

# sadhu, beware!

a new approach to renunciation



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## *Contents*

1	Ananda Sangha.....	7
2	Humility.....	12
3	Developing Humility.....	17
4	Techniques of Ego-Transcendence.....	21
5	How to Be an “Ego-Detective”.....	34
6	The Advantages of Formal Renunciation.....	35
7	The Disadvantages of Formal Renunciation.....	40
8	The Tally.....	45
9	Two Stages of Brahmacharya.....	55
10	A Suggested Rite of Passage.....	61
11	The Second Brahmacharya.....	68
12	Specific Suggestions for the Practice of Brahmacharya.....	71
13	How to Be a “Temptation Detective”.....	78
14	Poverty vs. Simplicity.....	80
15	Techniques for Dealing with Money.....	91
16	Obedience.....	97
17	The Rule of Cooperative Obedience.....	102
18	How to Be an “Attitudes Detective”.....	109
19	Attunement.....	111
	About the Author.....	117
	Further Explorations.....	120



## CHAPTER 1

### *Ananda Sangha*

In the normal course of events, a renunciate order defines itself by the contrast between it and society as a whole. A renunciate is (or should be) one who is wholly dedicated to seeking and serving God. Others in society, in this context, may be thought of as dedicated to worldly pursuits and to ego-gratification.

In Ananda Sangha, this contrast is less clear. All who join Ananda do so to seek God and serve Him. All of them should already understand, moreover, their need to transcend the ego by doing God's will rather than their own. Whether they have embraced formal renunciation or not, the gratification they are taught to seek is not of the ego: they are taught to seek it in their devotion to God. Thus, within Ananda Sangha the contrasts between those who embrace formal renunciation and those who don't are somewhat indistinct. For this reason the contrasts need to be spelled out more carefully. For this reason

also, much and perhaps most of what follows will be useful for all the members of Ananda.

Years ago, when there was an insufficiently clear distinction between the two groups, an attempt was made to create a monastic order, but the attempt failed. The monks and nuns had no choice but to mix freely with one another and with the rest of the community; segregating them simply wasn't a possibility. From then on, human nature and people's social conditioning conspired to make it too difficult for the renunciates—especially the younger ones—to ignore the normal attraction the sexes feel for each other. Thus, the ship of renunciate life at Ananda Village foundered, as I had known was all but inevitable. There was nothing I could do to alter the circumstances.

There is something in the air these days, moreover, that almost militates against monasticism. Everywhere—even in India, famous for its sadhus, swamis, ashrams, and monasteries—the trend seems to be away from outer renunciation. In Italy, huge edifices that once housed hundreds of monastics today stand empty. People everywhere on earth seem to feel that God can be sought in the family, and that this way is preferable to renouncing the family way of life. Lahiri Mahasaya himself, in the incarnation we know, lived as a householder. Most or all of Paramhansa Yogananda's most advanced disciples, moreover, were or had been householders.

Is the trend away from monasticism a response to some deeply felt need in society? I think that until home life as we

know it today becomes more spiritualized, fewer people will feel called to the renunciate life. I've gained this feeling after many years of travel in the world, for wherever I've gone I have heard the feeling expressed, sometimes consciously, and sometimes unconsciously. It seems to me that there will be no serious general commitment to the path of renunciation until people offer wider support for this ideal. Too many people today show a serious lack of commitment to anything—a lack suggested, for one thing, by the large numbers of divorces everywhere.

People must learn to take more responsibility for their lives, and not think the purpose of it all is sense gratification and self-aggrandizement.

Ananda Sangha communities exist partly to create a solid basis of spirituality for people in all stages of life. Only on this basis can the superstructure be raised of total commitment to God. Unfortunately, divorces do still occur at Ananda: not nearly so many as in society at large, but nonetheless more than would be the case in a completely stable society. One finds at Ananda also, however, a seriousness of spiritual purpose that is quite rare. Ananda is inspiring people everywhere to develop a life of serious commitment to God.

Master (Paramhansa Yogananda) once stated, “If you marry as a necessity, you will have to reincarnate again, until you reach the point where you can live only for God.” The key words in that sentence are not, “If you marry,” but, “If you marry as a necessity.” What did he mean by “necessity”?

Obviously he wasn't thinking of demands made on one by parents and society. He could have had only one meaning: "If you marry out of the perception that you need human love for personal fulfillment." When I mentioned that Master's most highly advanced disciples were householders, it must be understood also that those householders did find God.

Sister Gyanamata was an outstanding example. She came to live at Mt. Washington only after the death of her husband. And yet—as Master himself told us—she achieved final liberation in this life.

Ultimately, what I think the Master can only have meant was that the devotee must reach the point where he loves God alone, and depends on nothing and no one to fulfill his heart's natural longing for love.

The Ananda Sangha communities have, I think, reached a point in their maturity where it may be time seriously to consider creating, within the total definition of the Sangha, an order of renunciates for men and for women.

I doubt that it has ever been possible to develop a flourishing renunciate order within normal society. Renunciates need to define their way of life clearly, lest the differences become blurred with the kind of conditioning which is accepted everywhere as the norm. As Master put it, "Environment is stronger than will power."

It is a lamentable, but unfortunately usual, mistake for renunciates to pride themselves on being more spiritually

qualified than “householders.” I would like at the outset of this paper, therefore, to emphasize that the only valid definition of renunciation is the renunciation of all egoic identification. The renunciate must offer his entire being into the Infinite Self. Only when one has achieved complete freedom from ego-limitation can he realize God. At that point, there is nothing left to be renounced!

The first quality we must consider, therefore, is the renunciation of ego-attachment.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Humility*

What is humility? The first point to clarify is that humility is not self-abasement. Self-abasement indicates, not abandonment of ego-consciousness, but, instead, preoccupation with the ego. If one bows his head to the ground and throws dust on himself, he is thinking of dust, and of his own head. Implicit in this attitude is a kind of self-involvement: in short, egoism. Self-involvement is, in fact, simply the negative aspect of egotism, or arrogance.

True humility is self-forgetfulness. Self-forgetfulness leads to self-transcendence. By self-forgetfulness, therefore, I don't mean stumbling about and bumping into tables or other objects because of non-awareness of one's body! Nor do I mean other symptoms of lessened awareness such as absent-mindedness or careless behavior, which foolish critics, trying to prick holes in a teaching they find inconvenient, might assume from my recommendation. All I mean is simply not to refer

what happens to one back to himself: not to say such things as, “I did that. I didn’t get the attention I deserved. Why did this happen to me?”

Some renunciates try to practice humility by self-effacement. This is a valid, but not a universally desirable practice. Not everyone who strives for self-transcendence can get there by this route. Others aspiring to the same goal may be more naturally inclined toward expansiveness, and perhaps also toward creativity. There is no need to equate an expansive attitude with egotism. For expansive people, self-effacement would entail only a negative use of energy. In their focus on self-denial they may only expend their energy uselessly in the suppression of their natural ebullience.

People are uniquely themselves. What is right for one person might not be so for another. A mistake traditional monasteries have often made has been to try to fit all their members into one mold. Humility that is expressed only in a downward gaze might be spiritually helpful for some, but might be self-suppressive for others. For some spiritual seekers, it would be useless to strive to suppress their natural expansiveness or creativity. It would take more ego-consciousness to suffocate their natures than would be employed in simply releasing their energy in expansion. As the Bhagavad Gita says, “Of what avail is suppression?” People who are by nature expansive need to release their energy, not to bottle it up.

In that expansion, however, they must always hold the thought, “God is the Doer.” They will not gain spiritually if they try to expand their egos.

The spiritual path may be summed up as an endeavor to attain self-realization in the Infinite Self. God is our true being. It is from his consciousness that we were all manifested.

The ego will never, and can never, be annihilated even in infinity, any more than the drop totally disappears when it merges in the ocean. Paramhansa Yogananda, in his poem “Samadhi,” used the simile of an ocean and its waves. “I, the Cosmic Sea,” he wrote, “watch the little ego floating in Me.” This conscious merging in God is not, I repeat, self-annihilation. It is not the destruction of the ego. Instead, it is the realization of who one really is, in the Infinite. Merging in God is release from confinement in the little prison of a human body and personality, which is the definition of ego.

To merge in God is absolute freedom. People who view infinite self-awareness with alarm must realize that, in God, one loses nothing—not even, in an all-important sense, his ego. For although attachment to the ego is completely transcended in cosmic consciousness, the memory of its former, separate identity as an individual entity remains forever one aspect of Infinite, Eternal Omniscience. Thus, the ego can be revived at any time, in case the Cosmic Will, for example, or the devotional call of sincere devotees, asks that little drop (that wave) to re-manifest itself again. For the wave, too, is part of the

Infinite Self. What the true seeker achieves is not self-annihilation, but ultimate fulfillment in limitless perfection.

An interesting point to reflect on is that what appears again, if the individual self is re-manifested, is in fact the essential being of that merged self. Krishna or Christ, if recalled to earth thousands of years later by true devotees, manifests again as the same person. He is not the Absolute simply assuming a similar form.

Great masters like Paramhansa Yogananda, though liberated many lifetimes ago, are manifested again and again as the same essential being, with their own personalities and self-awareness intact. Yogananda, when he incarnated as Arjuna, and again as William the Conqueror, and still again as a Spanish general, always reappeared as himself. Though infinite in consciousness, and forever merged in the ocean of Spirit, one aspect of that infinity is also that infinitesimal memory, like a drop in the sea of Infinity.

I have listed two recognized ways of achieving infinite consciousness. The first way, as I said, is to practice self-effacement. It should be clear from what I also said that self-effacement is achieved not by negating one's reality, but by a kind of ego-forgetfulness that results in self-transcendence.

The other way of achieving infinite awareness is to offer up to God everything that one does, in so doing thinking of Him as the true Doer of everything.

Both of these ways—inward contraction, and outward ex-

pansion—are implied in the advice given by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: “nishkam karma—action without desire for the fruits of action.”

Thus, when Paramhansa Yogananda said, as I’ve often quoted him in my writings, “The greatest sin is to call yourself a sinner,” it is important to understand that what he really meant was, “Don’t identify yourself with sin. Even if you make mistakes, never tell yourself, ‘I am those mistakes.’”

Many great saints, including Paramhansa Yogananda, have sometimes in fact spoken of themselves as sinners. What they’ve meant was very different from affirming their sinfulness. The distinction lies in the lack of sin-consciousness in their utterance. When they called themselves sinners, it was with an attitude of joyful freedom. They were disclaiming identity with the ego, and affirming, “I am not that, because I am so much more!”

One can heap any amount of insults on himself if he does it in a spirit of joyful ego-rejection, knowing his true Self to be limitless and divine. This was the attitude of great saints such as Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Avila. They made that statement often and cheerfully, but they did so in joyful dismissal of their egos, not as an affirmation of actual evil in themselves.

People, instead, who affirm their own sinfulness give themselves all the excuse they need to keep right on sinning!

## CHAPTER 3

### *Developing Humility*

When my brother Bob was three years old, our mother once began a sentence to him with the word, “My. . . .”

“No!” interrupted little Bobby: “Not ‘my!’ ‘My’s’ me, Wobert.”

Isn’t it strange—indeed, wonderful—how universal is this sense of “I”? The infinite Self never became anything other than Itself, but it reflected that one Self, like sunlight on countless tiny slivers of glass, in every atom of creation. The Divine Consciousness is the essence of everything in existence.

Scientists have postulated, about computers, that they will probably be so sophisticated someday that they’ll become conscious. Out of that, is the postulate, self-consciousness will develop. Reflect a moment on one major defect in this scientific anticipation: What could be less sophisticated than a worm? Yet isn’t the worm obviously conscious? If one touches it

with anything sharp or hard, it squirms away from that touch. Worms have been taught to follow one direction in preference to another when the choice was offered them between one that led to food and another that led to an electric shock.

Everything in existence is conscious. This is true even of the rocks, though, of course, they are not conscious of being rocks. Consciousness is the central reality of all things, animate and “inanimate.” Everything is the product of consciousness. The divine consciousness is “center everywhere, circumference nowhere.” It is expansion outward to infinity from an infinity of centers.

Man’s way of creating things is from the outside in. He paints a painting; he carves a statue. Pygmalion, in the Greek legend, carved a statue of a woman that turned out so beautifully that he fell in love with it. Divine consciousness, as Aphrodite, taking pity on him, blessed him that the inanimate “it” he’d created became a “she.” Pygmalion named this living woman Galatea, and married her—happily, one hopes!

Just think of how varied human beings are: two eyes, a nose, and a mouth, yet each one of these “sets” is in some way unique, even as, so we are told, no two snowflakes are identical.

