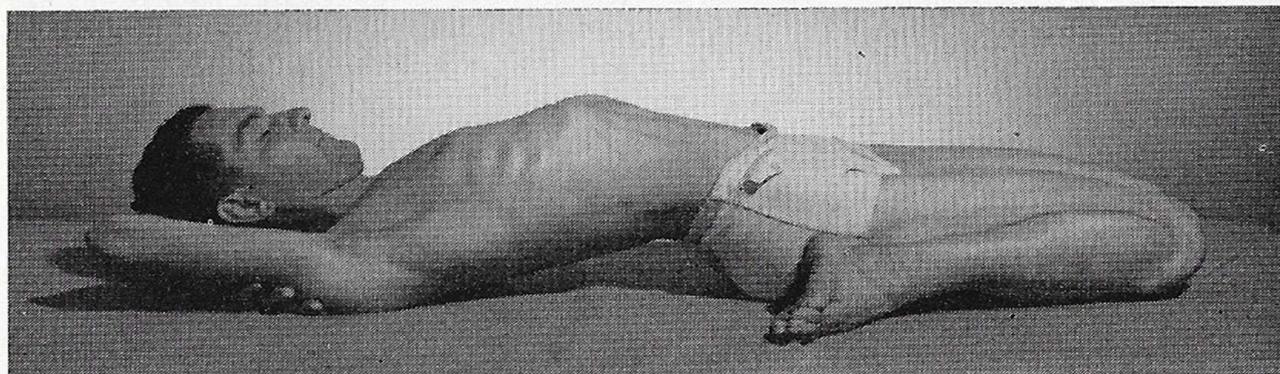


FIG. 7 — A difficult variation of *Suptavajrasana*, with feet turned outward

The Supine Diamond Pose is the only one that stretches the front thigh muscles (quadriceps) to their fullest extent. The stretch affects particularly the longest part of the muscle, the *rectus femoris*, which extends from the pelvic bone to the tibia bone, beyond the knee joint. The three other parts of the quadriceps extend only from the thigh bone to the patella, hence undergo less stretch than the *rectus femoris*.

In the beginning of one's training in *Suptavajrasana*, when the stretch is partial, the *rectus femoris* exerts a forward pull on the pelvic bones, which results in the forward tilting of the pelvis and the accompanying arching of the back. As proficiency is gained, the *rectus femoris* can be stretched more and more, gradually reducing the pull on the pelvis and thus lowering the back flatter and flatter on the floor.

This physiological action of the quadriceps muscle explains why *Chakrasana* (Circle Pose), which also stretches this muscle, is an excellent warming-up exercise before *Suptavajrasana*. It also explains why concentrating on the front thigh muscles while holding the pose, and trying consciously to relax them, enables one to master this asana much faster.

In the knee-hinge, both of the front thigh muscles are tightened while one is getting in and out of *Suptavajrasana*, and stretched while one is resting in the Supine Diamond Pose. This variation thus

