

# Self-Realization

## MAGAZINE



Founded in 1925 by PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA



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PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA

Photograph taken in Denver, Colorado, August 23, 1931



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# Interesting Facts About Reincarnation

By PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA



*(Extracts from a lecture given on February 20, 1944,  
at SRF Church of All Religions, Hollywood, California)*



Reincarnation means that a soul must go through many lives on the earth plane, as through so many grades in a school, before it "graduates" to the immortal perfection of God. Souls that are living in an imperfect state (i.e., unaware of their divine identity with Spirit) do not, upon the death of the physical body, automatically enter a state of God-realization. We are made in the image of God, but by identification with the physical body, we have put on its imperfections and limitations. Until this imperfect human consciousness of mortality is removed, we cannot become gods again.

A prince ran away from his palatial home to live in a slum. As a result of intoxication and of mixing with bad characters, he lost sight of his true identity. Not until his father found him and took him home to the palace did he remember that he was actually a prince.

Similarly, we are all children of the King of the Universe that have run away from our spiritual home. We have kept ourselves locked up in human bodies for so long that we have forgotten our divine heritage. As often as we have come on earth we have developed new imperfections and new desires. So we come back here again and again until we finish with desires; or until, through increase of wisdom, we banish those desires. We must satisfy our desires, or, by cultivating wisdom, do away with them altogether. Very few persons get off the wheel of birth and death by trying to satisfy their desires, however; it is the nature of desire that each time one "satisfies" it, the craving to repeat the experience simply increases its hold, unless one's mind is very strong.

In regard to small or unimportant desires, it is better to satisfy them, because in that way we can get rid of them. But it is necessary to use wisdom and discrimination; otherwise even small desires may come back in a stronger way, reinforced by experience. People that feel a desire to drink, for example, often "reason" thus: "I will have all I want today, and tomorrow I will do without." After several repetitions of this experience, the usual result is that they find they have instilled a habit, and then it is difficult to get rid of it. The same thing may happen with any other strong desire.

God is not a dictator that has sent us here and is telling us what to do. He has given us free will to do as we please. We hear a great deal about the importance of being good. But if we all go straight to heaven when we die (as some claim), what is the point in trying to do good



while we are here? If there is the same reward for everyone at the end of life, why not be a greedy, selfish person, since the path of evil is often the easiest one to take? There would be no use in emulating the lives of great saints if when we die we all — the good and the bad alike — become angels.

On the other hand, if God has it in His plan for us all to go to Hades, again there would be no use in worrying about how we behave in this life. And would there be any value in watching one's actions if our lives are like automobiles — once they become old they are cast on the junk pile and that is the end of them? If that is all there is to man's life there is no point in reading the scriptures or in exercising self-control.

### The Importance of Time

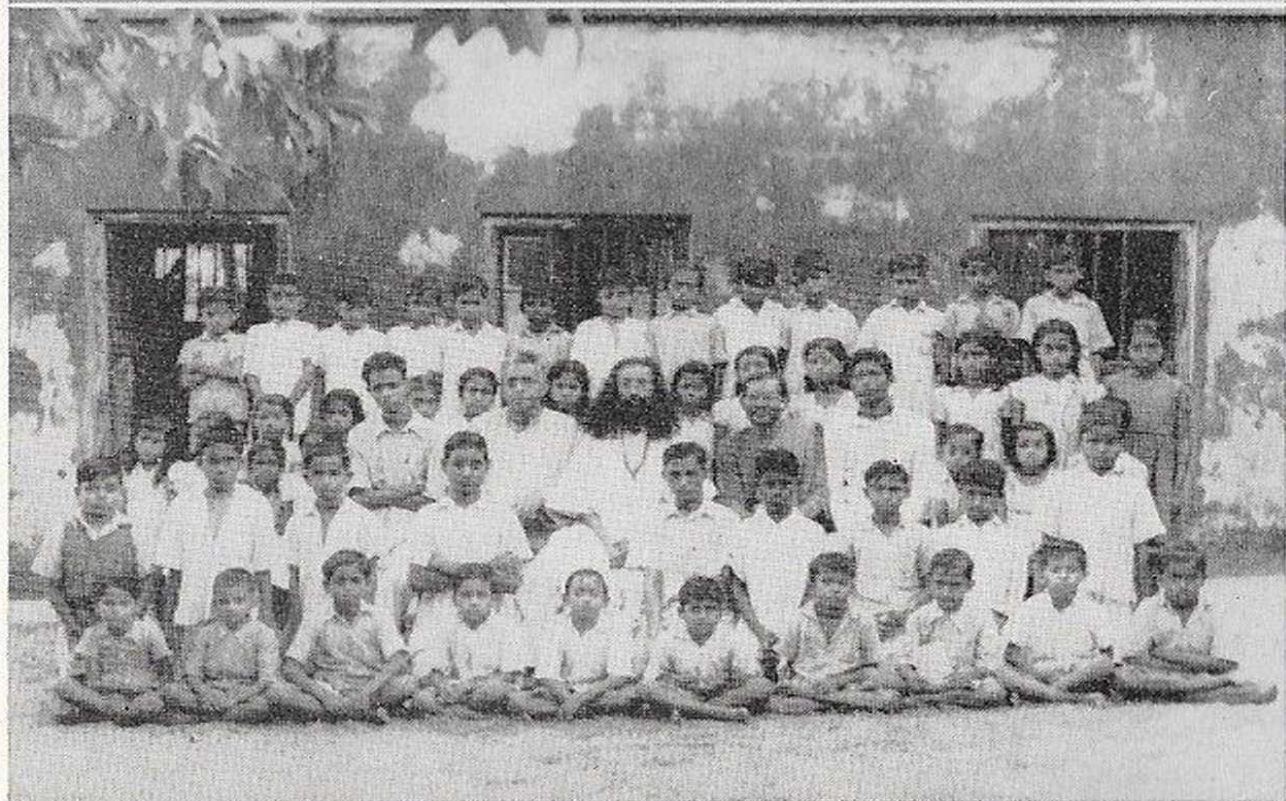
If, however, there is a lofty purpose in living, how may we explain the seeming injustice in a baby's being born dead? What about those that are born blind or dumb or crippled; or that live only a few years and then die? Only the one that lives long has time to struggle against wrong tendencies and desires brought from the past, and to try to be good. If there is no other chance (in a future life) for the little child that dies at six months, why did God give that child a mind and no time in which to develop the potentialities of that mind? The time element is most important in our progress. One life-span only may not afford sufficient time.

If a child dies early in life, there is a reason for that death; and, because he does not have time in which to express himself, it is necessary that he be given some other time in which to do so. Such a person is like a boy that is sick and cannot go to school. The boy does not leave school forever; as soon as he is well he goes back to school to start his lessons where he left off. So it is with life. If we don't have a chance to learn our lessons in this life, we shall have opportunities to learn them in some other.

When you can see "behind the scenes" you will realize that life on earth is a puppet show. It seems real to us now, but what we are experiencing at this moment will have a dreamlike unreality to us a few years hence. And what we are experiencing now would have seemed unreal to us five years ago, had it been described to us then. Last Sunday most of you sat in other seats in the church, and had other thoughts in your mind. Today we are seeing a different "picture show." Reflect on how many people you have known that are now vanished from this earthly stage.