Every human being has also his private dreams of fulfillment: a beautiful home perhaps; special contributions to the world; a mate of his own; perhaps travel. Above all, perhaps, there is some indefinable “mood” in his heart that draws him in longing toward some special vision of love and happiness.

A brief snatch of music may awaken in him some undefined longing. A brief smell may awaken in him some inchoate memory. Every one of the senses exerts, for him, some special appeal.

How can we rise above our egos, when so much conspires to draw us outward, through our senses and through our hearts' feelings into a world which is quite imaginary, though, as imagination at least, it has its own reality? How do we cut away, explode, or beat down into the ground the vague mists of memory, which give us brief glimpses, from time to time, of something we may hope for ever after: a longing for what, realistically speaking, may not be even possible? Often it happens that we cannot even define these fleeting sensations. They enter our minds momentarily, swirl about in them like vapors, then vanish even as we reach out to touch them.

All these things must be renounced if we would know truth, and God. Why, one may ask, must they be renounced? They are sweet; they fill us with yearning—even with a certain nostalgia. Ah! but when at last we fulfill even one of them, we find that the anticipation always exceeds the fulfillment. Every fulfillment, indeed, if ever it is finally grasped, turns to dust. Nothing can ever give us what we want most from life.

The first duty of every soul is to release the hold ego-consciousness has on it. All other spiritual practices are subservient to this one supreme obligation. I therefore address ego-transcendence as the first and, indeed, the only challenge

on the spiritual path, whether one is a renunciate, household-er, or lives in any other way for God.

Here are a few techniques that will help you in transcending ego-consciousness.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Techniques*

1. When you see something you'd like for yourself, buy it, if possible. Accept the satisfaction of possessing it. But then give it away with a free heart to someone else. I did this in Switzerland in 1955, when I was visiting the SRF centers in Europe. I saw a beautiful wood carving for sale of the Madonna. My first thought was how lovely it would be to possess it. Its cost was \$12, which at that time was a lot more than a comparable amount of dollars today. To purchase it meant spending almost all of my monastic allowance for that month. I decided, instead, to buy it as a gift for Daya Mata, SRF's president. I think this was a good choice, for purchasing the statue gave me joy in possessing it briefly, joy in giving it, and, finally, joy in seeing it again whenever I got to visit her quarters.
2. When people fail to give you credit for something you did,

and did well, say nothing, but in your heart give all the credit to God.

3. When people praise you for any reason, don't accept their praise in your heart. Don't be ungracious—by saying, for example, "It wasn't anything." That would be like deprecating their good taste or their common sense! In fact, it would be to answer a compliment with an insult! Thank them sincerely, instead, but then give the credit to God. Do so verbally, if you like, but much more importantly, give Him the credit in your heart. Tell yourself, "God is the Doer." People may remind you if you say that to them, "Yes, but it takes an instrument of God's will to do what you've done with such skill." True enough, but what does that really mean? Do you want to pride yourself on being a good screwdriver, or hammer?! Move on to another subject, and be particularly careful not to accept the compliment in your own heart.
4. When someone else gets the credit for something you've done, don't look for some way of letting people know where the credit really belongs. It is natural enough to want to do so; you needn't consider it a fault. Still, don't make too much of it. You will feel much more freedom in your heart if you can mentally give all the credit to God.

5. When someone has a good idea that you've had already, it will help you in the practice of humility to tell yourself, "It's the idea that counts, not the person who had it." Just say, "That's a good idea. Let's give it a try."
6. If someone scolds you for something you didn't do, you may have some good reason for letting him know that you're not guilty, but if it doesn't really matter who did it, you will gain more, spiritually, by saying nothing.
7. If you see others eager to air their views, be generous enough to let them speak. Add something of your own only if you see that they're interested. Many people are so convinced of the merit of what they've got to say—a certainty rarely backed by real merit!—that an effort to converse with them may descend to a level of competition. Better let them have their say, and listen for whatever benefit you might gain from their words and ideas. If you don't see any (as, let's face it, will probably be the case!), give your respect to the other person as a child of God, but share the humor of the situation inwardly with the divine Beloved. You might even make a mental game of it, by seeing just how boring your interlocutor can manage to be. Some people achieve a level almost of genius in this respect!
8. If others try to boss you around—assuming it doesn't re-

ally matter to you one way or another—why not simply go along with the “game”? At least you’ll gain a greater sense of inner freedom.

9. Don’t try constantly to explain or define for others what and who you are. Let your actions, and who you are in yourself, speak for you. If others misunderstand you, wear their misunderstanding mentally as a feather in your cap, reflecting that only God really understands us, anyway!
10. Never place yourself mentally in competition with anyone.
11. Never belittle anyone. View everybody with respect. Release any interest you may feel in outshining others, or even in shining at whatever you do. Do the best you can, always, but give the fruits of your efforts to God.
12. Without some good and definite reason, don’t try to justify your actions, ideas, or accomplishments. Whatever you’ve done, give mentally to God.
13. Try always to impersonalize your impressions. I remember many years ago, during a gathering of SRF renunciates, someone challenged a particular musical sequence (I don’t remember which one it was) in a chant. A nun present announced firmly, “[This] is how it should go.” Another nun answered her, “What makes you so certain?” I still

remember the ego in her consciousness, revealed through her tone of voice, as she answered, “My ear tells me!” Soon afterward, she left her monastic calling. I reflected, when she did so, on that one little statement she’d made, and on the way she’d uttered it. Already, in those few words, she had revealed a reappearance in herself of ego-consciousness. Try, therefore, never to make yourself the justification for any utterance you make. I don’t mean you shouldn’t call on your experience; you have a right to that. Indeed, it is the only real wisdom you can claim. Never say, however, “I know, because of my own special insight.” The nun I’ve mentioned was probably quite right in her opinion. It would have been wiser of her, however, to answer, “Just listen to the music carefully. Can’t you hear the difference?”

14. Always be guided by principles, not by desires. And if you should find yourself in a leadership position, especially, never impose your desires or your likes and dislikes on others. Be careful, on the other hand, how you let them impose their feelings on you. As Master said to us, “Don’t be a doormat!” Be firm in yourself, while letting principles as much as possible be your guide when you make decisions.
15. Stand up for what you feel to be right, but try to make it clear always that you are not trying to impose your

personal values on anyone unless those values are based on abstract principles.

16. Laugh with others, never at them.
17. Try to view sympathetically points of view that are different from your own.
18. Try not to tell stories the main point of which is to make you look good.
19. Live always in joyful inner freedom from ego-consciousness.
20. As you practice right principles, people may often express their appreciation for you, and for your goodness. Indeed, you will have become good. When others express that appreciation, however, it will help you to remember always something Anandamayee Ma once told me when I'd exclaimed to her, "You are so good!" With a beautiful smile she replied, "It takes goodness to see goodness."
21. It is not humility to tell yourself, "I can't. . . ." Remember, God can do anything. If you give Him the chance, moreover, He can do anything through you. Ask Him for the inspiration, the guidance, and the strength to do what you must do. As Master put it, "Pray in this way: I will reason; I will will; I will act—but guide Thou my reason, will, and activity in everything I do."

22. I remember an amusing interchange, years ago. We monks liked to play volleyball together; it was good exercise, and also good fun. I must admit, however, that I wasn't a good player. Cheerfully I used to keep saying, "Sorry. My fault." One day another monk commented with humorous exasperation, "Your humility is inspiring—but when will you reform?" It is, I think, perfectly all right to exchange this sort of badinage. The obvious solution to playing badly would be, of course—at least if it is important to you—to learn to play well; one should do as well as possible whatever he sets his mind to doing at all. On the other hand, it would be a waste of both time and energy to try to excel at everything one does. There is no harm in speaking lightly of your ineptitude at some things. If, on the other hand, you do try to excel, try not to do so in a competitive spirit. It is all right to compete with yourself—that is to say, with your own past performances. A child at an Ananda school many years ago put it perfectly. He had just competed in a race that involved several schools. Someone asked him, "Did you win?" "No," he replied, "but I won against myself."
23. Make a point of not feeling badly when you make a mistake. Obviously, it would compound your mistake if you insist you didn't make it. When you do err, however, acknowledge the error calmly and cheerfully—if not openly, then at

least inwardly to yourself. (Master used to say, “Don’t tell others about your mistakes, unless they have spiritual wisdom. They will only hoard up that memory, and may use your confession against you sometime, if ever they should become displeased with you.”) If possible, don’t even tell yourself, “I made this mistake.” Say, simply, “The mistake got made.” God is the Doer. Give to Him the blame as well as the credit for everything. Then try ever more earnestly to attune all your thoughts and actions to His will.

24. Avoid calling attention to your own cleverness or skill—for instance, by making the kind of bright remark that is almost invariably followed by a smirk, and perhaps with a glance around you, seeking approval.
25. In fact, try not to call attention to yourself. If you want to call attention to some thought, try to be sure in your own mind that your desire isn’t based on a hope merely to be heard.
26. When you move to a new position or situation, carry no mental “baggage” with you. Have no expectations. Visualize receiving no recognition for anything that you’ve done, and being shoved to the bottom of any ladder that people climb. Then visualize yourself accepting that status willingly. It isn’t that you will ever receive such treatment, but

it is very freeing to feel that you need nothing from anyone but God. Make Him your support and your joy.

27. Overcome the natural need for self-importance by enjoying your unimportance! Years ago, I was invited to speak at a conference about communities. Several famous persons had been invited to speak on the subject, and to hear the convener's plans for starting a community himself. I was, as things happened, the only person there with actual experience in founding a community. One evening during the conference I invited several of the other speakers out to dinner at a restaurant. For some reason, as we sat around the table, they mostly ignored me, spending the entire evening talking self-importantly to one another. I was the host, moreover! "This is beautiful!" I said to myself. No one seemed interested in my opinions about anything, so I said very little, while trying to be gracious. At first, I was surprised to find how far I'd been placed from "center stage"; I was virtually part of an otherwise non-existent audience. I soon realized, however, that this was a golden opportunity to practice enjoying my own unimportance. I found the evening delightful, relishing the inner freedom I felt in that practice.
28. Every evening, as you go over the events of the day, avoid thinking about how you fared: what kind of impression

you made on others; what you said to them; how you reacted; how they reacted to you. Instead, share with God any thoughts of that kind that come to you. Be like Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra, who had Krishna as his charioteer, not taking active part in the ensuing struggle, but giving by his very presence all the assurance Arjuna needed he would ultimately win. Your thoughts will soar above ego-consciousness if you share with the Lord every recollection of your day.

29. An American swami from another ashram once visited me in India. After some discussion, he asked my advice on something that had been bothering him. “How,” he wanted to know, “should I handle people’s respect and even reverence? In this country swamis are treated as though they were all saints. I know I shouldn’t let it affect me, but what is the best way to overcome that temptation?” I told him, after reflecting a little, “Don’t concentrate on what you receive from others: Concentrate on what you give out to them. Give them respect, first, and reverence. See them as children of God, even as you are. For all men are equal, in Him.”
30. How does one respond in the opposite situation, when one is insulted? In this case also, give respect—even reverence if you can bring yourself to universalize your feelings to

that extent. After all, what matters except, simply, what is? Is the insult justified? Then be inwardly grateful. Is it unjustified? Then wish to see the one who insulted you free from this negativity, for it can only pull his consciousness downward. Many years ago I encountered a man at a public function who had once been a friend, but who now had turned against me. Smiling sincerely, I invited him to come to my house one day for tea. He responded as he often had, excoriating me and Ananda. This person had accepted wholeheartedly SRF's accusations against me. I replied to his contempt by saying, "J—, I might be the Devil himself. Even so, it wouldn't be your problem. Why let negativity rankle you? You are the one who is hurt most, if you hold that attitude." He shook himself as if to clear his mind of cobwebs. "I know," he said. "I just can't help it." I felt sorry for him.

31. Some people find it helpful to tell funny or deprecating tales at their own expense—in a spirit of fun, not of heavy-hearted confession. This can be a helpful practice as long as it is engaged in with a measure of calm dignity. It may be helpful to invite people to laugh at you, and helpful also to return their laughter in a spirit of fun. Delusion is extremely subtle, however. Don't indulge in such banter too long: One or two light exchanges should suffice. After

that, turn the energy outward again, to deflect it away from yourself. For if you draw energy and attention too much toward yourself, even in a spirit of fun, it will affirm your own ego. The fruits of ego, however expressed, are painful. It is no accident that most comedians, in private life, are unhappy people.