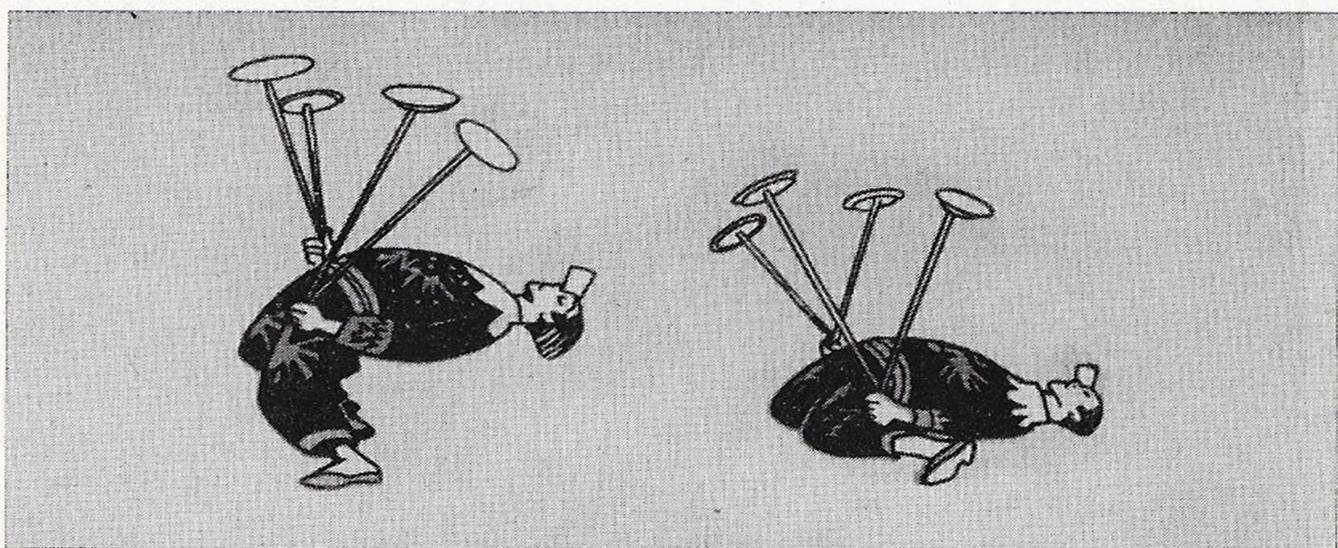


FIG. 8 — Elaborate way to assume *Suptavajrasana*, performed by two Chinese jugglers. (Drawing by Alessandro Cervellati, used by permission)

gives a balanced development to the quadriceps. Since these are key muscles for the proper functioning of the knee joints, the knee-hinge is a very good practice to strengthen the knees. However, it should be performed within the limits outlined above and not be attempted by people suffering from meniscus troubles or luxation of the patella.

The muscular stretching is not confined to the quadriceps. It concerns also the front muscles of the trunk. The *recti* are elongated in the pose so long as the back is arched, but their stretch is by far less intense than in *Chakrasana*, the Circle Pose. In this respect, conversely to what we have seen above, *Suptavajrasana* may be performed with advantage as a warming-up pose before *Chakrasana*. Because of the stretch of the *recti* as well as of the oblique muscles, the practice of the Supine Diamond Pose is not recommended during pregnancy and for a few months after childbirth until the abdominal musculature has regained its tone.

The Supine Diamond Pose also stretches the intercostal and (especially in the variation with arms raised overhead) pectoral muscles of the chest, and (in the variation with head bent backward) the muscles of the throat.

BENEFITS THE ORGANS OF THE TRUNK

The pull on the front muscles of the trunk represents only one aspect of the second main feature of *Suptavajrasana*: the "opening" of the abdominal and thoracic regions, and of the lumbar and lower dorsal spine. Instead of being cramped and oppressed, as seen in the all-too-common slouching position, these regions are made to expand and to "breathe" freely.

The German physician Johannes Ludwig Schmitt gives special emphasis to the value of the Supine Diamond Pose as a remarkable respiratory exercise, because it favors the breathing movements of the anterior portion of the diaphragm and of the lungs and thus constitutes an ideal preparation for deep breathing practices.³ Like *Chakrasana* (Circle Pose) and to a lesser extent *Dhanurasana* (Bow Pose), *Suptavajrasana* contributes to the development of the bust, chest, and lungs.

But all the organs of the trunk, from the genito-urinary organs in the pelvis to the thyroid and parathyroid glands in the neck region, benefit from the Supine Diamond Pose. Yogis emphasize in particular the healthful value of the pose on abdominal organs, stomach, intes-

tines, and so on, stating, for example, that it is a very good remedy for constipation.¹

This "unfolding" of the trunk between pelvis and clavicle is realized, of course, at the expense of the back, particularly the lower back, which undergoes a definite stress. However, the pressure on the back renders the spine more elastic and is credited with being a good corrective measure for hunchbacks.^{2,4} The action on the lumbar spine is less pronounced than in *Chakrasana*, and this is another instance in which *Suptavajrasana* may be practiced advantageously as a preparatory exercise before the Circle Pose.