The conception of life as a changing, passing show is not pessimistic; it should teach us not to take life seriously at all. *Maya* (cosmic delusion) makes us feel that the body is so real, such a necessary part of our being. Yet in a moment the body may be taken away from the soul by death, and the separation is not painful at all. When that "operation" is over you have no need of time, dress, food, or shelter, for you no longer have





YOGODA SAT-SANGA DAY-SCHOOL CHILDREN, PURI, INDIA  
*(Above)* Children in formation spell out school initials, "YSS."  
*(Below)* A group of students with Brahmachari Rabinarayan (*center*), who is in charge of the YSS Ashram and Sri Yukteswar Vidyapith (high school). Seated at his right is Dr. N. N. Das, noted scientist and a YSS director. The ashram was founded by Sri Yukteswar.



to carry this bodily bundle of flesh. You are free of it. And you are still you. Have you ever sought to reason out why this truth is hidden? Or where may be now the millions of people that have gone away from our earth? Have you ever wondered if we are like so many chickens in a coop—when we are gone from the coop we are replaced by another flock? Is there no way to find out?

### **How We Live This Life Determines What We Are in the Next**

We *have* been given the power to reason out where we go and from whence we have come. But we don't take enough pains to analyze ourselves and our lives. Otherwise our common sense would tell us that whatever our character is today it will continue to be after death—perhaps a little better or a little worse, depending on how much effort we are making to improve ourselves. You go along 365 days a year, year after year, and perhaps you have made some progress; but your nature will be the same after death as it was before death. You will not become an angel just because you die! Only the body changes. Death makes no difference, otherwise. Death is like a gate you will pass through. Your body will be gone but you will be in every other respect the same. If you have a violent temper, you will not leave it behind, at death, with your physical body. Your violent temper will remain with you until you conquer it. If in your present life you have observed the laws of healthful living, in your next incarnation you will possess a healthy body. The last portion of life is more important than the first, because what you are at the end of this life is what you will be at the beginning of the next.

The first part of life is usually stupidly misspent, in a sort of bewildered state. Then romance comes, and finally disease and old age; the struggle with the body starts. I have coined a phrase, "patchwork living," to describe how one has to keep on patching and repatching the body to keep it going. The body is a trouble most of the time: a "sparkplug" is missing, or the "tires" give out; you have headaches or a cold, or the stomach goes wrong; there is difficulty with the teeth, and so on. Always trouble, trouble! That is why it is so necessary that you realize you are not the body, with all its aches and pains, but an immortal soul.

I don't take life seriously at all. I say, "Lord, any time you want to remove this body from the soul, it is all right. So long as you keep me here, all right; but if I am to be free of the body, that is all right too." It is not necessary to die in order to claim freedom from attachment to the body. If you commune with God you will see that you are already free. You are not the body. You are eternal Spirit.

Is there any way to find out what we were in our last incarnation? Most certainly we can detect basic tendencies of thought and capabilities, by analyzing what we are now. The Hindu scriptures say that it takes a million years for the soul to be liberated. Comparatively little change,



therefore, is to be expected in the ordinary man from life to life. But one's spiritual evolution may definitely be hastened by determined effort in right living and with the help of a true guru.

The sages of India have analyzed mankind as belonging to four basic types: the *Sudras*, those capable of offering service to society through bodily labor; the *Vaisyas*, those that serve through mentality, skill, agriculture, trade, commerce, business life in general; the *Kshatriyas*, those whose talents are administrative, executive, and protective—rulers and warriors; and the *Brahmins*, those of contemplative nature, spiritually inspired and inspiring.

The *Sudras* are those that see in life no greater purpose than the satisfaction of wants and desires of the body; such persons eat, sleep, work, multiply, and finally die. Millions today live life like that, in the *Sudra* or "laborer" state—concerned merely with the comfort and pleasure of the body.

The man of the *Vaisya* or mentally active state is always busy getting things done. Some people of this type think of nothing else but business; they live only to earn money, which they usually squander on sense enjoyments. But the best *Vaisya* type of businessman is much more evolved and creative in nature.

The third or *Kshatriya* class are those that, after having had the experience of earning money and of creating something along business lines, begin to understand what life is all about; they strive to win the battle with the senses for self-control. (The *Vaisya* man doesn't engage himself in such effort for inner improvement. He simply earns money and produces children and seldom thinks about the meaning of life except in terms of business.) But the third or *Kshatriya* class takes life more seriously. Such a man asks himself, "Should I not struggle with and destroy my bad habits?" He feels a desire to overcome evil tendencies and to do what is right.

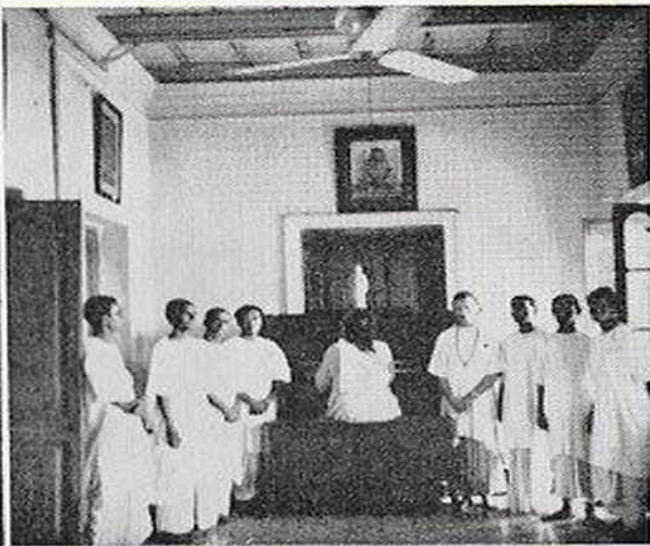
The last and highest state is that of the *Brahmin*: knower of Brahma or God.

### Analyze Yourself to See How You Should Change

To recapitulate: the first or *Sudra* is the animal state of existence; the second or *Vaisya* state is the business or creative state of man. The third or *Kshatriya* is the warrior state of man, when he desires to do battle with his senses and to conquer his attachment to them. And the fourth or *Brahmin* is the wisdom state of man, when he has overcome all attachment to the senses and remains consciously immersed in Brahma or God.

Every human being fits into one of these four classifications, and if you analyze yourself you can find your class. Think over your life from childhood days and try to reason out in which of the four classifications





(Left) Composing room in the Printing Department of Yogoda Sat-Sanga Society (SRF) in Dakshineswar, India.

(Right) Residents of YSS hermitage gather for chanting and prayers in the chapel of *Yogoda Math*. Swami Atmananda, director of *Yogoda Math*, is seated at the organ. Above his head are a statuette of Swami Sri Yukteswar and a picture of the YSS founder, Paramhansa Yogananda.



Swami Atmananda, secretary, Yogoda Sat-Sanga Society (SRF), at the wheel of new station wagon. It replaces a vehicle that has been in service eight years. Photo taken at YSS Ashram, Baranagar, near Calcutta.



you belong. Reflect on whether you have been living for sense pleasures, only catering to the senses and earning money; or perhaps just working without thinking or acting creatively.

Analyze yourself and see if you have been creative from your childhood. Some children, for example, think readily along mechanical lines, and want to open up and take apart things so that they can put them together again. Others show the greatest pleasure in drawing, or in playing or listening to music. It is not necessary to be an expert or a prima donna in order to consider that one has shown signs of creativity in this life. Even a nonsensical song like "Yes, We Have No Bananas!" is a product of a creative mind.

Anything one creates, whether it is expertly done or not, is an expression of creative talent. A flair for writing novels or for acting or for woodcarving or for painting or for music or for working with machinery, if exhibited early in life, indicates that you were probably in the *Vaisya* state in your past life.