32. Don't let your mind play with the thought of where you, yourself, fit into any picture. Don't play mentally with flattery by entertaining it even lightly. Reject sternly any thought of self-importance, self-praise, self-justification, guilt, and blame. This subject is as important for you as your own salvation, for it is on abandoning ego-consciousness that your spiritual freedom depends. If release from the prison of maya is important to you, then all that I have written here is of supreme importance. It is a question of the direction your own energy and consciousness take. If you allow yourself to be affected even minutely by flattery, to that minute extent you will insert one more bar in the prison of your ego. And to the extent that you allow yourself to direct toward your ego the slightest energy, to that exact extent you will bind yourself. Instead of that, therefore, seek in every way possible (and be quite stern with yourself in this practice, no matter how carefree you seem in others' eyes) to expand your energy and conscious-

ness outward, away from yourself. In other words, don't expand it like a balloon: Release it from self-definition.

33. This should be enough for now. The important thing is that any thought of yourself, when you have it, be offered up instantly to God. Spiritual liberation comes not in one grand, overarching leap, but by little increments of which the points suggested here are good examples. Master suggested that we memorize his poem, "Samadhi," and repeat it daily. In essence, what he was saying was that we should dwell ever on the thought that our true reality is infinite. Make this concept your reality.

(As I see what I've written, I see that the thought might arise in some people's minds to print these ideas in the format of my "secrets" books, with the suggestion to the reader that he practice one idea every day of the month. I'm not in favor of that idea in the present context, however. These thoughts are not intended to be pondered in turn, whether one of them each day of the month, or according to any other system. It seems to me better, rather, to try to practice these thoughts as often as the occasion to do so arises.)

## CHAPTER 5

### *How to Be an “Ego-Detective”*

Ego-consciousness is centered in the medulla oblongata. Whenever you feel energy gathering in that spot, understand it as a sign that your ego has been stimulated. Note this fact any time you feel flattered, or upset or pleased with yourself, or (as I hope you never will) arrogant.

When you feel any concentration of energy at that point, make a determined effort to relax it; release the energy, and let it flow toward the forehead at the point between the eyebrows: the ajna chakra.

## CHAPTER 6

### *The Advantages of Formal Renunciation*

Between worldly people and sincere renunciates it is easy to see a distinction. Worldly people, whether married or single, live primarily thinking, “I . . . I . . . I,” or, “mine . . . mine . . . mine!” True renunciates live for God alone, and conduct their lives by divine truth.

I won’t go into the subjective aspects of this matter. Obviously, many apparently worldly people are not worldly at all, but, in their hearts, live purely for God. Many so-called renunciates, moreover, are arrogant, and allow their very outward renunciation to feed their egos. Let me then concentrate on the members of Ananda Sangha, and especially on the differences between those residents who have embraced formal renunciation and those who have not. For to be a sincere Ananda member means, at least inwardly, to be a sincere renunciate. Indeed, the only valid reason for joining Ananda

Sangha is the desire to find God, and, in seeking God, to serve Him in others.

Renunciation, then, for Ananda Sangha members means, as far as possible, renouncing one's ego-identity. I have tried already to make it clear that this renunciation is for everyone. Freedom from ego-involvement is, however, easier to accomplish if one formally embraces the path of renunciation.

Why so? Because the way we define ourselves is, to a great extent, how others will define us. By formally renouncing worldly ties, a person is making a clear statement of that fact to himself, and will find it easier to project that consciousness toward others. It will be easier for him also to live by those values, if others are aware that he himself has firmly embraced a different set of values from those of most people, and perhaps different from their own. At any rate, people will be less likely to seek to engage him in unspiritual talk.

Ease is the main issue, in fact. The path to God is not easy. Why, if one can help it, add unnecessary burdens to what he must carry anyway? Renunciation is like the saying, "He travels fastest who travels alone." One may also say, "He travels fastest who travels lightly."

When one can make it clear to others that he is not interested, personally, in getting involved in worldly concerns, he has fewer problems in dealing with others. Their expectations of him will be more in line with who he really is, sparing both them and him unnecessary difficulties. His family members

will not be so apt, moreover, to try to get him to be interested in all the things that engross them but that might be in conflict with his renunciate calling. Members of the other sex will not be so likely to risk disappointment by trying to get him (or her) interested in them. Mothers of marriageable offspring will be more likely resigned to seeking elsewhere for a suitable mate for their sons or daughters. (I'm not going to go through the he/she thing any further. Please understand simply that "he," in this paper, and indeed in the English language, is both the masculine and also the impersonal pronoun. When I say, "he," my reference is to both sexes.)

A renunciate is armed with a perfect excuse for not getting involved in worldly activities that are incompatible with his calling—visits to night clubs, for example, or attending dances. He can, without giving offense, plead off from attending weddings, baptisms, and other familial affairs that might be a contradiction to his chosen life-style. Not all renunciates wear a formal monastic garb, but if he does so he should wear it with a loftier motive than impressing others. Indeed, he may not want to draw unnecessary attention to it. For instance, when traveling in public he might feel justified in wearing normal street clothing. The purpose of monastic dress is not display. It is a constant reminder to the renunciate himself of his sacred calling. It also makes it easier for others to know better how to relate to him. When others know at once the kind of life to which he has dedicated himself, moreover, they

find it easier to channel their communication with him toward uplifting matters.

A renunciate doesn't have to make an effort that worldly people often make in their efforts to please others. Often, their shallow and elaborate courtesies are only oil to lubricate the machinery of social intercourse. The renunciate can show a certain eccentricity in this respect without giving offense, as long as he understands that the word "eccentric" means living not centered in worldly consciousness, but in the spiritual truth in himself.

A renunciate finds it easier to keep the motive of pleasing only God and Guru uppermost in his mind. He doesn't need to make an unnecessary effort to please people who do not share his spiritual outlook. Being single, there is no need for him to respond to the superficial criticisms that husbands and wives often hurl at each other. (I'm reminded of a song that was fairly popular in America many years ago. A wife is nagging her husband: "Why don't you do right like some other men do? Get outa here, and make me some money, too!") The renunciate has no need to justify himself when faced with accusations that have no spiritual validity. And he doesn't have to submit, somehow, to the foolish demands worldly people commonly make of one another.

As for offspring, spiritually dedicated couples might easily attract to themselves beings burdened with entirely worldly karmas. There is simply no danger, for the renunciate, of this

kind of imposition! (Indeed, to “be fruitful and multiply” is something like a game of roulette: How can one be sure into which slot the “ball” will land? Who can know what sort of child will end up being drawn to live in his family, thereby defining it, and becoming for the rest of his life his own joyful or sorrowful responsibility?) The renunciate need not adjust his wishes to, nor take personal responsibility for, growing children whose karmas may be quite different from his own. He doesn’t have to listen to worldly people urging him to “get ahead” in the world. He can forget other people’s expectations of him, and not feel defensive toward them. He can live centered and secure in himself: in his own values, his own system of beliefs, and his own devotion to truth and God.

## CHAPTER 7

### *The Disadvantages of Formal Renunciation*

There are disadvantages, also, to assuming outwardly the role of a renunciate. Perhaps the principal one is that, in living surrounded by people who share his ideals, he may develop a condescending, judgmental attitude toward those who don't share his beliefs. He may steep himself thereby in ego-consciousness, instead of ridding himself of the ego.

It is, in fact, a common disadvantage of formal renunciation that it presents a temptation for some renunciates to feel superior to those who live more worldly lives. It is, indeed, as Sri Ramakrishna said, more difficult to overcome spiritual than worldly pride. Pride in one's material or intellectual accomplishments, or in one's worldly position, soon receives its "come-uppance." Just as waves on the ocean rise and fall, so, on this ocean of delusion, even the highest wave of pride can never remain uplifted for long. Worldly exaltation is inevitably followed, sooner or later, by a crash of some kind—whether

failure, or scandal, or defeat by enemies. Every outer success is followed by outer failure; every joy, by sorrow; every fulfillment, by disappointment. Pride in one's spiritual accomplishments, however, is at least based on something real. Spiritual pride, therefore, may take a long time to overcome: even incarnations. Be very careful, therefore. Never fall into this great delusion.

I remember a period during my early days of discipleship. I was trying earnestly to overcome intellectual pride. After some time I began to feel that I had made significant gains in this direction. Then one morning, to my combined dismay and amusement, I woke up to the realization that I was growing proud of my humility!

Many swamis, it seems to me, preen themselves foolishly on the respect they receive from worldly people. It pleases them for people to touch their feet, or for them to say (with no more meaning, surely, than if they were remarking, "It's a nice day"), "Swamiji, everything will go well provided only that it has your blessings." Indeed, for many people this danger may outweigh any benefits they might otherwise achieve by formal renunciation.

My instinctive reaction when people in India touch my feet, according to their custom, is to feel that they are giving me their blessings. The renunciate must never take pride in his status in others' eyes. Nor should he feel that his status entitles him to any increased authority. Indeed, there seems to

me something slightly comical in the big mahant proceeding grandly on the back of an elephant!

Being served by others, instead of humbly offering service to them, may also make the renunciate not only proud, but selfish. He must make an extra point of serving others as his Divine Friend in many forms. It is important that he show and feel respect for everyone—even the most ignorant. However foolish another person may be, he has something in common with everyone else on earth: the universal adventure of traveling the path to ultimate enlightenment.

A further disadvantage to formal renunciation is that, because the renunciate is traditionally not supposed to mix with the other sex, his nature may tend to develop one-sidedly in either a masculine or a feminine direction. Separation of the sexes is right and desirable for renunciates, but in certain ways it can be unfortunate. For the masculine and feminine natures are two parts of a whole. Neither is complete, in itself.

As a man evolves spiritually, he acquires balancing feminine characteristics. He develops his feeling nature, becoming kinder and more compassionate. Even physically there is a tendency to manifest both masculine and feminine qualities: His gestures may become softer and more gentle, without becoming effeminate in the sense of conveying a suggestion of the message, “Look at me.” His gaze, though ever direct, is also accepting of others and not challenging to them. Some-

times he may actually develop a slight suggestion, physically, of having breasts.

As woman evolves spiritually, on the other hand, her nature becomes balanced with certain masculine characteristics: She will be more impersonal toward all, more impartial, more inclined to balance emotion with reason. Even physically speaking, her walk becomes firmer, her gestures more decided and less inviting. Her gaze, though loving, becomes impersonal. (I observed all these traits in the great woman saint, Anandamayee Ma).

Men saints tend to become more devotional: Women, more fascinated by the impersonality of wisdom.

Mixing only with members of one's own sex can be disadvantageous in causing a one-sided development. Men who lack an outer, softening feminine influence in their lives may become less sympathetic toward others, more rigid in their views and in their comportment, more drily rationalistic. Women, on the other hand, may become more emotionally reactive, more prone to gossip inconsequentially about things and people, and less generous spirited.

Men tend to view nobility more as an expression of noble behavior. Women, on the other hand, tend to view it more in terms of lofty outward position. This may not be a fair assessment, but certainly it is true that men, generally, are more inclined to see things impersonally, and women, more personally.

A man once remarked to a woman friend of his, “Women take things too personally.”

“Nonsense,” the other snorted. “I don’t!”

## CHAPTER 8

### *The Tally*

What is wrong with this picture?—

The man is reasonable, fair-minded, and sincere; the woman is sweet, tender, and inspiring; the combination ought to work. Often it simply doesn't. Why not?

For of course, too often, it doesn't work at all. Too seldom do men and women bring out the best in each other. Too often they bring out the worst. How is this possible?

I have, in my life, seen some happy marriages. Sometimes what looks like a happy marriage is simply acted that way behind a mask of mutual hatred. The mask is donned when they're "on stage" before the public. Master described a couple he once met—ideally mated, so others believed—who quarreled constantly, viciously behind the scenes. In a situation, however, where I myself lived "back stage" since it was my own earthly family, I never heard a cross word pass between my parents. I cannot but believe that the case is similar in

many homes. Why, then, have I written that it doesn't work? The reason is that even the best of marriages can never fulfill the soul's eternal longing. In this highest sense, it is a dismal compromise. Human love, even at its best, cannot but disappoint the naturally soaring ideals of the heart.

Last night (as I write these words), I watched with a small group of friends the Walt Disney animated movie, "Cinderella." I am no hard-hearted cynic when it comes to love: I long for it. It is human love that I see as the compromise, not divine love. As the movie ended with the message, "And they lived happily ever after," I found tears in my eyes. "It's true!" I murmured. "That's just what happens to all of us!"

"You mean," someone said, "in nirbikalpa samadhi?"

"Of course," I replied.

The perfect love for which all of us long—that love which ends in absolute, unqualified bliss—awaits us in God. Nothing, outside of Him, will ever work.