BENEFITS BLOOD CIRCULATION

A third characteristic of the Supine Diamond Pose is its action on the blood circulation. The sharp bending of the legs at the knee joints considerably cuts down the supply of fresh arterial blood to the lower part of the legs, even more so than in the Diamond Pose. The extra blood is thought to be redirected to the various organs and glands of the trunk and head, and on a more even scale than in *Vajrasana*, because trunk and head are lying horizontally instead of being held upright.

Since blood is life, all the organs from the womb in the pelvis to the eyes in the head are said to benefit from the practice of the pose. Certain types of headaches reportedly subside with the performance of the Supine Diamond Pose.

Similar circulatory effects are obtained in *Matsyasana* (Fish Pose), which in many points resembles the Supine Diamond Pose, the only difference being that in the Fish Pose the legs are crossed in Lotus Pose fashion instead of lying folded side by side in the Diamond Pose manner. *Matsyasana* is known by yogis to be helpful in respiratory diseases such as asthma. Although it is not mentioned specifically in yoga literature, there is no reason why *Suptavajrasana* should not produce the same benefit, since both poses tend to expand the lungs and bring them more blood.

Perhaps because of these circulatory effects on the organs and on the glands of the trunk and head, *Suptavajrasana* acts as a booster, driving away laziness and replenishing one with enthusiasm, will power, and energy. Although the pose is difficult for many adults to perform, the efforts spent at mastering it are rewarding. Try *Suptavajrasana* and judge for yourself.

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Dhanurasana (Bow Pose), March 1956
Padahasthasana (Jackknife Pose), March and May 1962
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desires, all sweet odors and tastes proceed; he who embraces all this, who never speaks, and is never surprised.

“He is my self within the heart, smaller than a corn of rice, smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a canary seed or the kernel of a canary seed. He also is my self within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds.

“He from whom all works, all desires, all sweet odors and tastes proceed, who embraces all this, who never speaks and who is never surprised, he, my self within the heart, is that Brahman.”

Atman, the individual soul, and Brahman, the world soul, are one. This is the central assertion to which Hindu thought keeps returning. “Thou art that.”

Western thought, with its compulsion to analyze and separate, has seen God as immanent and transcendent, but has not generally been at ease about bringing the two attributes together, except of course through the incarnation of the divine spirit in Jesus as the Son of God. Hinduism, with a grand surmise and an intuitive certainty, sees immanence and transcendence as complementary attributes of the divine.

And how is this presence made known?

There is but one instrument — the mind of man. And for thousands of years Hindu thinkers and holy men have labored to perfect the instrument so that it may respond, like a seismograph, to the gentlest tremors. Only through the mind of man can the divine be known. Meditation is therefore the main activity of the religious individual.

The world with all its temptations, since it is *Maya*, or illusion (yet paradoxically also a manifestation of the divine), raises a wall between self and spirit that must come down. The world of matter must be surmounted to get at the pure spirit which is the true nature of reality. Hindu sages therefore place a good deal of emphasis upon self-control. The earnest seeker will control all his appetites — not only for food and sex, but for comfort and all sorts of pleasures that delude the senses and draw the self away from its principal business — the realization of that breath of life which is spirit.



“When the Concealed (God) wanted to reveal Himself, He first made a point, shaped it into a sacred form, and covered it with the rich and splendid garment that is the world.” — *Zohar*.