Husbands and wives should not ridicule each others' or their children's creative tendencies. It is a sin against the evolutionary process of God to try to suppress another's creative spirit.

Ask yourself if from childhood you have always tried to perform actions in accordance with the guidance of your conscience. Were you constantly watching your actions and trying to correct yourself when you were wrong? Did you have that struggle within from childhood? That reflects the third or *Kshatriya* state. But if from childhood your thoughts have always been of God, you have entered the fourth or spiritual state.

Recognition of one's belonging to one of these four types of mental attitude should not discourage but encourage one. If upon self-analysis you find that you have not yet advanced to the highest state, do not think yourself helplessly unfortunate. The idea is that if you haven't changed yet, it is now time that you should. Otherwise you will carry your present state into the next life too. When death comes you want to feel that you have passed that particular "grade" of life, and that you are free to go on to higher grades. Therefore you should change your life now. Analyze yourself and learn what you were before. Then you can begin to remold your life more ideally.

Learn to check your moods. The violent feelings you may experience in the present were all created in the past. If it were not so, why is it that some children are jealous from the very beginning, while others in the same family are calm and loving? There are children that would strike you if you were to tell them not to do a thing; others are quietly obedient. Yet another child may steal. Why? These traits are simply outcroppings of prenatal tendencies created in former lives.

I was once given a little baby to hold. I almost dropped it, for God suddenly revealed to me that that baby had been a cruel murderer in a previous life. But ordinarily, the past is a closely guarded secret. You may discover the true details only if the Lord wishes you to know them.



### Discern Between Inward Worth and Outer Position

Once, in New York, a lady who was helping in SRF office work confided to me that she had met a marvelous man, a "psychic," who had told her wonderful things about herself, including the revelation that in a former life she had been Mary, Queen of Scots. I did not believe she had been that Queen, and I silently uttered a little prayer that God would banish her delusion.

A few days later a student came to see me and, with great excitement, said, "I have just met a famous psychic [the same one the SRF office worker had mentioned], who told me that in a past life I was Mary, Queen of Scots." I asked the SRF office worker to come into the room; and, placing the two "queens" face to face, I said, "Which one of you is the *real* Mary, Queen of Scots?" The ladies, happily, realized their mistake—which was one of indiscriminating credulity and of readiness to confuse true inward worth with conspicuous outer position.

The truth is, we love to be flattered. Unscrupulous persons thus may take advantage of us now and then. But who you were in a previous life and whether or not you were important in the eyes of the world is of little consequence. It is best to be born as a divine or *Brahmin* type, regardless of worldly position! All of you have something of that divine type in you; otherwise you would not be here this morning. Out of millions of people, you have been drawn to this church, because you have had something to do with the Orient and its spiritual teachings before. Now that you are an Occidental, outwardly, other Occidentals may laugh at you for going to what may seem to them a "heathen" church. But there is a reason for your being here in this Oriental atmosphere. Did you from early childhood enjoy the fragrance of incense, and stories and pictures of the East? Such inclinations would show that you had been quite recently in contact with the Orient. Those that feel a prejudice against the East did not recently come from there; but those that feel a leaning toward the East were probably born there in a recently past life. By such indications one can distinguish Oriental and Occidental souls. Another test is susceptibility to certain sensations. Some people like heat all the time. They have become accustomed, in other lives, to warm climates. Others like cold better, which shows that they had been born in cold climates before.

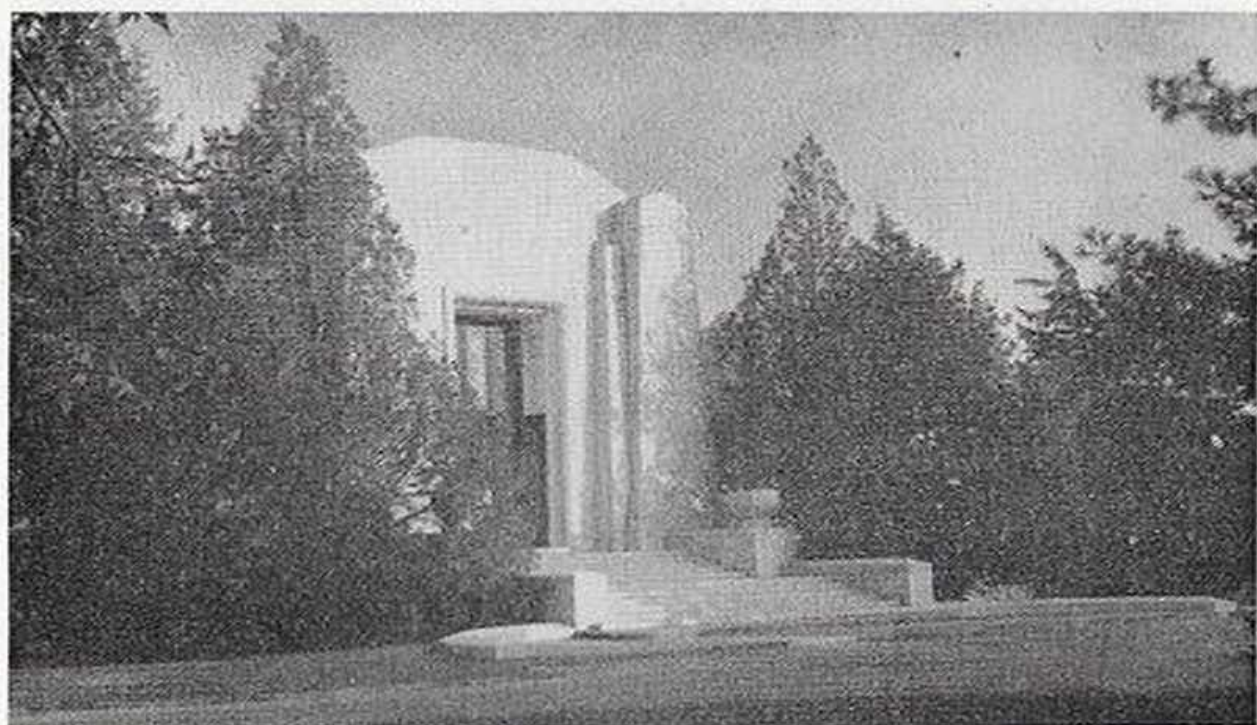
Those that have a driving ambition throughout life were important men before. To have that tendency and not develop it is to suppress oneself. In the proper environment such a person could become a great man. Then there are some people who, no matter what they do to get ahead, remain unsuccessful. This indicates they have carried a failure tendency from the past. But they should not give up the battle to overcome it. Such persons must conquer wrong tendencies now or they will manifest those faults in the next incarnation.



George Eastman once told me that, in his early years, he offered stock in his Kodak company for twenty-five cents a share; still it wouldn't sell. The family of the girl he wished to marry objected to the match. The adverse circumstances were such that it seemed he would never become a success; yet, after a while, everything opened up for him. Why? Because he had been creative and ambitious before, and he kept on cultivating those tendencies in this life.

From childhood I wished for large buildings and many people about me; and for shady trees and water wherever I might go. That is what I attract. I knew, from my childhood, that I would have these things, but when I used to talk about it people would sometimes laugh at me. But such environments have materialized. At our Ranchi school we have a big pond; our Dakshineswar headquarters faces the Ganges River; our Encinitas hermitage overlooks the Pacific Ocean. I knew from childhood that my karma would attract these places; I knew that when I wished and worked for it, these things would come easily to me.