When I met my Guru I said to him, "Marriage isn't for me."

"It isn't for anyone," he replied, and proceeded to tell me several stories of the disillusionment he had seen.

To develop an ideal balance between one's own masculine and feminine natures one must commune inwardly with God. The degree of inner balance achieved depends on the degree of one's spiritual realization. The Garden of Eden, Master wrote, represented the inner bliss and harmony that man knew when he lived focused on the inner joy at the spiritual eye. A strange

thing Master added was that in Adam and Eve's communion at that point they were able even to produce offspring. "Offspring" can also mean those spiritual inspirations and exalted creative works which come to a person whose consciousness is uplifted. What the Bible means in stating that Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden is that their level of consciousness descended from the Christ center, becoming centered in the lower chakras. High types of creativity result when the masculine and feminine energies are united in higher communion. As the energy descends down the spine, lower levels of creativity ensue, producing at last only physical progeny. To the degree that men and women find unity between them on a lower level, rather than in God, what they receive from each other is, to varying degrees, egoic in nature. In God alone does perfection lie.

What, then, is the problem with human love? The answer is simple: human nature. Though all things, including of course human beings, are manifestations of God, in their separateness of manifestation they take on limitation—not in essence, but in awareness. A veil is cast over the consciousness of all forms of manifestation, including human beings, darkening the understanding.

As human beings evolve, they perceive the truth ever more clearly. As long, however, as the veil that covers their consciousness causes them to think, "I, I, I," the highest Truth must remain forever hidden from them.

The ego reaches outward through the senses to the world around it. Its soul-memory inspires it to reach upward, toward perfect bliss. The spine is, literally as well as symbolically, an expression of this fact. That part of us which moves outward moves also downward through the spine, and becomes polarized at its base.

When our self-awareness is centered at the point between the eyebrows, the harmony we feel with others is spiritual. The balance effected when men and women mix together in an uplifted state of consciousness brings out the best in them. As their consciousness moves downward in the spine, however, the quality of that interchange becomes mixed, strengthening the ego. The farther down people's consciousness becomes centered in the spine, the more keenly they desire, as egos, to possess one another instead of simply cooperate together in harmony.

Of course, the more people's energy becomes centered in the lower spine, the greater the attraction they feel toward sexual expression. Originally, Yogananda said, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden attracted even physical offspring from the astral world by uniting their spiritual forces in the spiritual eye. For people nowadays it is difficult even to visualize this process. When Eve was tempted by the serpent, this meant, my Guru said, that she—that it to say, the feeling aspect in human nature—subconsciously recalled the procreative process in the animal kingdom, and felt instinctively drawn toward sexual expression.

Woman is traditionally viewed as the temptress. This is because the feminine nature represents the heart's feelings. On a practical level, of course, man also plays his part in the tempting, and is usually more aggressive in this role. It is true nevertheless, however, that it is usually woman who attracts, whereas masculine nature imposes, though at first, perhaps, in response to a subtle invitation.

The fact is, as energy becomes focused in the ego, it rotates around the thought of self, creating a field of magnetism. Between unenlightened men and women an attractive power exists the reality of which it would be foolhardy to deny.

Most people cooperate gleefully with the flow they feel with this power. Nature pushes the thing along by making men and women physically attractive, and attractive in other ways, to each other. As for physical beauty, not only does it soon fade with the passing years: It is also the first human aspect to lose its appeal for people, after they come together in marriage. This doesn't mean that people come to see their beautiful partners as ugly, but only that their beauty loses significance beside the inner person as he becomes clearly revealed.

Again let us ask that question: What is wrong with this picture? Sex seems exciting, wonderful, energizing, supremely enjoyable. So why shouldn't men and women indulge in it to their hearts' content? Why not satiate themselves to the full? The obvious problem it creates is the responsibility that comes

with the appearance of a squalling brood of offspring. Much more than that is involved, however.

The Hindu scriptures say that sex increases the grip of the ego on human nature. Women's pride is evident in the eyes. Men show not only an increase of ego, but also a depletion of their mental energy. Sex takes more out of the man, since it is he who must give energy. Woman, however, who receives that energy, reinforces her own sense of self-importance and self-worth. As Master put it, "There she sits like a queen, ruling her husband because he cannot rule himself."

Biologically speaking, the female function is to coax semen out of the male. Men who respond eagerly to that magnetism become what Yogananda called "sex wash-outs." Their energy for higher types of creativity is drained; their will power, weakened; their magnetism for higher activities, depleted. Both men and women become prematurely old, and the lines on their faces become deeply etched. The expression in their eyes grows tired and, in time, listless. Even their voices become somewhat brittle and hard, as though they found it in some way difficult to use them. Their ability to recall things becomes dulled.

With men, more is involved than decreasing their energy. As energy is lost with the frequent expulsion of semen, so sexual involvement poses a greater spiritual hazard for men than for women. Yogananda said that every seminal ejection is, in terms of energy-loss, the equivalent of one quart of blood. He

also said, “For this reason, the spiritual path is more difficult for men than for women.” He added, however, “Those men who get there become very great.”

The power that is released, when a man practices sexual self-control, and flows up toward spiritual awakening, is enormous. In Rumania there is a sect of which the male members, after having two or three children, undergo voluntary castration. Their purpose is spiritual, based—but not validly—on the words of Jesus Christ: “There are eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 19:12) Yogananda spoke strongly against this practice, saying that the power generated in the testicles is extremely potent; its purpose is to generate life, and it can serve spiritually to regenerate a person’s very consciousness. Lacking that power, he added, a man would become listless and spiritually without energy.

After stating that the spiritual path is harder for men, Yogananda added, “Well, women have their obstacles too. They are more attached to maya.” One has only to look at the way women litter their homes with useless objects and their shelves with little nick-knacks to understand something of his meaning. One woman—my superior, years ago, in the monastery—remarked to me on one occasion, “Let’s face it, women are more spiritual than men.” Nonsense! Both men and women start even in the race. Men in general have one set of obstacles; women in general, another. Victory is usually

greatest for anyone who has the greatest obstacles to overcome. Indeed, it is interesting to observe that the leaders in every field of life, including those in which women usually excel, seem to be men. As Master said, “Those men who get there become very great.”

Sex is no easy thing to dismiss from the mind, so long as one’s energy remains centered in the lower chakras. Sex ceases to be tempting, however, when the energy is centered higher in the spine. Sex has been described as the next strongest instinct after self-preservation itself. The very scriptures exhort mankind to “be fruitful and multiply.” Who would think to indulge in it at all, were it not for the strong downward flow of energy which is implanted in all human beings by nature, and which takes their consciousness downward and outward in the body?

The sex instinct can be transmuted, but transmutation can never be effected by suppression. The sex temptation is nothing, therefore, to be alarmed about, if one feels it. Neither is it something to provoke feelings of guilt. The way to transcend it is by calm dispassion, not by violent rejection. One who seeks transcendence must practice inner detachment, while offering himself joyfully to God.

For most people, giving up sex seems possible only by suppression. Krishna says, however in the Bhagavad Gita, “What can suppression avail?” (“Nothing,” is what he implies.) The way of Nature is not only the natural but the best way. Self-

control comes more easily by curbing one's lower nature than by denying its existence. Marriage, for example, has the advantage of limiting one to a single partner. This is a natural means of bringing the sexual inclinations under control. The concept of platonic love is wrongly believed to mean the elimination of physical passion altogether. In fact, it was meant to be a gradual reduction of physical passion, until the point is reached where people experience communion together on a spiritual level only.

After marriage, the desire for which is often all-absorbing, people discover other forms of creative outlet as well. With women that creative outlet is, in most cases, children and the creation of a beautiful home life. With men, it is more often their work. Men may find hobbies, also, to engross them—work that they create on a wood-working table in the basement, for example. In time, these other outlets for creative energy provide wholesome alternatives to physical intimacy.

All such activities, however, strengthen the hold of the ego until, during life's later stages, one begins mentally to withdraw from them and to focus his sights on eternity. The "ashrams" in Hinduism are intended to lead everyone so inclined through four natural stages, or "rest points": brahmacharya, the stage of student, who is urged to develop self-control in all ways, and not only sexually; grihastha, the householder stage, when one is counseled to see his fulfillment in performing his duties in the home and at work; vanaprastha, the stage of mature

counselor, who withdraws somewhat from worldly involvement, but remains on hand to share what he has learned with those younger than himself in terms at least of experience; and sannyasa, or renunciation, a stage designated at least for those who are nearing the end of life, when it is suggested that people focus their sights beyond the horizons of this life, in preparation for the time when they will leave this body for what, it is hoped, will be a better life.

In many cultures, particularly (as it is known in modern America) the American Indian culture, there are “rites of passage” for when children enter upon adolescence. I think this concept would be an excellent one for Ananda communities to embrace. I have hesitated to recommend it thus far in Ananda’s history, because its premature introduction might do more harm than good. I haven’t wanted the memory of former failures to discourage its eventual adoption. If, however, after reading this paper, members should feel it can be tried safely, then I am all for it.

Is this the time for it? Several people have in fact recommended this concept to me recently. I am more than open to the thought of its adoption, for it is one I’ve toyed with mentally for years. The important thing is that the concept be approached with understanding. Let me explain what I think that understanding entails.

## CHAPTER 9

### *Two Stages of Brahmacharya*

I suggested earlier that renunciation is a difficult concept to instil in society until society itself has reinstated certain concepts supportive to self-abnegation. Modern society has, instead, gone baying like a pack of hounds down the trail of self-gratification. Accepting that the goal of life is happiness, what society has done is look for shortcuts to that goal. And it has found them abundantly—in all the wrong ways!

The word “duty” has become almost equivalent to some naughty four-letter Anglo-Saxon word. “I want” is the guiding thought in too many people’s lives today. The natural brake to that thought, “I should,” is greeted with deprecating sneers, as though it were tiresomely old-fashioned.

The ancient teaching in India of the four stages in life is virtually ignored these days even in India. Young people go to school, but they are not taught how to live, but only how to get a good job and, if possible, to grow rich. The grihastha or

householder stage is generally seen as a time for enjoying more sophisticated pleasures, along with doing the necessary work to maintain a life of self-gratification rather than of social or spiritual duty. The third stage, vanaprastha, virtually no longer exists for the simple reason that what young adults learn has become passé by the time they've reached an age when they might have passed on their knowledge. People in their fifties and sixties must struggle nowadays to keep up with all the new information that is flooding the marketplace. They try to work as long as they can if only because, once they retire, their days of usefulness will be over, and there will be nothing left to do but wait for death. The fourth stage, sannyas, finally, has become not at all what people still sometimes, euphemistically, call it, "the golden years." People in their old age, instead of withdrawing and devoting themselves to a search for higher truth, have no lofty role held up to them for their aspiration. Society is through with them, and they too, between brief bursts of traveling and gawking at "sights," end up playing cards and watching television. Because they are not taught duty and higher values in childhood, all they know is that life is, in the end, a gradual descent into senility.

I am perhaps being too cynical for some people's tastes, but I cannot forget my Guru quoting Adi (the first) Swami Shankaracharya, who said, "Childhood is busy with playthings; youth is busy with sex; young adulthood is busy with income and worries; old age is busy with sickness and pain: No one is

busy with God!” Master’s comment was, “He was bitter, but such is, indeed, the human lot.” As Sri Krishna stated in the Bhagavad Gita, “Out of a thousand, one seeks Me.”

How much more true all of this is, at a time when youngsters are taught that no other aim exists in life. Many people with the inborn tendency to live for God end up thinking, “Oh, what’s the use? I must be reasonable. Maybe it’s crazy of me to seek anything higher than a worldly life.” And even those with a strong, natural sense of duty soon decide that their first duty is not to improve themselves, but to improve society.

It all begins with education. “As the twig bends, so does the tree grow.” In my book, *Education for Life*, I state that we need four tools to become truly mature—a maturity which, I make clear, is not mere growth to adulthood. Those tools are 1) physical coordination; 2) emotional control; 3) will power; and 4) intellectual penetration and clarity.

I associate these four stages with the first two cycles of Jupiter in everyone’s life. Jupiter, in Indian astrology, is called, Guru. The influence of this planet is to expand one’s understanding. One full cycle of Jupiter, or “Guru,” requires twelve years to complete. In the first six of these years, Jupiter moves away from its birth placement in the chart; in the second six years it moves back to that placement. Thus, one phase of expansion is completed.

For the first six years of a child’s life, its main preoccupation is with learning to control its body. This is a time in

one's life of stumbling and of gradual increase of physical coordination. Children during these years have little control over their emotions, but it is too soon in the learning process for them to try to focus too intently on reining in their feelings. When they weep, they simply weep; there isn't much one can do about it.