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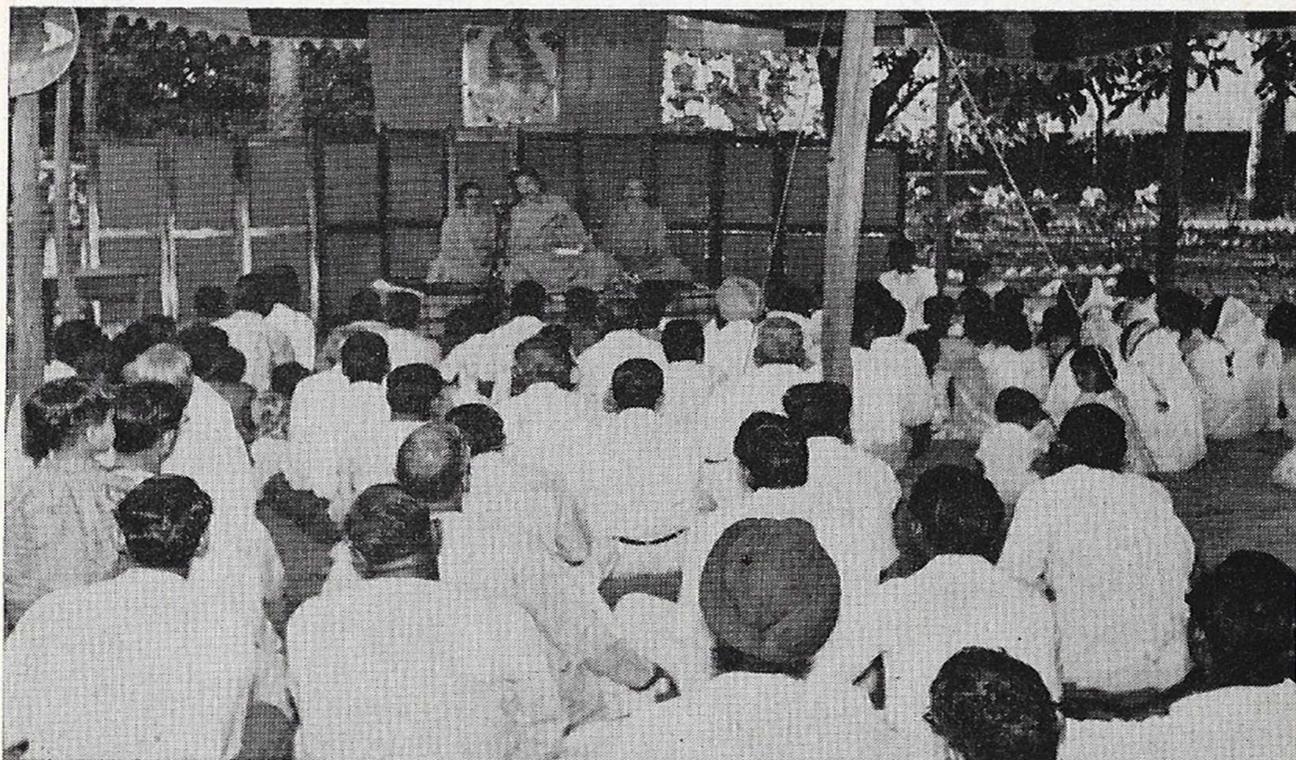
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Daya Mata (*center, on dais*) addressing YSS devotees at Yogoda Math, Ranchi, India, during a ceremony on March 8, 1964, commemorating the *mahasamadhi* of Sri Yukteswar, Guru of Paramahansa Yogananda

SELF-REALIZATION MAGAZINE

Index to Volume 35

Oct-Dec 1963 — Jul-Sept 1964

AUTHORS

- Betai, R. S.; The Ideas of Manu, Ancient Lawgiver, Oct 1963, 19
Cameron, Clare; The Tree of Life, Oct 1963, 6
Gandhi, Mahatma; Thoughts of, Apr 1964, 6
Jagadguru Bharati Krishna Tirtha; The Three Yoga Paths, Apr 1964, 20
Lal, Chaman; Spiritual Stories from India, Jul 1964, 9
Rajeswarananda, Swami; Wisdom from the World's Scriptures, Jan 1964, 8
Tesnière, Bernard, M.D.; History of the Yoga Postures, Oct 1963, 7
Yoga Postures for Health:
 Mayurasana (Peacock Pose), Jan 1964, 21
 Vajrasana (Diamond Pose), Apr 1964, 11
 Suptavajrasana (Supine Diamond Pose), Jul 1964, 19
Theresa of Avila, St.; Union With God, Jul 1964, 8
Vela, Maria; Thoughts of a Spanish Nun, Jan 1964, 15
Yogananda, Paramahansa:
 Commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita, Chap XV: 8-11, Oct 1963, 13; 12-14, Jan 1964, 3; 15-20, Apr 1964, 29; Chap XVI: 1-4, Jul 1964, 25
 OM — Sanskrit Word-Symbol for God, Jan 1964, 19
 Peace — Divine Weapon Against Worry, Jul 1964, 35
 Prayer for a United World, Apr 1964, 17
 Soul Whispers, all issues
 The Divine Art of Making Friends, Jul 1964, 3
 The Perfect Christ Consciousness, Oct 1963, 29
 Wisdom of Paramahansa Yogananda, Oct 1963, 3; April 1964, 3