So, through analysis of your present strong tendencies you can pretty accurately surmise what kind of life you led before. If from earliest childhood you liked warm or cold climates, or the mountains, or the sea, you may be certain you brought these attachments from the past. Some people become lonely if they are out of the city, and cannot stand quiet places. That attitude was cultivated in the past.



Entrance to Pantheon Building, Forest Hill Cemetery, Kansas City, Missouri. The body of Rajasi Janakananda (Mr. James J. Lynn), second president of Self-Realization Fellowship and beloved disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda, lies in this mausoleum.



Many souls from the East have reincarnated now in America. Desiring material perfection, they have been born here to enjoy the fulfillment of that desire and to help encourage American spiritual ideals. Similarly, many souls that formerly were born in America have since reincarnated in India in order to benefit from her spiritual riches and to help India in the development of the material side of her civilization. I hope that many of you may go there to help India, and that many in India will come here to serve in America. This world is God's family. He is trying to improve all nations. He has no preference for one over another.

Recently I met a young American girl who told me, "I have never studied any Oriental language, but lots of times I hear strange words in my mind. I can say them, but I don't know what they mean." She forthwith said about nine words in Bengali. She had never in this life studied the language, nor had she known anyone that speaks Bengali. Yet she knew these words and pronounced them correctly.

### **Past Associations Influence Present Affinities**

You may find that you have a strong affinity to certain foreign languages and that you are able to learn them quickly. Madame Galli-Curci, for example, amazed me with the quickness with which she learned many phrases in Bengali. A love of certain languages is the result of past-life associations. You are attracted to German or French or Chinese or Bengali because you have spoken them before.

In traveling, you begin to like certain scenes more than others. If some place stands out above all the rest in its attraction for you, you have probably been in that vicinity before.

So by these various clues you may discover certain general ideas about your past lives. From this point on, meditation can bring about a deeper knowledge of what you were before.

Sometimes it happens that you go for the first time to a certain place where you seem to recognize certain scenes; but the people whom you once associated with those scenes are gone. And sometimes you meet people you feel you knew before. With me, recognition has always been instant, especially of those that had been disciples before.

The following authentic case of remembrance of a past-life experience became world-famous. A little girl, born in a small village in India, began inexplicably to pine away for a village in another part of India. Her condition became so serious that a doctor advised that she be taken to the distant village. This was done, and to the amazement of her companions, from the moment she entered the outskirts of the village she began to describe in detail everything in it. She knew people by their names (although she had never before been to this village), and went directly to a certain home where she called a man by name, saying that he had been her brother in her previous life. Nor did she stop there. She explained





Members and teachers of SRF Lake Shrine Sunday School, Pacific Palisades, California, in newly redecorated meeting place in SRF Museum. The Cross (*center*), bearing a reproduction of the SRF lotus symbol, is made according to a design by Paramhansa Yogananda.

that in her past incarnation she had hidden some gold pieces in a brick wall of the same house, but that she had died without ever having told anyone about it. The little girl went to the place in the wall, and lo! the gold pieces were there still. She described her clothes and how they had been packed away, and they were found to be exactly as she had said. In the face of such evidence, we are not justified in doubting the genuineness and significance of her experience.

There is another case of a saint in India who went to a certain temple on a river bank and said: "My temple was near here. It is now in the river." Divers went down, and found under the water a very old temple. This man had been, in a previous life, the saint to whom that temple had been dedicated.

### **A Pure Heart — A Clear Insight**

If you keep above the consciousness of sex, and make your heart pure so that whenever you look at people you are not conscious of whether they are men or women, you will be able always to recognize at once old souls you have known before. If you have cultivated that impersonal consciousness you can instantly recognize people you knew before. Suppose you see a six-months-old baby, and then do not see it again until



many years have gone by and the baby has become a man. You probably do not recognize that baby in the man. Yet certain features are the same, you would discover, if you had known that baby long enough to firmly fix those features in your mind. So, certain features of our past life remain with us. The eyes especially will be like they were before. Eyes hardly change because they are the windows of the soul. Those whose eyes reflect anger or fear or wickedness should try to change, to remove unlovely qualities that hide and hinder the expression of the beauty of the soul. Owing to the change of environment and company, your mind and body change somewhat. But the eyes change little. You are reborn with the same expression in them.

You can also tell by your inclinations if you were a man or a woman in your past existence. Many women are mannish, and many men want to be like women.

Both man and woman are equal in importance. Reason and feeling are present in both men and women. But in man reason predominates, and in woman feeling predominates. It is easier to influence a man by appealing to his reason than to his feeling; women, on the other hand, respond more readily to an emotional appeal.

By God-communion man brings about the harmony or balance of these two qualities within himself. I never acknowledge myself to be either man or woman. I feel for others with the love of a mother, but no one can dissuade me by an appeal to my emotions if my reason does not concur. To achieve a divine balance of reason and feeling should be the purpose of both man and woman. Man usually has to cultivate more feeling, and woman has to cultivate more reason.

### **We Must Perfect Love in at Least One Relationship**

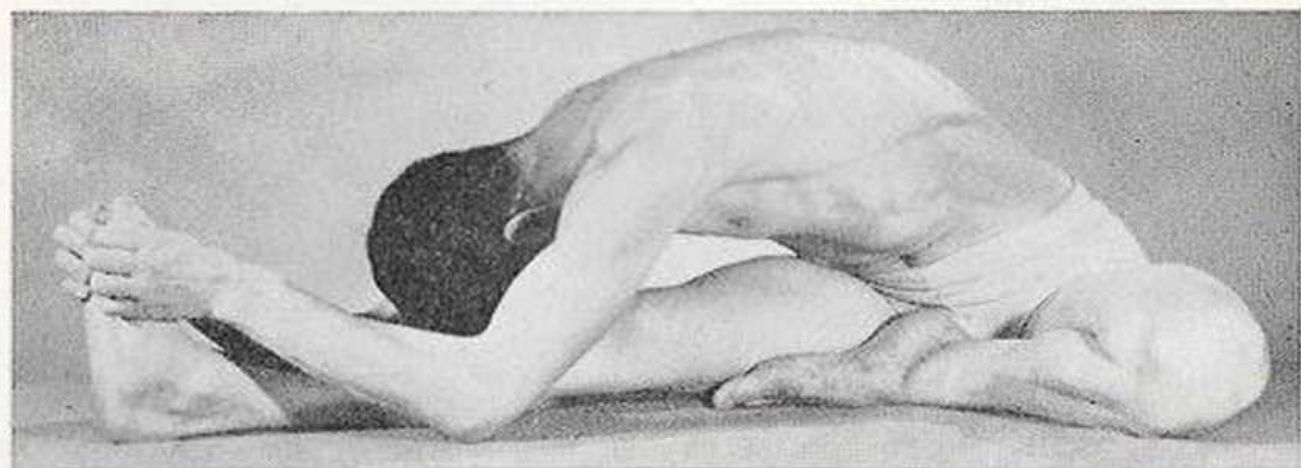
There is a deep reason why God does not usually allow us to recall our previous lives. It is because we would be very clannish with those we knew before, instead of expanding our love to encompass others. God wants us to give friendship and love to all, but we must *perfect* it in at least one relationship. When you meet old friends again, you can perfect your love in relationships with them. A disciple means one in whom the Master perfects the state of divine friendship. Those that follow the guru's wishes are his disciples. The wishes of a true guru are guided by divine wisdom, and if you tune in with his wishes you will become free, as he himself is free.