When a child turns seven, it is time, on an average, for his elders no longer to appeal only to his sense of fun, but to try to inspire him with noble feelings and ideals.

At thirteen, more or less, a child reaches puberty. This is, for many children, a time of rebelliousness. What that means is simply that they are testing their will power — “flexing their muscles,” so to speak, or “spreading their wings” preparatory to flying on their own power.

At nineteen — again, more or less — a child begins to try earnestly to think for himself, to exercise and develop his intellect, preparatory to crystallizing his own directions in life.

As I've said, these stages cannot be demarcated absolutely. Some children are precocious, and precocious in different ways. Their direction of development, however, is generally as I've stated it. Children, moreover, are deprived of the necessary balance in their development if their parents or teachers try to “force feed” them prematurely — for example, by cramming their heads with too much knowledge while they are still very young.

To return to our basic subject, in the ancient Hindu system, necessary to right education is the stage of brahmacharya.

Brahmacharya properly begins at the age of twelve or thirteen, with puberty. The word means, literally, “flowing with Brahma.” Just as a surfer must learn muscular control before he can flow with the waves, so a human being needs to learn self-control—morally especially, though also emotionally and intellectually—before he can attune himself to, and “flow” with, truth.

The stage of brahmacharya bears the same name as the first stages of renunciation. In both cases, the name means to learn self-control in all ways. The usual connotation of brahmacharya is sexual self-control, but that is simply because sex is, of all instincts, the most difficult to control. Without some measure of sexual self-control, moreover, one’s whole life moves like a runaway train, and is ready to jump tracks at any moment.

Brahmacharya is greatly assisted, for adults, by having received training for it during adolescence.

Early childhood, before a person’s sexual awakening, is a sweet period, mostly without worries or responsibility. When the child arrives at adolescence, sexuality dawns, marking a time when it must increasingly assume responsibility for its actions. When one reaches adulthood, he is ready to take on serious responsibilities. To review this brief outline of the four stages of responsibility (leaving out, that is to say, the more-or-less helpless dependence of childhood) semi-retirement is a time for gradually handing the reins over to one’s successors,

and old age is, ideally speaking, a time designated for living above all for God.

I have always been particularly struck, for some reason, by how a calf's tone of voice changes when it becomes a bull, and its relatively impotent sound becomes a deep-toned, aggressive bellow. People's voices change too, of course, men's voices especially, but it is the aggressiveness of that bovine bellow that has made a particularly strong impression on my mind. It suggests that there appears suddenly within the growing animal a new self-importance and, however undeservedly, a budding self-confidence, as it reaches sexual maturity. Is this not true of human beings, also?

## CHAPTER 10

### *A Suggested Rite of Passage*

Many societies have “rites of passage,” as they’ve been called, for various significant changes of social status: marriage, for example. The American Indians celebrated boys’ growth to adulthood. I am only minimally acquainted with their practices: their dream quests and all the rest. In any case, we today live in different times, and cannot merely imitate what was done then.

I have long thought it would be good for Ananda communities, and perhaps some time later for society as a whole, following Ananda’s example, to develop some special method or ritual as a way to honor children’s transition from childish innocence to sexual maturity. It has, in fact, astonished me that so little notice is taken in modern society of this significant event. Certainly it is an occurrence of the highest importance. I suppose the reason it is given so little attention is, first, that people become sexually mature at different ages, and, second,

that the subject is too embarrassing for most adults, especially for parents.

Obviously, the need exists for the facts of life to be introduced impersonally. I don't personally think, however, that the best place to teach them is in the classroom. It seems to me that it would be a good thing for society itself to take on this responsibility. Sex should be taught as more than a biological act. For there are deep, and indeed spiritual, aspects to this subject. These deeper aspects are, unfortunately, little known. For many reasons, however, and not only the spiritual, this is not a subject to be swept figuratively, when possible, "under the carpet."

Most growing children, surely, are dismayed upon first learning how they were conceived. Their parents are, quite understandably, reluctant to tell them, since the children will almost certainly begin to think, "You mean . . . you . . . you . . . ? Oh, no!" The information is traumatic for them.

And then the youngsters' own bodies begin to behave strangely, often to the children's great shame.

The nature of any "rite of passage" into adolescence is not a matter for contemplation here, since our subject concerns renunciation for grown adults. The essence of what needs to be taught, however, is the same as for those who, later on, become renunciates, and it is important that every human being realize that sex was given to mankind for a high reason, and not for liberal and undisciplined indulgence. Those who are

not initiated early into these mysteries will have to learn them by experience, later on in life, when for most of them it will be too late to benefit from the understanding.

I suggest for any rite of passage that an age be selected before puberty—perhaps at the age of ten. It should be, in other words, a time of preparation for what is to come. Emphasis should be placed on the coming stage of life when one's will power naturally develops, and on the importance of acquiring will power above all through sexual self-control.

Children should be taught that they have within them a sleeping dragon—known in the yoga teachings as the Kundalini power—which can bestow upon them great powers of accomplishment, or, on the other hand, make them lean on other people like beggars for any power they require.

Delusion, like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, is extremely subtle. Something which girls and boys soon discover is their power to attract and influence each other. Power, in their minds, becomes soon identified with, but also, therefore, limited to the power they exert on members of the opposite sex. The song, "It Ain't Necessarily So," from *Porgy and Bess*, states scoffingly, "Methuselah lived nine hundred years. . . . But who'd call that livin', when no gal will give in? To Methuselah, what's nine hundred years?" Such is the lie which Satan insinuates into young people's minds.

Any rite of passage offered to children as they approach adolescence should emphasize the fragility of such "power."

Life should be explained to them as a long-distance marathon for which they must prepare carefully. The subject of sexual self-control may well be difficult to discuss, but adults should not flinch from showing what happens to people who live wrongly. It may even be good to use examples (though not too personal) that the children may find recognizable.

It is very difficult for a young child to imagine itself old. It will help him to realize that this is a stage of life he has known before, and that will, all too soon, be with him again. The speed with which life passes will be a good thing to emphasize in every “rite of passage.”

A little girl once asked me, “How old are you?” (I was probably nearing seventy at the time.) I answered her, “Let me put it this way: When I was your age, you were an old woman.” Young people should be helped to realize that they, themselves, will someday be grown-ups, then old, and then—finished!

Boys should be helped to see that the power they exert over girls is a trap, in which they themselves will get caught in the end! (Consider the many silent husbands in the world, in whose marriages the wife does all the talking, and makes most of the decisions!)

Girls should be shown that the power they exert over boys—a fact they delight in, after a childhood of being pushed aside or ignored by boys—will yield, ere not much time, to the disappointment and pettiness of a complaining and unfulfilled existence.

Indeed, the ego cannot possibly fulfill even the least of its promises, if only because it is, itself, so disappointingly diminutive. Sex, which seems to promise at first a joyful, indeed glorious life, shows itself in the end a Great Liar, its flowers strewn on the wind, as the children produced all too often disappoint all one's hopes and expectations. Life itself is a gray compromise. Each generation behaves as though it had discovered at last the wonder of sex! And each generation soon finds itself trudging wearily down the winding road of life, hemmed in on both sides by barren fields of disappointment.

None of this is to say that human love cannot be beautiful, ennobling, and inspiring. Even at its best, however, it is still of the ego, and is therefore limited and temporary: a brief rainfall, at best, on a parched land. If life is disappointing at last, even in its best aspects, it is because we were not made for this world, but for God's love alone. Our very confinement in this tiny ego is disappointing at last. Even the most perfect human love is found, in time, to be like a mere sliver of glass, shining with the reflected light of God's love.

Sex should also be described to children as an expression of love, not as something done with lust, and not some merely scientific fact that the child may think of as merely bestial or unclean. If connecting sex with love seems strange to children who have yet to feel any stirring of sexual feeling, it may help to explain to them that when deep love exists between husband and wife, there is sometimes a desire for complete union,

even physically, rather like the way children love to be held and caressed. Between parents, it may be explained, there is a special relationship that is holy, and one not shared with anyone else, as well as too adult to be shared with children.

Sex is a wonderful force when it is understood and used rightly. It contains the secret of life itself. Sought at its source in spiritual feeling, rather than like a plant in autumn scattering seeds on the wind, it contains some of the secret to the very mystery of existence. Children who can be taught to understand and appreciate this truth will be able to develop the magnetism to attract the right mates, to attract popularity and success in life, and to retain youthful energy into old age. On the other hand, people who abuse this power become, as Yogananda put it, “sex wash-outs” even while still young in years.

I propose a ritual in which several older men—five might be a good number—address a group of ten-year-old boys, and a comparable group of women address another group of girls. It would be good to make this a solemn occasion. There could be a fire ceremony, accompanied by chanting the Mahamrityunjay mantra; a special blessing; a chant, a prayer, and a short meditation. Each boy and girl could be given an Ananda pin to wear made of silver with a small zircon or similar stone at the point of the arrow.

I do not propose to go more deeply here into the subject of training the young. Brahmacharya is a vitally important stage of life, but since it usually leads to marriage, not renunciation,

I will limit my discussion here to those who want to become lifelong brahmacharis. This paper is for true renunciates, but also for those who are married, even if they have children, who have realized that the true purpose of life is to find God. Thus, couples too can follow these principles at least inwardly.

This paper is above all for those unmarried people who want to give their lives to God. Formal renunciation may help them as a protection against the temptation, whether inwardly or from others, to seek companionship in human intimacy rather than in God alone.

How are people to avoid the emotional trap of human entanglement? Young people, especially, should not take lightly this all-but-universal human inclination, which many people don't even see as a weakness, but as a simple reality and, indeed, as a blessing and perhaps even a sign of strength.

## CHAPTER 11

### *The Second Brahmacharya*

I will now discuss brahmacharya with special emphasis on its usual connotation of sexual self-control. It is important to understand that the attraction between the sexes is not merely “in the mind.” It is a magnetic force to which people of all ages are sensitive, as can be seen, for example, from the special tenderness that very old people often show toward youths of the opposite sex. Yogananda said to me, “This attraction is felt at all ages.” A relative of mine once told me, speaking of her little three-year-old daughter, “She has a special giggle that she reserves just for little boys her own age.”

The attraction between the sexes need not be physical. It depends on where a person’s consciousness is centered in the spine. If one has the slightest feeling toward people of the other sex that they are somehow different or special, that should be recognized in oneself as a warning sign.

One of the principles for brahmacharis always to practice,

under every circumstance, is to internalize the slightest feeling of attraction. This is true of any kind of attraction: It is not limited to one's feelings toward the opposite sex. It may be a simple liking for a piece of music, or for a beautiful painting. Whatever pleasure you feel in anything, internalize it. Recognize the source of your enjoyment to be your inner reaction.

Consider the example of little children at the zoo. How enthusiastic they are, beholding so many exotic animals. The fascination dwindles slowly, however, with fatigue. It isn't that the experience loses interest for them. What diminishes is their own ability to appreciate: their level of energy. By the end of the day they want only to go home, having had, perhaps their first lesson that pleasure lies, not in things, but in the ability to respond to sense-stimuli.

Thus, when you see beautiful scenery, for example, be aware of the inner lift of pleasure—perhaps even of happiness—the sight gives you, and then share that feeling with God. Lift your heart's feelings up toward Him.

When you hear a beautiful sound—music; or the soothing sound of wind in the trees; the ocean surf on a beach—bring the consciousness of God into that thought of beauty. In fact, in certain sounds there is a suggestion of Aum, the vibration of the universe. Share the experience with Him, and rejoice in it, with Him.

Train yourself never to enjoy anything avidly. (The exaggerated reactions displayed in television commercials are a good

example of what I mean by “avidly.”) Don’t pour energy out through your senses toward anything. Internalize whatever sense stimulation you experience, and remind yourself that the very power to have that experience lies within you, not in anything external to yourself.

Thus, look . . . appreciate briefly . . . then turn within, or look elsewhere from the object that engaged your interest. Give thanks to the Creator for every enjoyment.

## CHAPTER 12

### *Specific Suggestions*

Here are a few rules—rather, call them helpful suggestions:

1. Make a special point of not letting persons of the other sex engage your attention too closely. Don't feast your gaze on them, whether or not they are beautiful. (They will have, in any case, a certain magnetism.) Don't make a big thing of not looking at them: For example, don't drop your gaze hastily to the ground, or look hurriedly away, as if startled or afraid. (There is no surer clue that you are affected by another person's appearance, and that you may even dread it. Some people will take their very suspicion that you have such a feeling as a personal challenge.) Instead, therefore, simply look away with a determinedly impersonal attitude.
2. The first thought of sex, even if it comes without any suggestion of attraction, is the moment to beware, to catch your thoughts, and to direct them elsewhere. Never tell yourself,

“Oh, there’s no harm in thinking!” There is, in fact, every harm. The factory of the mind is where all temptation is first created.