ARTICLES

- Bhagavad-Gita, Commentary on; Paramahansa Yogananda, Chap XV: 8-11, Oct 1963, 13; 12-14, Jan 1964, 3; 15-20, Apr 1964, 29; Chap XVI: 1-4, Jul 1964, 25
Divine Art of Making Friends, The; Paramahansa Yogananda. Jul 1964, 3

- History of the Yoga Postures, Bernard Tesnière, M.D., Oct 1963, 7
 Ideas of Manu, Ancient Lawgiver, The; R. S. Betai, Oct 1963, 19
 OM — Sanskrit Word-Symbol for God, Jan 1964, 19
 Peace — Divine Weapon Against Worry; Paramahansa Yogananda.
 Jul 1964, 35
 Perfect Christ Consciousness, The; Paramahansa Yogananda. Oct
 1963, 29
 Spiritual Stories from India; Chaman Lal. Jul 1964, 9
 Thoughts of a Spanish Nun; Maria Vela, Jan 1964, 15
 Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi; Apr 1964, 6
 Three Yoga Paths, The; Sri Jagadguru Bharati Krishna Tirtha, Apr
 1964, 20
 Union With God; St. Theresa of Avila. Jul 1964, 8
 Wisdom of Paramahansa Yogananda; Oct 1963, 3; Apr 1964, 3
 Wisdom from the World's Scriptures; Swami Rajeswarananda, Jan
 1964, 8
 Yoga Postures for Health; Bernard Tesnière, M.D.
Mayurasana (Peacock Pose), Jan 1964, 21
Vajrasana (Diamond Pose), Apr 1964, 11
Suptavajrasana (Supine Diamond Pose), Jul 1964, 19