Above all, you should learn the most you can from this life, and strive to pass to the highest grade of spiritual development in the school of life. Commune with God. When you can do that, the deficiencies of all lesser grades of living are forgiven. To free yourself from *karma* that binds you to the lesser duties of life, develop the consciousness and wisdom of God.



# Yoga Postures For Health

By B. TESNIERE, M.D., and BRAHMACHARI LELAND



## JANUSHIRASANA — THE HEAD-TO-THE-KNEE POSE

"Man is a soul and has a body."\* Saints and sages of all times have repeated this immortal truth. The body is the temple of the soul. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I Cor. 3:16) The physical body is the house through which is manifested the very life and consciousness of the Lord. To make his body temple fit for expressing Divinity is one of the goals of the yogi.

Yoga teaches the path of moderation. The body should be under the calm control of the mind, and its condition should be perfected so that aches and pains are not present to distract us from deep, attentive devotion during meditation. The body should not be pampered; but it should not be neglected, thus inviting disease and inharmony. Scientific Yoga teaches the aspirant to give the body its due, but no more; and to spend his greatest effort in meditation, in order to rise above body consciousness into the freedom and ecstasy of God-communion.

One of the daily needs of the body is proper exercise. Yoga postures (asanas) provide a very practical and efficient system for all-round physical exercise. They also are very effective in preparing body and mind for the actual science of meditation.†

\* *Autobiography of a Yogi*, by Paramhansa Yogananda, p. 170.

† Self-Realization Fellowship Church teaches to students a system of SRF Energization Exercises that can be practiced more easily than asanas, and that have many superior characteristics. However, the asanas offer certain unique benefits.



Of the postures, *Janushirasana*, the Head-to-the-Knee Pose,\* is one of the first that should be included in one's daily exercise period, and also just before meditation. Instructions for practice of *Janushirasana* are as follows:

- (1) Sit on the floor with legs extended in front.
- (2) Pull the left foot toward the body, so that the left heel is at the perineal space, and the left sole is against the inner side of the right thigh.
- (3) First bend the lower part of the trunk and stretch forward, grasping the toes of the right foot—the big toe with the left hand and the other toes with the right hand.
- (4) Then bend the upper part of the trunk, pulling on the hands and toes, and bringing the head toward the right knee.
- (5) Stay in this position for five seconds (in the beginning), concentrating on the stretched part of the spine (the left lumbar region).
- (6) Sit upright again, with the legs outstretched, and pause for a few seconds before repeating the pose (this time with the position of the legs interchanged).
- (7) Follow with *Savasana*, the Relaxation Pose.

During initial practices of *Janushirasana*, exhale the breath before bending forward, and inhale upon sitting up. When accustomed to the asana, breathe normally (i.e., without any consciousness of breath). Gradually increase your practice up to one minute for each side.

### Key Points of *Janushirasana*

During performances of *Janushirasana* make certain to keep both knees to the floor and to practice slowly and smoothly. Wait at least three hours after a meal.

Some persons may have difficulty in bending forward, or in grasping the toes, or in touching the knee with the forehead, owing to stiffness of the spine, tightness of the posterior muscles of the thighs, or abdominal obesity. The tendency in such cases is to upraise slightly the knee of the outstretched leg, but for best results the leg should be kept straight.

Persons that are not able to reach the foot with the hands during the practice of *Janushirasana* should stretch forward to the foot as far as they can, first grasping the knee, then the calf, then the ankle, then the foot, and finally the toes. A practice that some have found helpful is to grasp the toes first, with the knee slightly upraised, and then to straighten the leg gradually and gently until the back of the knee touches the floor. Likewise, persons that cannot bring the forehead to the outstretched knee may practice doing so at first with the knee raised and then with the knee lower and lower, until it touches the floor.

\*Literal translation of the Sanskrit word *janushirasana*: *janu*, knee; *shira*, head; and *asana*, pose. Sanskrit *janu* and English *knee* derive from the same Indo-European root that gives, in Latin, *genu* (as in genuflection).



If there is stiffness of the knee and the hip region, there may be difficulty in keeping the knee of the bent leg to the floor. There is a variation of *Janushirasana* in which the foot of the bent leg is placed on the opposite thigh instead of against it. In this variation there is less pressure on the hip region (which is one of the first to become stiff in aging) although there is more pressure on the knee and ankle. Some persons find it easier, however, than the regular pose.

Definite progress in overcoming all obstacles will be achieved through patient, steady practice.

### Many Benefits Flow from This Pose

*Janushirasana* is distinctive in giving an unusual stretch to the lateral muscles of the trunk, particularly in the lumbar region. This naturally helps in bringing more harmonious proportions to the shape of the waist; but more important is the invigoration given to the internal organs, especially the kidneys and the adrenal glands. *Janushirasana* helps to clear the blood of waste products, which results in greater vitality and a healthier skin.

Through its forward stretch, *Janushirasana* tones up the digestive organs, improving their peristaltic and secretive functions. In the completed pose there is actually only one position of the spine, a combination of a forward bend, a lateral bend, and a slight twist. The spinal nervous system is invigorated thereby, and subtle life energies flow more freely through it.

The sciatic nerves are the most important nerves in the legs. By the beneficial stretch it gives to the legs, *Janushirasana* strengthens the sciatic nerves. This asana also makes the legs more supple. By increasing the strength and flexibility of the legs (which is unusual in an asana) this pose proves to be one of the best preparations for the cross-legged meditation postures.

In short, the Head-to-the-Knee Pose conduces toward a healthy body, and prepares the legs and spine for the practice of meditation.

In the next issue we shall describe *Ardha-Salabhasana* and *Salabhasana*, Half-Locust and Full-Locust Poses, and their benefits.

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### MAN AND SUPERMAN

"Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman — a rope over an abyss. A dangerous crossing, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous trembling and halting!

"What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal....

"I love those who sacrifice themselves to the world so that the world of the Superman may hereafter arrive. I love him who liveth in order to know, and seeketh to know in order that the Superman may hereafter live. I love him who scattereth golden words in advance of his deeds, and who always doeth more than he promiseth." — *Zoroaster*



# Thought Seeds

By PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA



*Nurtured in the soil of consciousness by daily meditation, watered with showers of the heart's devotion, may these thought seeds blossom into beauteous divine realizations.*



I will plunge the gaze of my faith through the window of the spiritual eye and baptize my body in the healing light of Christ-consciousness.



Bless me, Father, that the single eye of realization lead me to behold through all the veils of matter Thine infinite presence.



Since all affairs are directly or indirectly guided by Thy laws, I will bring Thy presence consciously into my mind through meditation, in order to solve the problems life has sent me.



Father, teach me not to torture myself and others with the ugly fires of jealousy. Teach me to accept with satisfaction the measure of kindness and friendship from my loved ones that I deserve. Teach me not to moan for what I may not receive. Teach me to use love instead of jealousy to rouse others to do their duty toward me.



The reality of my life cannot die, for I am indestructible consciousness.



## Pavlova's Interest in India

Pavlova had long been interested in the East, and in 1922 she undertook a journey around the world with her Company. She felt intensely a mission "to dance for the whole world," as she herself put it. In Arthur Franks' book, *Pavlova*, Sol Hurok is quoted as saying: "Pavlova spent twenty-five years, at least half of her life, traveling on trains and ships."

V. Dandre, her husband, writes: "The East had a strong attraction for her, more particularly India. She adored that country. She was interested in the scenery and in the various types of people.... She felt very well there and was so bright and happy she declared she could spend her whole life in India."