3. When people of the other sex give the slightest indication that they find you attractive, don’t try to analyze your own feelings in the matter. (You might decide that they have a point!) Instead, immediately impersonalize those feelings. I found when I was young, even before I met my Guru, that this simple response often sufficed to be left strictly alone. For when women saw my impersonality, they decided I was a poor “catch.”
4. For my part in those days, the more likely it seemed that I might feel attracted to some woman, the more I instinctively put up a shield of impersonality. It worked! Girls generally turned away, to seek elsewhere.
5. Another trick I found useful was to throw abstract philosophy at them! Doing so proved an effective damper on any interest they might have had, especially when I showed no interest in persuading them of my ideas.
6. Discourage the thought in yourself, “She’s a woman,” or, “He’s a man.” Train your mind to look upon others simply as human beings.

7. Strangers on the street or elsewhere can also exert a passing fascination: Don't let your gaze linger on them. It may be enough merely to look away, but I suggest you also make a point of withdrawing your energy from the scene—lest there linger some thought in your mind that you will have to deal with, later. Try not even to notice them. Remember, even if most people of the opposite sex awaken no interest in you, you may find yourself surprised, someday, to find that one person, out of a crowd, has lingered insidiously in your mind, and that the thought is difficult to dismiss.
8. Try not to look lingeringly at any photograph if you find it appealing. Advertisements, particularly, are of course designed to attract you, and advertising surrounds us nowadays. Pull in your psychic antennae in response to that barrage.
9. The voice can exert powerful magnetism. Use your own voice consciously in an effort to send out harmony, peace, and inspiration. Take pains not to use it for attracting people in a personal way. When anyone's voice draws you magnetically, be especially attentive. You can't close your ears to it, but withdraw your energy, and tell yourself that all beauty comes from God.

10. Touch is the principle channel of sexual magnetism. Try to avoid all physical contact with the opposite sex. The simple, palms-folded namaskar is, in all cases, better than shaking hands. Hand shaking, Yogananda said, forms a special magnetic interchange, creating two “horseshoe” magnets, one between the upper bodies, the other between the lower bodies. In such an interchange of magnetism, the Master made the point of saying, the stronger magnet, whether good or evil, will always affect the weaker.
11. Avoid the practice, increasingly common nowadays, of embracing others of either sex, even though a hug means nothing more than affection and friendship. I myself developed a distaste for this practice when I realized how often people don’t embrace with sincere feeling. All too often, their gesture was quite meaningless. I feel in my heart much more love and friendship toward others if I refrain from gripping them to myself in a “bear hug”—an awkward gesture, at best! Thus, it has become my practice not to hug anybody.
12. Avoid as much as possible the company of worldly people. Don’t be rude to them, of course, but show no particular interest in the things that fascinate them.
13. Dress neatly and tastefully; otherwise, however, don’t pay special attention to your appearance in an effort to look at-

tractive. This suggestion is especially important for women. As my Guru said to the women renunciates on one occasion, “Ladies, don’t pay too much attention to your appearance, lest you fall into temptation.”

14. If persons of the opposite sex, especially, pay you compliments, watch your heart’s feelings to make sure you take no special pleasure in what they say. Don’t reject the compliments; that might be rude. Simply tell yourself, rather, and also (if tact and graciousness permit it) tell the other person that everything praiseworthy comes from God.
15. Attraction often grows in the soil of merriment. Never allow your amusement in mixed company to cross over the line into hilarity. Be friendly, be even humorous, and smile easily. Maintain always, also, especially in mixed company, a certain calmness and dignity.
16. Because sexual attraction can arise in the mind also when one is alone, remember again Master’s advice: “The first thought of sex is the moment to catch it. Put that mere thought out of your mind; then channel energy into thinking about something else.”
17. When you feel the slightest stir of temptation, inhale and exhale deeply several times to make your lungs a magnet, drawing the energy upwards. Then sit and meditate; focus

on the spiritual eye, and, feeling the magnetism there, draw the energy upward to that point.

18. Affirm frequently in yourself, “I belong to no one, and no one belongs to me. I depend on no one; no one depends on me.”
19. Keep in mind these words which were once addressed to me by my Guru: “Remember, you won’t be safe until you reach nirbikalpa samadhi.”

Paramhansa Yogananda once told me, “Sri Ramakrishna had a young male disciple of whom he said, sometimes, ‘He was born and I was born’—a statement that led some people to conjecture, ‘Who came because of whom?’

“One day this disciple told Ramakrishna that he was meditating with a young woman.

“Brahmachari, beware!’ said the Master.

[The expression I quoted in *Conversations with Yogananda* was, “Sadhu, beware!” A sadhu is a holy man. A brahmachari is one who aspires to holiness. Master used the expression, “Brahmachari, beware!” on one or two other occasions. I’ve used this expression here simply because it is more suitable, and also more understandable, in this context. The two words could be taken, in this story, interchangeably.]

“‘Oh, I will be all right,’ the young man said. Well, after some time he ‘ran away’ with the woman. Brahmachari, beware always.”

## CHAPTER 13

### *How to Be a “Temptation Detective”*

The point from which energy leaves the spine, going out to the sex nerves, is the swadisthan chakra, or sacral center, located about an inch and a half up from the base of the spine. Sexual stimulation brings with it a sensation—a sort of “thrill” of energy—at that point. Whatever your mind tells you, should you feel anything at that point, it is something of which to be wary.

Another sensation comes also: a stimulation of energy in the sex nerves themselves.

When such feelings, in either location, become apparent to you, try to raise the energy in the spine by taking several deep breaths; then concentrate your energy deeply at the point between the eyebrows. Such feelings of stimulation, however slight they may be, are warning signs that you should be extra careful how your thoughts and energy are being directed.

Deep breathing is helpful, followed by meditation. A sensation of coolness in the sex nerves helps also. You can generate this sensation literally with the touch of something cool or cold. Feel the coolness rise up the spine to the brain, cooling it.

## CHAPTER 14

### *Poverty vs. Simplicity*

There is a story told in India about a sadhu who went to the local police office to report a theft.

“What have you lost?” demanded the officer in charge.

“Well, I’ve lost my home, my bedding, my table, my chair, my overcoat—in fact, I’ve lost everything!”

The police officer pondered a moment. “I don’t understand,” he said. “Aren’t you living alone on that open hillside?”

“That’s true,” acknowledged the sadhu.

“Then how could you have . . . ? Oh, never mind. Would you please describe to me what you lost?”

“Yes. It was a large, square piece of cloth about so big.” The sadhu extended his arms upward and downward, then out to the side. For him, that one cloth had served all those functions.

Non-possession is, for the renunciate, an important principle. Certain Roman Catholic convents encourage their nuns in the thought of non-possession by having them say, “our,”

not, “my” — thus: “I am returning to our cell [where she lives by herself],” or, “In the morning, I don our habit [monastic dress].”

My Guru did not emphasize poverty as a necessity for his renunciate disciples. The word he recommended we use was simplicity. In my own experience, I’ve found that people who own nothing must live at their own inner center if non-possession is not to cost them their dignity. The case varies with different people, of course, but complete non-possession as a discipline works best for people who live for God alone. People with affirmative natures may accept complete non-possession cheerfully, but it can lead to a feeling of oppression if they have no freedom to decide anything for themselves. In a monastery, where living among others results in not possessing any spending money, it is more suppressive than liberating.

I can somehow believe more easily in the raven that brought St. Anthony (or was it St. Paul?) his daily loaf of bread than in the impartial charity of superiors in a monastery whose duty it is to satisfy every monastic’s needs as they arise.

Some people reach liberation by expanding their awareness of self to infinity. Others achieve it by reducing the thought of self to insignificance. Both attitudes, in fact, are expansive and, indeed, beautiful. The mistake the superiors often make in monasteries, however, is to try to force everyone into the same mold. This indifference to the individual’s needs, or even his reality, does more harm than good.

St. Francis of Assisi is fondly remembered for his “love affair” with “Lady Poverty.” Yogananda, who often spoke of Francis as his “patron saint,” said also, “Instead of ‘Lady Poverty,’ I prefer the expression, ‘Lady Simplicity.’”

“Money,” you may have heard people say, “is the root of all evil.” They are mistaken, of course. The root of all evil, if it involves money, is the desire for money—or, as St. Paul put it, “love of money.” An alternative to the desire for money as the “root of all evil” might be, “Attachment to money is the root of all evil.” At any rate, no mere thing can be evil. It is what we do with things that makes them either good or bad. In fact, some people use money to do a great deal of good.

Money and possessions, like every delusion, are harmful principally in their strengthening effect on ego-consciousness. Money itself is but a thing: in modern society, money is only a piece of paper, backed not so much by a government as by people’s faith.

In traditional monasteries, an absence of personal funds is intended, of course, to free the members from both the desire for and the attachment to whatever money comes into their possession. Money itself, of course, is always necessary for mere survival in this world.

I wonder to what extent, however, a complete absence of money doesn’t in some way, at least, inhibit creativity. It may be very well not to care about money, and not to wonder how the money is spent that pays for one’s needs. This attitude may,

however, also suggest a kind of passivity that cannot in itself lead to God-realization. When others, for the sake of making you wholly dependent on God, provide all your needs for you, the chances are you will find yourself depending passively on those individuals rather than depending actively on God. Monasteries generally encourage such passivity, but I have not seen it to be of any particular benefit to people.

What I think it usually encourages, in fact, is a kind of *sudra* attitude—a passivity that lessens a person’s courage, his ability to stand strongly on his own feet. This attitude is spiritually harmful, for it is self-debasing.

As with humility, non-possession should be practiced intelligently, not mindlessly. To have no care for money—where it comes from, how it is used, or how it might be used, may be admirable, but I think that, usually, it argues a lack of intelligent interest in one’s surroundings that suggests, not perfect surrender, but simply dullness of mind.

To be completely dependent on God’s bounty is wonderful if it is active, and if it entails a constant, conscious act of joyful self-offering to the Lord. Otherwise, what is the use of letting others make all one’s decisions for him?

A superior in the monastery I lived in once said to me, “In a corporation”—she was thinking, of course, of monastic corporations—“no one has a right even to think except the members of the board of directors.” I was myself, at the time, on the board of directors; otherwise, I’m sure she wouldn’t

have dared to utter such words to me. Yet I found, even as a director, that I didn't really have the right to think.

Having no money at all in a community makes one consciously dependent on others, more than on God. Even if, in one's heart, he has no desire for money, and even if he should find it more freeing not to think about money, his position of having to ask for everything he needs is demeaning, and is not good for the over-all spirit in the monastery itself. What I have found is that people's dependence comes to repose not so much in God's will as in the will of other human beings. Apart from the fact that those individuals will rarely be wise, they will also—usually—dispense their “largesse” unevenly, and not always in the individual's highest interests.

Perhaps strange to relate, politics often enter the community's consciousness—the politics of favoritism and inequality. Some people may feel they have to please their superiors, and not depend impersonally on God, to get their needs seen to.

I myself faced this problem once, years ago. I was new at Mt. Washington, the headquarters of my Guru's organization. Repeated requests for necessary curtains had produced no results. I was not only a new member, but young. My needs, consequently, must not have been considered important. At any rate, months passed and no curtains came.

The building I lived in was a little two-room affair on the grounds near the main building that had once served as a waiting room for the cable cars that came up the hill from Marmion

Way at the bottom. The windows were without visual protection. In order to get dressed or undressed, I had to turn off the single light that dangled precariously from the ceiling. Otherwise I was clearly visible to anyone passing by.

One evening, finally, I rebelled. Stripping down to my undershorts, I lay face down on my bed and gave myself up to the luxury of reading Shakespeare. Some time later, one of the senior nuns passed by my window on her way from the garage. Paying no attention to her, I went on with my reading—though smiling to myself at the probable consequences.

The next morning word reached me that I would be receiving my curtains!

An amusing incident, perhaps, though it suggests, regarding me, that I didn't belong to the "passive class" of renunciates. I tell the story here to illustrate the fact that monastic poverty, though in some ways a beautiful ideal, may produce problems to the extent that it depends on the will of others.

Overcoming the inward desire for money by depending wholly on God is spiritually strengthening. The effect is lessened, however, when one must depend on a whole community as a channel for divine grace—even assuming that the community as a whole is dedicated to God. The gains from letting others fulfill one's every need cannot equal the gains derived from self-effort.