MISCELLANEOUS

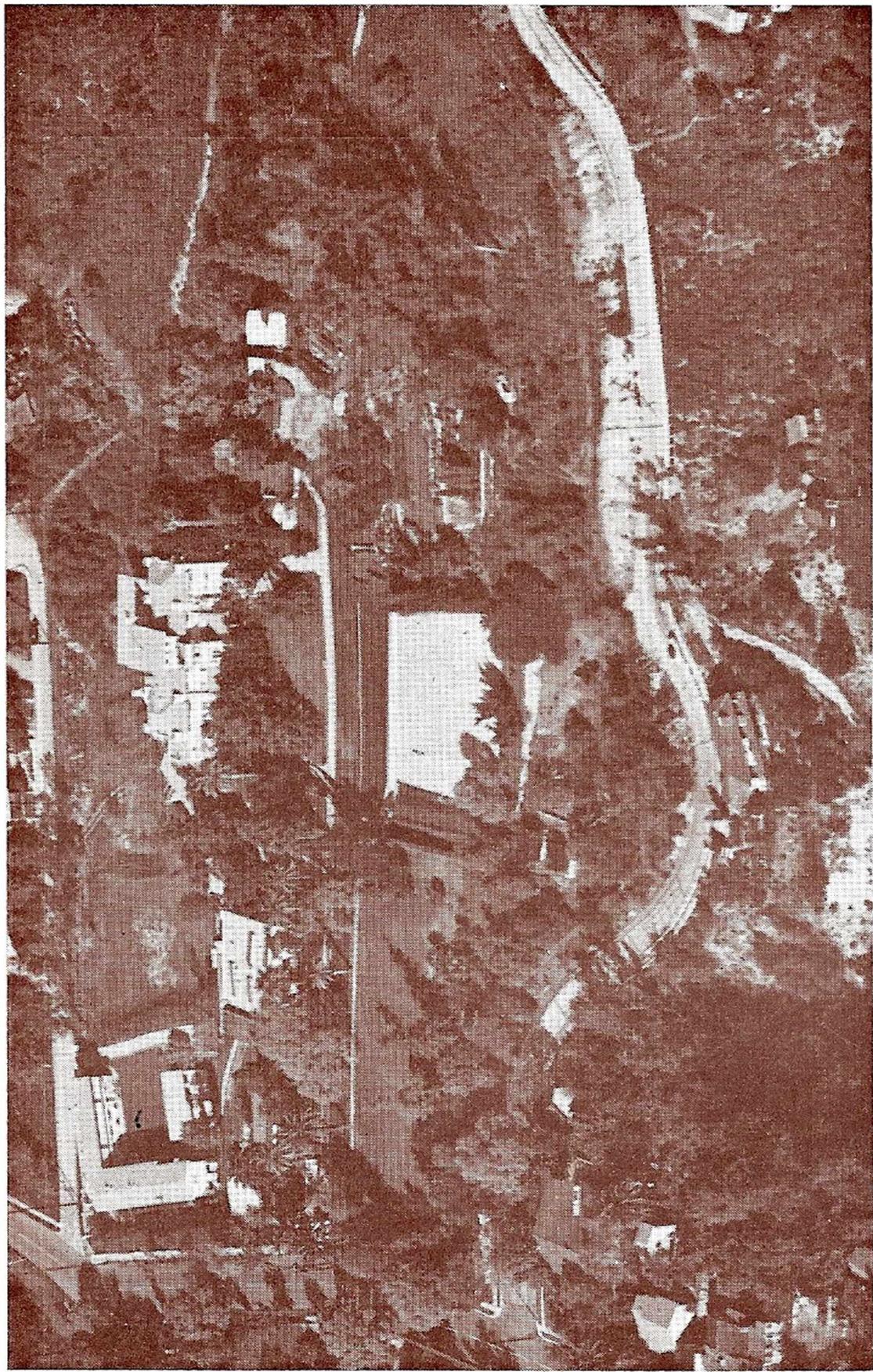
- Daya Mata in India; Oct 1963, 31
 Daya Mata's Homecoming Speech; Jul 1964, 32
 Nehru, Pandit: In Memoriam; Apr 1964, 7
 No Birth, No Death — Adi Shankaracharya's Song; adapted by
 Paramahansa Yogananda, Jul 1964, 29
 Prayer for a United World; Paramahansa Yogananda, Apr 1964, 17
 Shankaracharya, Adi, Pilgrimage to Honor; Jan 1964, 17
 Shankaracharyas of Dwarka and Sringeri, Historic Meeting of; Apr
 1964, 18
 Shankaracharya of Gowardhan Math, Puri, Installation of New;
 Jan 1964, 25; Jul 1964, 31
 Soul Whispers; Paramahansa Yogananda, all issues
 Tree of Life, The (*poem*); Clare Cameron, Oct 1963, 6

BOOK REVIEWS

- Filliozat, Jean, *India: The Country and Its Traditions*, Oct 1963, 25
 Smith, Bradford, *Meditation: The Inward Art*, Jul 1964, 36
 Villaseñor, David B., *Tapestries in Sand*, Jan 1964, 26



Daya Mata (*right*), president of Self-Realization Fellowship, and Mrinalini Mata meditating before the marble image of Adi ("the first") Shankaracharya, in Gowardhan Math, Puri. This monastery was founded by the great teacher in the ninth century. Daya Mata visited the Math in 1961 at the invitation of the late Sri Jagadguru Bharati Krishna Tirtha, Shankaracharya of Gowardhan Math.



Aerial view of 60-room Self-Realization Fellowship headquarters (*upper center*) and surrounding grounds and buildings. At upper left is L-shaped Rajasi Janakananda Ashram for monks, with smaller refectory building adjacent at right angle. Between monks' ashram and main building is the SRF publications building (*large square roof*) on main driveway. At left of it, more or less obscured by trees, are three small residential and office buildings. Another office building and a cottage are seen in front of trees at right of main building. Large white square (*center*) is games court. Next to it on right are the Temple of Leaves and a garden area with meditation nooks. Mount Washington Drive serpentines across foreground, intersecting at far left with San Rafael Avenue.