Pavlova went to Delhi and Agra for sightseeing. In 1929 she visited Benares, which had long had an attraction for her as the holy city of India. Her husband writes of this trip: "We spent a day there, most of the time in a big boat that floated slowly past the shores of the Ganges; admiring the beauty of the countless temples and palaces on the steep banks, and watching the thousands of pilgrims who had gathered on the shores of the sacred river from all parts of India for ablution and prayer. The expressions on the faces of these pilgrims, who stood for hours in the water in an ecstasy of prayer, made a profound impression on Pavlova.... She was indefatigable in trips of this kind. Being well able to stand the heat, she could remain for hours under a blazing sun; and each such journey refreshed her and gave a new impetus to her work."

—From an article by Margaret Chatterjee in "Sainik Samachar," Delhi.



Dasasamedh bathing ghat (arrow) on the Ganges River, Benares, where Lahiri Mahasaya, *paramguru* of Paramhansa Yogananda, used to bathe; the site, also, of a meeting between the deathless Mahavatar Babaji and his sister Mataji that was witnessed by Lahiri Mahasaya and one of his disciples, Ram Gopal Muzumdar. The meeting is described by Paramhansa Yogananda in Chapter 33 of *Autobiography of a Yogi*.



# A SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE *BHAGAVAD GITA*

By PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA



*Chapter VII, Stanza 19*

## Literal Translation

*After many incarnations, a sage realizes Me in My true nature. A man so illumined that he sees Me as all-pervading is hard to find.*

## Spiritual Interpretation

A rare devotee is he who discerns only the Omnipresent Beam of Spirit that creates the many dreams of births and deaths including his own. Such a man, concentrating on the Cosmic Beam alone, becomes liberated from the witnessing of the many dreams of births and deaths, forced upon mortals that are infested with lusts and pursued by karma. He can quicken his evolution by living many lives materialized in daily visions.

A person who emotionally identifies himself with the daily dream, the motion pictures of his life, becomes entangled in the web of births and deaths and does not find liberation. He does not realize that, in an average life span of sixty years, a man is "born" or re-awakened 21,900 times; and "dies" or enters the sleep or "little death" state 21,900 times.

Certain yoga books explain that with every exhalation a person dies, and, with every inhalation, is reborn. (On the average, man breathes eighteen times a minute.)



Some yogis say that with every "lub" sound of the heart, there is a birth; and with every "dub" sound of the heart, there is a death. According to that theory, a man lives and dies eighty-six times a minute—the normal beat per minute of the heart; in a lifetime, a person would have many more experiences than the births and deaths involved in inhalations and exhalations.

Medical science claims that a normal person's brain is substantially changed every eight years. According to that theory, a man is reborn eight times in a lifetime of sixty-four years.

Some sages say that evil men who die without the desire for liberation may experience births and deaths during many million-year cycles.

However, it has been proved by modern-day disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, and other masters that people with past good karma can quicken their evolution by Kriya Yoga practice and find liberation in three or six or twelve or twenty-four or forty-eight years in one lifetime—a liberation that ordinarily comes to a righteous person, without conscious effort, only in a million years of births and deaths, by natural evolution.

By bullock cart and by a circuitous way, it would take many years for a man to go around the earth. But by the fastest airplane and by the shortest route, a person may traverse the earth in a few days and possibly in a few hours. Similarly, the individual that makes no conscious effort may take countless lives to become liberated; but a wise man, through his knowledge of quickening evolution by Kriya Yoga, may find emancipation in one life.

A wisdom-expert, an accomplished Kriya Yogi, may banish the karma of his past unfinished actions by living many births and deaths enacted in daily visions during *samadhi*. In this way, within three years he may work out all his past desires of many, many lives, by materializing them in actual daily visions. A sage understands that a human incarnation is a motion picture of many dreams. Such an illumined devotee does not have to go through many mortal births and deaths.

An advanced yogi living in the bleak Himalayas need not go to a city nor be reborn in a new body in order to work out his latent desires, such as a liking for curries; he might daily create a technicolored, true-to-all-the-senses motion picture in which he would materialize and cook the various curries; and taste, eat, and enjoy them daily in this novel way, until by wisdom his karmic desires for food were dissipated forever.

A Kriya Yogi adopts the fastest way of quickening his evolution and working out his unfinished past karma—not through many agonizing incarnations, but by experiencing them in materialized visions.

Krishna says in this stanza: "Even a wise man attains Me only after many births—because a yogi aware of My omnipresence is rare."

These words have more than a surface significance. The deeper



meaning is this: "Wise men attain Me only after many births, because it is so seldom that even a sage understands that I am attainable instantly."

#### Chapter VII, Stanza 20

##### Literal Translation

*Led by their own inclinations, their discrimination stolen by this or that craving, pursuing this or that (cultish) injunction, men seek (lesser) gods.*

##### Spiritual Interpretation

A butterfly mind willy nilly sails on with the breeze of its innate moods acquired in past lives. Indiscriminately it dwells on various blossoms of desires, drinking the honey of their meager pleasures. Such a restless mind is for a time engrossed in any dear object, deifying it, and thus forgetting to seek the supreme nectar of bliss.

A "movie fan" watches most of the shows with interest. In this way he develops a desire to resort continuously to the theater without using much discrimination as to the quality of the pictures.

Similarly, many people in this world become engaged without discrimination in the performance of various actions. According to their innate natures, inclinations, and habits of past lives and of this life, they devote themselves to worship of money, fame, power, and so on.

Most people deify the object of their desires and the lesser gifts of God. They thus forget to worship the God of gods, the Giver of all gifts. Every person, by self-analysis, should detect his injurious mental and material habits. He should cease to identify himself with his material "second nature," and should allow his true nature of the soul, loving the divine bliss of Spirit, to emerge from behind the clouds of indiscretion, ignorantly formed useless habits, and spiritual indifference.

#### Chapter VII, Stanzas 21, 22

##### Literal Translation

*Whatever embodiment (a God-incarnate, a saint, or a deity) a man faithfully worships, it is I who make his devotion unflinching.*

*Absorbed in worshiping that embodiment with deep faith, the devotee thus gains the fruits of his longings. Yet those fulfillments are verily granted by Me alone.*

##### Spiritual Interpretation

Even the worshiper of lesser gods does not go divinely unrecognized or unrewarded. If a person of deep devotion offers homage to the form of



any deity symbolically representing God, He silently responds by materializing that form in visions before the devotee.

In India Cosmic Nature and the Infinite are symbolized by the idol of Kali, the Mother of the Universe, standing on the breast of her husband Shiva, or God. This symbolism (unraveled!) signifies that Cosmic Nature does not test or tempt the devotee with delusion if he is consciously united to the Infinite (the breast of Shiva). Many pious Hindus worship God and His cosmos in the forms of Shiva and Kali.

No matter what mode of worship the devotee adopts to find God, He accepts it, if the devotion be genuine. This divine acceptance enables the mind of the devotee to concentrate on the Spirit behind the specific symbol. When a great devotee worships a symbolical deity as God, He manifests His unseen omnipresence by a visible display of that symbolical form. He appears before, talks with, and blesses the earnest devotee through the form that is beloved by him.