I have always been able to attract to myself whatever I've needed in life. When it has been necessary for me to depend on

others for the fulfillment of those needs, however, I've never had such success. I haven't felt strengthened, moreover, in doing so. Surely it is good to affirm, with inner freedom, one's ability to live happily with whatever God gives him. To add to divine acceptance, however, complete reliance on the charity of others is, I think, too likely to muddy the river of grace. What one really affirms in that case is his dependence on others' attunement with God's will.

I think my Guru's solution was the best. He gave us a small allowance, making it unnecessary for us to have to submit a request for all our needs. It was good for us, he felt, to be able to do certain things on our own.

He also never insisted that we turn over to the organization all the money we possessed, or any funds that came to us (from relatives, for instance). Thus, in my own case, I was able to do a number of things that were meaningful to me—none of them expensive—and also to give money freely for projects in the work (which I did).

One time, however, my father sent me \$500 worth of Gulf Oil Stocks. Our president insisted (this was years after our guru's mahasamadhi) that I give those stocks to SRF. I did so, as an act of obedience. I never felt right, however, about handing them over, because I'd done so at her insistence, and hadn't offered them of my own free will. I felt, and still feel, that it would have been spiritually better for me to hand them over on my initiative. Years later, when SRF threw me out, this was

the one thing I asked be returned to me. Everything else had been my free gift to Master; I considered it no longer my own, and never wanted it back.

Monastic rules used to be written with a view to making the monks and nuns holy. This was the medieval way of thinking. Years ago when I read the rule of St. Teresa of Avila, it came to me forcibly that the imposition of a rule was no longer the right way: People couldn't be made holy. When Yogananda put me, as a young man, in charge of the monks, I soon realized that the time had come for us to create a truly monastic way of life—something to which he himself hadn't devoted much energy, because the caliber of people coming hadn't yet encouraged him to. Moreover, it was necessary for him first to launch his much larger mission in the world. He himself told me at the time, "Don't make too many rules. It destroys the spirit."

It was soon apparent that any rule we instituted would have to be a compromise with personal sincerity. Several of the monks meditated long hours, but I saw it would be necessary to develop a pattern of life that would help everyone including the lighter ones to become focused on a single way of life. A number of the men used to go downtown occasionally on frivolous errands. Worse still, many of them tended to chat frivolously instead of meditating regularly. Our Guru wanted us to meditate together, but no previous person in charge had been willing to court unpopularity by imposing any system. Classes and meditations were more or less left up

to each monk's conscience. I decided there must be more system: Too many young men, accustomed to live by their own whims, were leaving our way of life—such as it was. I decided to shorten my own meditations simply to make sure everyone regularly attended everything and abided by the few rules our Guru had recommended.

For me, as I said, it was a compromise. It was obvious to me—and Master confirmed it—that no rule was sufficient to ensure anyone's holiness. This was our Guru's job in any case, and he himself never forced his will on his disciples. The best I could hope for was to prevent the monks from disturbing excessively the over-all calm.

I have, since then, seen many monasteries in my life. In 1963 I even lived for six months in a Roman Catholic monastery, soon after I was forced out of SRF by superiors—all women—with what was, to me, an altogether too circumscribed view of how the work should be served. I have become convinced that spiritual development, in these times at least, cannot be brought about by the imposition of any rule. A rule can only prevent people from falling below a certain minimum level of mediocrity. For spiritual development, the individual must develop his own inner attunement with God.

This is not to say that rules should therefore be abandoned. Far from it. A rule is important for the cohesion of any group of people living together as renunciates. They must be encouraged in every way feasible, however, to develop their own inner life.

To return to the subject of money, then, I think it is important not to force non-attachment to it on renunciates by any outer rule. Wealth should not be encouraged, of course, but I have seen in practice that when people are encouraged toward non-attachment they are much more likely to practice this virtue spontaneously. We may assume, of course, that no one would dedicate himself to the quest for God who is still avaricious.

Master supported common spiritual tradition in saying that money is one of three great delusions—the other two being sex and “wine” (this is to say, intoxicants of all kinds). Money strengthens a person’s identification with his ego by increasing in him a sense of power, importance, and superiority to others. In a monastery, anyone with these attitudes would probably be subjected to a certain amount of ridicule; he would almost certainly receive little incentive to indulge in the “big talk” often encountered among worldly people, where such competition in arrogance is almost the norm.

If a person wants to know God, he must shun values that are normal for worldly people. Their desires and ambitions are centered in their egos. To transcend ego-consciousness, he must give up the thought that he owns anything, and must view everything as belonging to God.

The reason the “three great delusions” are cautioned against is that they are primary causes of man’s bondage to ego. Ego is the issue where money is concerned, not wealth as such. Not a few renunciates are as proud of having no possessions as any

merchant is of his wealth. The particular delusion of money is that it suggests innumerable possibilities to the mind, not only one attractive item at a time. When one's dreaming begins at the source of supply, rather than in any specific thing one wants, he may even imagine castles built with the one thousand dollars in his pocket. It is only when he visualizes just what it would take to build a castle that he moderates his dreams. In vagueness one is more easily caught in the trap of restless desire.

It may be better to allow the water contained behind a dam to overflow slightly than to keep that dam under constant, maximum pressure. Letting the renunciate have a little spending money will not only give him a sense of greater dependence on himself, which is a good thing, but it will help his spiritual development. For that development, as I've said, depends on self-effort.

Every delusion causes energy to flow out from the heart toward the object of its attraction. Watch the flow of your energy. Where money is concerned, especially, keep that flow reined in.

It is an interesting fact that when the desire for money is brought under control, and money ceases to fascinate one; when one has schooled oneself to think of it only in terms of the good that can be accomplished for others: then one attracts money almost effortlessly—indeed, in any quantity he really needs.

Try to practice regularly the following techniques for overcoming attachment to money.

## CHAPTER 15

### *Techniques for Dealing with Money*

1. Whatever money you receive, place it either mentally or literally on an altar, as an offering to God. Pray that it be useful in a good cause.
2. Give to God, or to some good cause in His name, a portion of whatever money comes to you.
3. On your birthday—a day, traditionally, when people give you presents—give something to as many friends as you can in gratitude for God’s countless gifts to you, including, first, the gift of your own body.
4. If you suffer any pain or sorrow, look for someone less fortunate than yourself, and try to help him. Offer him, if you like, some monetary gift.
5. When giving gifts to others, try to give happiness also. Give not only something you think they may want, but

something you feel happy, giving them. Material gifts are only things, but the wishes you infuse into them for the happiness of others is your real gift to them.

6. When buying something, don't pay for it only with money. Offer with that money your smiling wishes for the seller's happiness. Shopping should, indeed, be an exchange of good will, and not only of material goods. When you meet salespeople who don't show any understanding of this truth, smile at them with greater kindness, not with less—as if to protect yourself from their indifference. Whenever you give or pay money to anyone, feel that, beyond that, you are giving your friendship and good will.
7. Don't equate non-attachment with poverty-consciousness. Dress pleasantly—not to make yourself attractive, but to give pleasure to others. Any effort others put out to make this world more beautiful, show them, if possible, your appreciation. As a youth, I even—to my mother's dismay, I'm afraid!—rang the doorbells of homes that I thought were particularly lovely, simply to thank their owners for providing such beauty. I don't say you should go so far, but I do think we all need to express our thanks and appreciation to others more often for many things. As far as money attachment is concerned, the more we give, and the less we

try to draw to ourselves, the more we will find that life itself sustains us.

8. Don't equate renunciation with negligence or a sloppy appearance. One time in Phoenix, Arizona, Paramhansa Yogananda met a man who was unkempt, shabbily dressed, and physically unclean. "Why do you dress that way?" asked the Master. "I'm a renunciate," the man proudly answered. "But you've become attached all over again," answered the Master, "this time, to disorder!"
9. It is good to be practical when shopping for anything, whether it be a shirt or something really expensive. I have learned, however, that any bargaining I do works better for both me and the other person if I make his needs also my consideration. Usually he himself will try also, in return, to be as fair as he can be to me.
10. Realize that it is not a suitable expression of non-attachment to treat money as though it meant nothing to you. The proof of action lies in its consequences. Many film stars in the thirties, for example, gave their money away indiscriminately. It was more than coincidence that a number of them, though once wealthy, died in poverty. Respect what God gives you. It doesn't please Him if, to show your non-attachment, you treat His bounty disdainfully. Be

grateful for everything in life. Share whatever you can also with others in a spirit of gratitude to the Supreme Giver.

11. Money is energy. When you need money for anything, don't be passive about it. As a renunciate, especially when living in a community of monks or nuns, your access to funds may be limited. Nevertheless, never think of yourself as poor. God is the Lord and Owner of the very universe! There is nothing He will deny you, if you ask Him properly. When I lived at Mt. Washington as a monk, the allowance I received during my first years was fifteen dollars a month. (It was later increased to twenty dollars.) When I was getting only fifteen dollars a month, I decided one day that a navaratna (nine-gem bangle) would be spiritually helpful to me. I didn't let my virtual want of an income discourage me. Nor did I ask my superiors, or anyone else, for financial help. I simply affirmed, in the proper way, that the bangle was mine already. Before long, in fact, I got the bangle. Years later, I sold it to help pay for Ananda. You may well ask, What is that right way? Some of the pointers below will help you to attain the material abundance you need.
12. Equate abundance only with what you need. Poverty is not lack: It is a sense of lack. Be satisfied with whatever God gives you. I have always found that, with this attitude, my needs both great and small have been fulfilled.

13. Have faith. Doubt is a mental static. When you ask God for anything, ask Him also, "If this is in accordance with Your wishes"; then know that He will respond.
14. Faith is more than belief. It is a conscious direction of will power. To exercise it when you make any appeal for a true need, send energy with will power through the spiritual eye, at the point between the eyebrows. The energy should rise from your heart with a pure desire for good, not for selfish gain, and then flow outward from the medulla to the spiritual eye, and on toward Infinity. Visualize not so much any specific result as the direction you want the energy to flow. By the power of your will, united to God's will, there is no limit to your potential.
15. Pray or affirm with will power, and always without attachment to the results. The results can be safely left in God's hands. Otherwise you may find that what you've attracted is more harmful than beneficial to you.
16. Your attitude in manifesting what you want should be loving, grateful, and filled with joy.
17. Never tell yourself that material self-sufficiency is contrary to the spirit of renunciation. Renunciation is not self-deprivation: it is viewing everything as belonging to God. It is an attitude which attunes your own power to the power

of infinity. That is why the renunciates in India are often addressed as Maharaj. One who has mastered himself is, in the true sense, master of the very universe. His supremacy comes not by subjugating anybody, but by harmonizing himself with the love and joy which brought everything into existence.

## CHAPTER 16

### *Obedience*

Obedience, in Western tradition, is held up to people as the supreme monastic virtue. The tradition was given several rationales. First, it was considered that only those would rise to positions of authority who were worthy of being obeyed. Second, those people were supposed to be viewed as human representatives of Christ. Thirdly, it was claimed that, if they erred in giving any directive, Christ himself would correct them.

Our Guru's words on this subject do not support that rationale. What he said was that obedience to one's guru, or to one who knows God, is liberating, but obedience to anyone who is not spiritually enlightened can lead to weakened will power.

Obviously, where directives are given there is a possibility that some of them, at least, may be wrong. In the war crimes trials at Nuremberg after World War II, a common excuse offered by the accused was, "I was only obeying orders." This

reasoning was not acceptable to the courts of human law. Still less should they be acceptable where the issue concerns spiritual rights and wrongs.

One assumes, hopefully, that the superiors in a monastery will not order their charges to do anything morally wrong. This is a hope, but it would be foolish to turn that hope into a dogma. Indeed, when one thinks, for example, of the Spanish Inquisition, or of numerous evils that have over the centuries been perpetrated in the name of religion, and sanctioned in the name of God by many religious leaders, one cannot honestly swallow the concept of religious obedience as being truly based on wisdom.

Usually, of course, the issues are by no means so black and white. Still, since renunciation is supposed to help one not only to please God, but to find Him, it would be foolish to hand the reins of one's spiritual future to one who is not competent to guide one wisely.

When I met my Guru, he asked me to give him my unconditional obedience. I was desperate to be accepted by him. Nevertheless, I felt that in something so vitally important to my welfare I needed to be completely honest.

I asked, "What if I should ever feel you are wrong?" His answer completely satisfied me.

"I will never ask anything of you," he stated, "that God Himself doesn't tell me to ask."

I had faith that he knew God. I had faith, therefore, that he

would never betray my complete trust. Nor did he ever do so, not even to the slightest degree.