The symbolical form of God appearing to a Hindu devotee as Kali or Durga becomes a permanent blueprint in the ether. If any other devotee concentrates very deeply on the stone or brass reproduction of that deity, one that has been seen and worshiped by a great saint, that deity in living form appears to satisfy his true heart-call. Similarly, any devotee fervently worshipping God in the form of Jesus Christ, St. Francis, Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, or a Guru-Preceptor (either mentally, or before an image or a picture) may see that form first in vision, and then, by deeper spiritual advancement, as a materialized being, living and talking.

Any devotee that ardently meditates on the picture or form of a true guru-preceptor or any other master becomes attuned to him, imbibing his qualities, and ultimately feels in that saint the presence of God. As people can talk back and forth over the radio by tuning in, so a devotee may tune in with a saint and may see him televised in the crystal sphere of the spiritual eye. That is what is implied in this stanza of the *Bhagavad Gita*. In another place it says: "Whoever worships God truly in any way, crude or noble, He responds to him in that way."

After all, the Omnipresent God knows all His true devotees, no matter in what form they love Him. Christ said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (*Matthew 10:29*). If God's omniscience is aware of a small sparrow, how much more deeply is He aware of His true lovers!

The Omniscient alone, who knows the hearts of His children, answers their prayers in many ways. Devotion shown to God always evokes some form of plain or mysterious response. No true devotee is ignored by God.

However, shallow seekers that worship astral deities for the fulfillment of desires do not realize that it is God who will fulfill their wishes through the instrumentality of the divine beings. The Lord is consciously present in all higher beings and in their devotees. It is He who is *Chintamani*, "the jewel that grants all desires."



# Rights and Duties in Indian Culture

By PROF. B. L. ATREYA



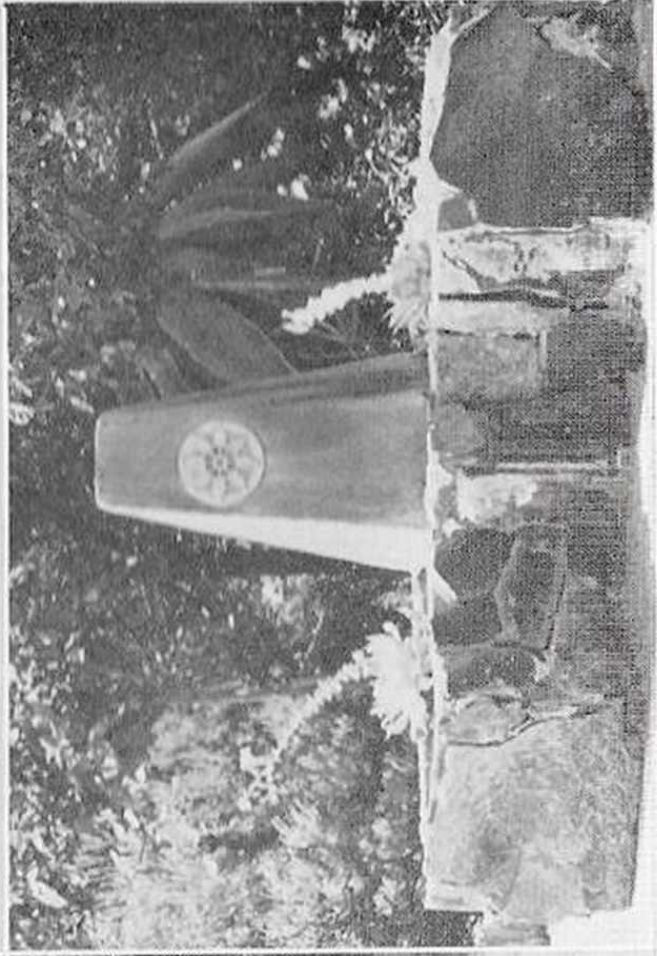
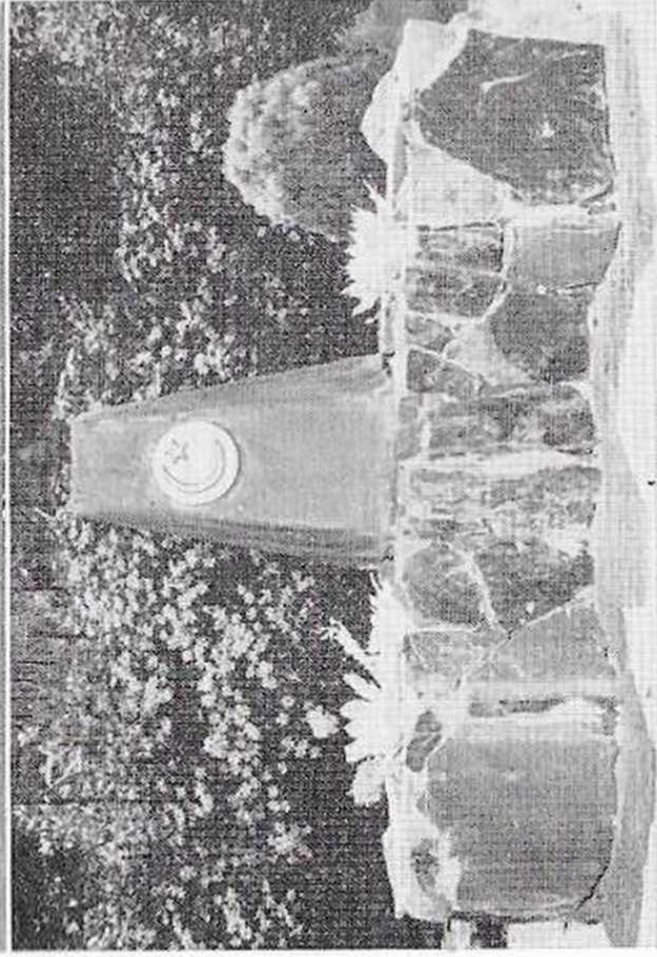
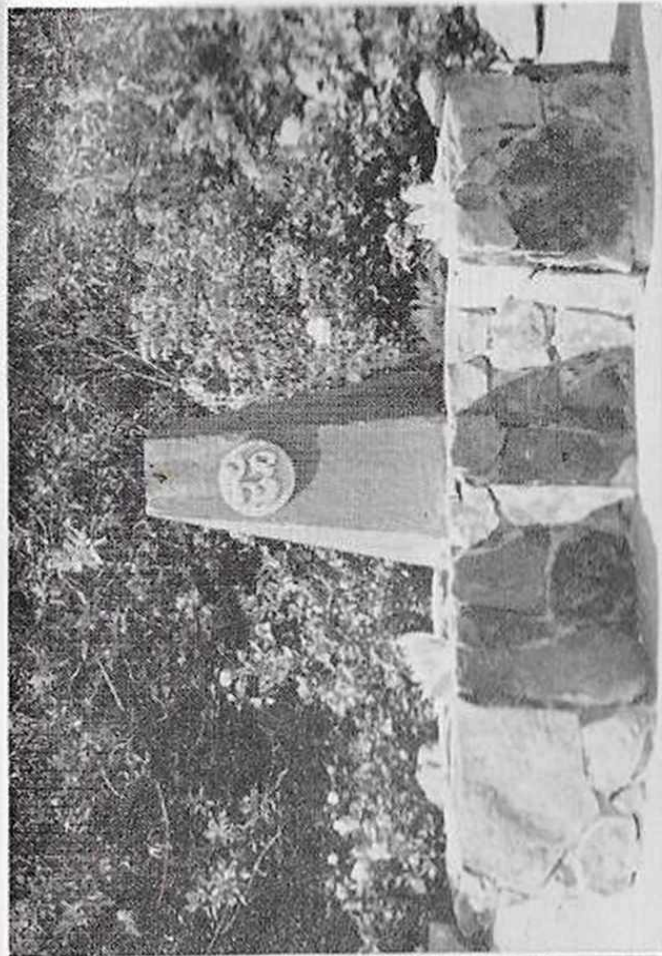
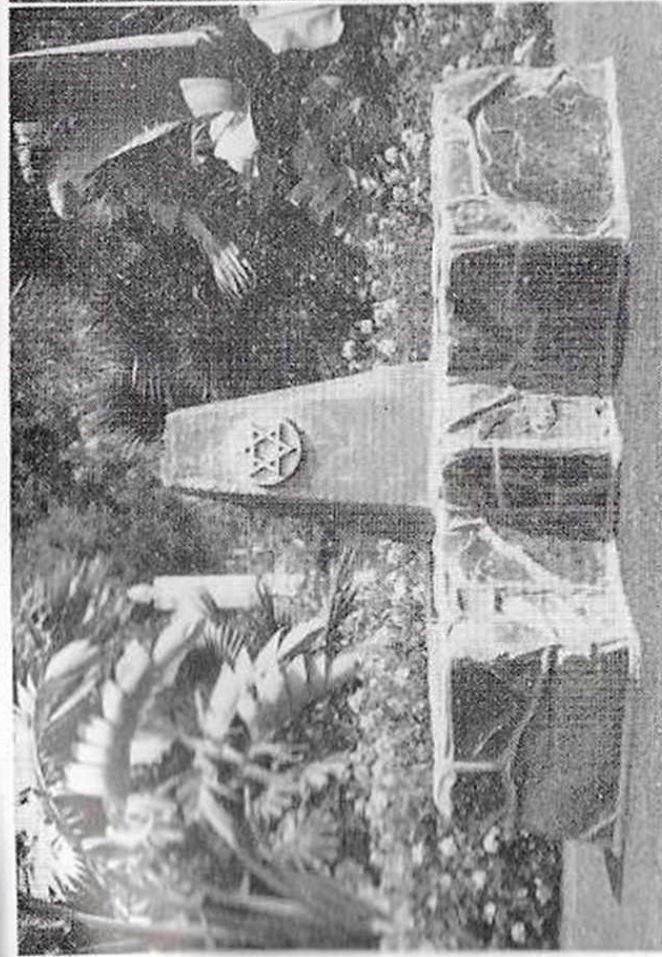
A remarkable thing about Indian culture is that there is no concept of "rights" in it. While there is much talk about duties in its literature, there is nowhere any mention of the "rights" that are avidly discussed in modern social life. Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* teaches his disciple Arjuna to perform the duties that are demanded by his station in life, without expectation of gain or reward from any quarter. He regards the performance of one's duties without hope of gain or reward as the best worship of God.

In our modern age, unfortunately, everybody thinks more of his rights than of his duties. "Rights" is simply a glorified word for our individual and selfish interests. They refer to the fulfillment of our bodily needs or desires. Indian thinkers have said that it is not wrong for man to demand satisfaction of his natural desires. But we need not emphasize them, glorify them, and plead for them. We are naturally prone to assert them. Why should we add to their force by constant insistence? If every man were careful of performing his duties and willing to give to others what he in turn expects from them, there would be no need for the asserting of his rights. Assertion of rights, demand of rights, and quarrel for rights lead to an inharmonious society.

In Indian culture an attempt was made to make man forget his materialistic "rights." Good and great men in society never talked of rights but always of duties; and others followed their example. People worried more about their debts than their dues. An elaborate theory of man's debts (*rina*) was developed. According to this theory, every individual has to pay, in some manner, the following debts:

(1) *Deva-rina*, debt to the forces of Nature, for the invaluable gifts of air, fire, water, crops, and so on; by prayers to the gods who control Nature, as tokens of our gratitude. (2) *Pitri-rina*, debt to one's parents and to society for their help in our rearing. This debt is paid off by man's bringing forth and training his children and by contributing to the well-being of the family and society. (3) *Rishi-rina*, debt to the teachers, discoverers, and inventors that have brought civilization to this stage and to whom we owe our store of knowledge. We pay off this debt by making some contribution to knowledge and by helping others. — "*Religious Digest*," Colombo, Ceylon.

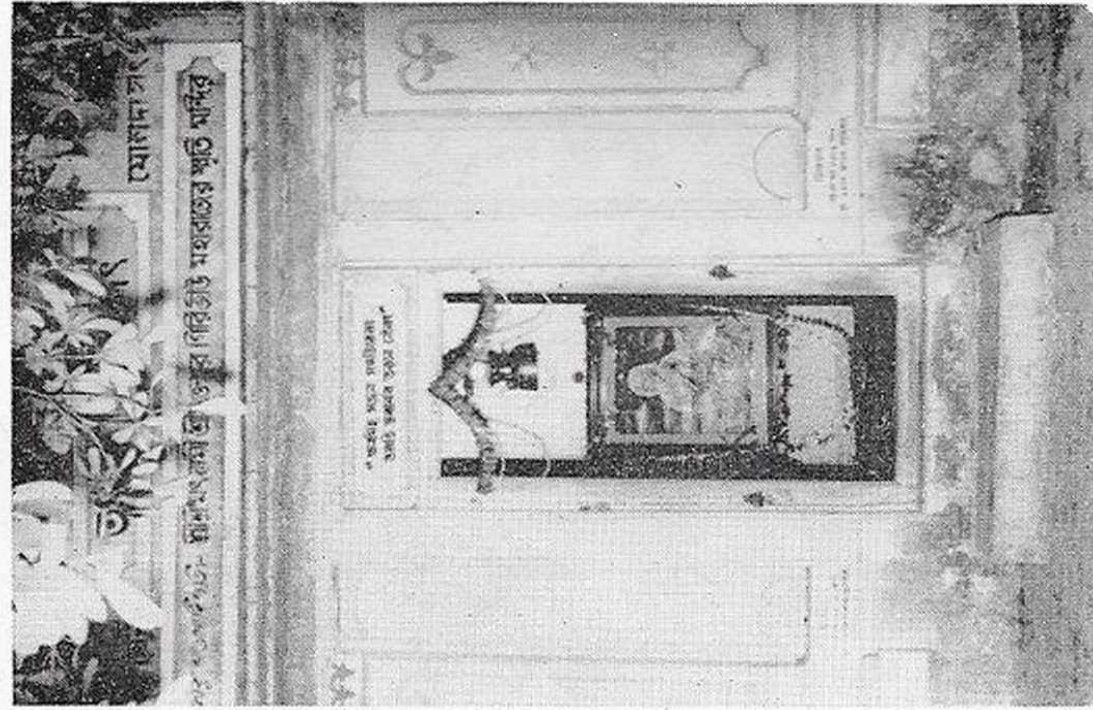




# COURT OF RELIGIONS, SRF LAKE SHRINE, PACIFIC PALISADES, CALIFORNIA

Monuments dedicated to Judaism (*upper left*), Hinduism (*upper right*), Islam (*lower left*), and Buddhism (*lower right*). A picture of the monument dedicated to Christianity appeared on the front cover of Sept.-Oct. 1956 *Self-Realization Magazine*.





Oil painting of Sri Yukteswar in a shrine dedicated to him at Yogoda Sat-Sanga (SRF) Center in Kalidan, Midnapore



Enlargement of oil painting (*shown in picture at left*) of Swami Sri Yukteswar, the guru of Paramhansa Yogananda