That was my Guru, however. His successors came into another category. The demands they made of me were not always with my own spiritual development in mind. My Guru, for example, had told me that my duty in this life was writing, lecturing, and editing. Orville Address, the hired printer at Mt. Washington, decided he wanted me to work with him in the print shop. Daya, the president, anxious to satisfy him, asked me if I would be willing to work in the print shop. She was upset when I told her I thought this wasn't the right work for me. She accepted my answer only when I added, "Any machine I work with is bound to break down within a week! I'm afraid I just have no talent in that direction."

Had I taken on that job, it would have meant a major change of focus for me, and one very different from what my Guru had told me I must do. But what would have happened, had he not given me those instructions? I might well have become a printer, but it would have been in violation of my true nature, and of that direction I myself needed to go, if I was to find my liberation.

In India, years later, the person supposedly running things there wanted to put me in charge of the main office. I said to him, "If I accept that position, it will be another twenty years before I even see the light of day again!"

"Quite right," he answered matter-of-factly. Fortunately, again, I had my own Guru's personal instructions to guide me.

What would have been the case, otherwise? I'd have had to suppress my natural inclination to help others directly, as I'd always known I must, by answering their doubts and questions, and by inspiring devotion in their hearts. I wouldn't have grown, spiritually. I might have been useful to the organization, as I had some skill in the direction he indicated, but I cannot help doubting whether the organization would have been useful to me.

I could explore this matter at length, but I think these two illustrations, taken from examples of those who probably were at least as wise as, and probably wiser than, the average monastery superior, will suffice to show that the ideal of monastic obedience is seriously flawed. The issue, surely, is whom and what one is obeying.

In fact, I tried earnestly for years to give to my superiors the same obedience I had given to my Guru, though I frankly didn't always feel they were right. But I always remembered words in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, to the effect that Master had never been commandeered by details. It was, I decided, spiritually right for me to obey them, and also important to the harmony of the work we were doing. For a time I considered their requests reasonable. To contest them would, I felt, have been to display an uncooperative spirit.

In time, however, I found that what they wanted of me sometimes, as I've said, contradicted my Guru's personal instructions to me. In such cases it was of course my duty to

tell them what his instructions had been. Usually, where my own work was concerned, they accepted what I said, and went along with it. Their acquiescence on instructions he'd given me for the work as a whole, however, rather than for my particular role in it, they tended to ignore. Perhaps they thought that, if he hadn't given those instructions to them personally, he couldn't really have given them at all. I began to ask myself, "What must I do?" My goal in life was to find God. Would it further me toward that end to oppose them? I did much soul searching on this matter.

In my own work as head of the monks, I said to them, "I know it is customary for those in charge in the monastic life to demand obedience of those under them. I don't feel comfortable with that tradition, however. All I will ask of you is your cooperation."

At Ananda also, the only obedience people are asked for is a willing, cooperative spirit. The same, therefore, is true of Ananda's renunciate order. My purpose is never to violate a person's free will. That is his divine right, and my divine obligation to everyone who comes to me and Ananda for spiritual guidance.

Obedience, therefore, is to be open to any guidance you receive. If you don't agree with it, state your reasons for not agreeing, and your alternatives. Naturally, willing cooperation is expected of everyone. I myself cooperate willingly with any good idea, whatever the source of it. In the next chapter I will offer a few guidelines, first for the persons in positions of authority, and second for those who are under their charge.

## CHAPTER 17

### *The Rule of Cooperative Obedience*

For Those in Positions of Authority:

1. Remember, Ananda Sangha is a spiritual work. Its purpose is to provide an environment, and to give every encouragement, to its members to find God. Every directive should be given with this thought supremely in mind.
2. Naturally, in directing the work there will be needs to be filled, and persons available who are more or less qualified to meet those needs. Never ask anyone to do anything, even if he expresses willingness, that does not seem right for his spiritual growth. For instance—and this has happened—there may be a great need for an accountant, and a person with all the necessary skills for filling that position. If it is evident, however, that this sort of work is not spiritually good for him because it may make him devotionally dry, DO NOT PUT HIM IN THAT WORK. The orga-

nization itself may suffer, but have faith that God Himself will provide a solution. Meanwhile, never use anybody.

3. Look upon everyone serving God under you as your equal in Him. Never condescend.
4. It will seem strange to make a separate rule of looking at other sets of rules, but my books, *The Art of Supporting Leadership*, and, *Secrets of Leadership*, both contain many principles that will help those who serve as superiors in a monastery.
5. Never treat anyone under you as just a worker. Be concerned for his spiritual well-being, and show your concern.
6. Encourage a prayerful attitude in the workplace. Have everyone meditate at least briefly every morning, before work begins. Encourage them if they want to meditate briefly at different points during the day. Always keep before those under you the spiritual and devotional purpose behind what you are asking them to do.
7. Keep a small altar in your place of work, and see that it is garlanded every day.
8. Pray, at least briefly, before you issue any directive. Visualize the heart of the person you are directing, and try to feel whether what you are asking will be right for him.

### For Those in Subordinate Positions:

1. Usually in monasteries, though not always, a person is in a subordinate position either because he has no talent for leadership, or because he has something to learn which the other can teach him. Humility is good in both positions. The superior should not view himself as, truly, superior. And the subordinate should never equate humility with submissiveness. The ideal attitude for the subordinate is an attitude of cheerful, willing cooperation.
2. The traditional teaching that the subordinate should view his superior as an instrument of Christ and God is a good tradition. In fact, the true devotee sees everyone as the Lord in human form. Every rock is a manifestation of God, who brought all things into existence. For the superior to preen himself over this concept would be an utter misunderstanding of this principle. He should see his subordinate, also, as an instrument of the divine—perhaps causing him frustrations that are for his spiritual growth. So also is everything an instrument of God, if it is viewed properly. This doesn't at all mean that all things, all human beings, and particularly one's own superior, is a wise instrument. The subordinate's duty is not to ask himself, "Is this person wise? Can he guide me in the best way for my spiritual liberation?" The reason willing, cheerful cooperation with him is beneficial

to the subordinate is that such an attitude is essential to spiritual maturity. The grumbling, unwilling subordinate is the one who gains the least from his life for God.

3. Obviously, not every directive that one receives from a superior who is not enlightened spiritually will be spiritually beneficial to him. The benefit will come from his own attitude. Many years ago, at the SRF Lake Shrine in Pacific Palisades, a young monk was given the job every day of clambering across the steep hillside, watering the plants. Dragging that long hose about, soaking himself in the process, so distressed him that he came actually to hate that job. Yet, every morning, he received the same assignment. After some time he awoke one day to the thought, "If this is the only job I'm going to be given, I might as well make up my mind to enjoy it!" He came down cheerfully to breakfast, ready for anything. And this was the day his job got changed. I seem to remember hearing him say that was he never given that same job again. Whatever the actual case, what changed the situation for him was his attitude.
4. It does sometimes happen, of course, that superiors make not only requests that are unwise, but also, occasionally, that may be harmful. To take a strictly hypothetical case, a young monk with a romantic weakness for a woman in his past may be asked to attend her wedding. The superior

may not know of this weakness in the monk's past. He may even know of it, and see this as an opportunity to help the monk to dismiss his own past. He may actually be wise in giving such a directive, in this case, even though it is generally better for monks not to attend weddings. Nevertheless, the monk owes it to himself and to his relationship with the superior to explain the particular situation involved. Blind obedience, especially in such a case, would be foolish.

5. If you receive a directive that you feel is morally or spiritually wrong, don't imagine that obedience will absolve you of any blame in the matter. You must use your own discrimination. In such cases, calm your heart's feelings, then hold them up to the spiritual eye; ask inwardly, at that point, for guidance. The feeling in your heart will tell you what is right for you. In short, monastic obedience should always be given primarily to God, inwardly. Don't let it weaken your sense of right and wrong. To do so would be very wrong on your part, and wrong also on the part of any superior who demands this kind of mindless obedience from you.
6. In a religious work, there are two types of devotees: those to whom expansion of any kind is viewed without favor, as though it smelled suspiciously of delusion; and those who want to share what they know of truth with others.

I discount those who, for ego-centered motives, are either selfish and contractive or eager to go about converting everybody, beating big drums to let everyone know of their zeal. When Paramhansa Yogananda obtained Mt. Washington Estates, Laurie Pratt, his chief editor, announced to him, “Now your troubles begin!” To her, spreading the work seemed an exercise in futility. She told me herself that she saw no hurry about getting all his books published. “What do they need with more books?” she demanded. “They already have everything they need, to find God.” And when she put me out of SRF, she discouraged me from writing (as my Guru had told me to do), saying, “What’s the use? Everything has been said many, many times before.” Between the contractive and the expansive type of devotees there cannot be real appreciation or understanding. If your superior is one of these types, and you are another, accept the situation if you must, but be aware that you are headed for troubled waters, and a constant struggle which will lead to frustration for both of you.

7. Never let an unsympathetic superior “get your goat.” Be cheerful, but never surrender your own sense of right and wrong. I once had a superior—not the SRF president, but someone more directly over me—who was, to my mind, much too rigid and strict. I simply could not run, when she

“barked.” Instead, I calmly and good-humoredly offered my own “take” on things. Usually she ended up agreeing with me, but when she didn’t she never took offense, because she saw I was her friend. Did I always obey her? Frankly, I’m not sure. It seems to me that, if I did so, it was always with good humor, thinking, “What does it matter, anyway? This is all God’s dream.” Why get upset over little things?

8. Make harmony your priority. A rebellious spirit may win points, now and then, but in the end it will destroy your inner peace and will keep everybody disturbed to no avail. Peace and harmony are the foundations of the spiritual life.

## CHAPTER 18

### *How to Be an Attitudes Detective*

Watch your heart: That is where your attitudes will reveal themselves for what they are. A right attitude will lift your energy from the heart toward the spiritual eye. A wrong attitude will pull your energy downward. When a wrong attitude intrudes itself on you, you may actually feel energy draining downward from the brain. Right attitudes bring inner harmony, peace, and a happy outlook. Wrong attitudes, on the contrary, bring disharmony, a loss of peace, and a feeling of disgruntlement.

Attitude is the most important thing on the spiritual path. When you have good attitude, you can sail through every test, and may not even realize it was a test. When your attitude is wrong, on the other hand, everything seems a test to you: you can find some cause for irritation in a kindly smile.

Watch the direction of your energy, especially in the spine. Whatever your reason tells you, if the energy is downward

there's something wrong with you. As Master said to one of my fellow monks, "Whenever you see wrong in the world, remember, it's wrong with you. When you are right, everything is right for you see God there."

## CHAPTER 19

### *Attunement*

I have written so far about renunciation in a monastic setting. Many renunciates, however, do not live in monasteries. Some of them live solitarily in caves. Some of them are wandering sadhus, and some of them live in society, but have dedicated their hearts and lives to God.

Some of them, for one reason or another, would like to live among other renunciates, but have yet to find a communal setting that is right for them.

I myself lived for fourteen years in the monastic setting of SRF. I did my best to fit in. I deeply believed, and still believe, that I was serving my Guru as he himself wanted me to do. My superiors in the order, however, saw things very differently from the way I did. Finally I was forced to serve God and Guru on my own. I am not sorry I didn't fit in. I had another mission to fulfill, one that resulted in the founding of Ananda Sangha and in a creative outpouring that resulted in over

eighty books, over 400 pieces of music, fifteen thousand color photos, and a new, more expansive view of Paramhansa Yogananda's mission in the world. SRF has claimed that he came to start a monastery. I believe they are mistaken. His mission was to the whole world: not to make monks and nuns of people, but to show people everywhere that the missing ingredient in modern life, the lack of which has produced world-wide suffering, and turmoil in our times, is communion with God.

I did not leap onto a new “bandwagon” the moment I was put out of SRF. I had believed in what I was doing; now, I questioned my attunement with my Guru. Had I, despite my belief—and indeed my zeal to serve him—been misguided by lack of attunement? I was told never to lecture again, never to write, never to contact any member of SRF, never even to tell people I was Yogananda's disciple. (“We don't want people to know that he had such a despicable disciple!”) I tried to do what they had demanded of me: I tried to drop out, to become a silent, solitary hermit, to become unknown to anybody.

Every door I approached in my search for seclusion was closed in my face—by circumstance and by other people. What was I to do? Presumption on God's guidance would have been disastrous for me at that time. I had to take one small step at a time, then consult my heart as well as the reaction of others to see if I was going in the right direction.

As the guidance became clearer that God and my Guru wanted me to lecture, teach, and be before the public as my

Guru had told me I must be, I tried many times to prove this guidance wrong. Peace, and inner joy, came to me only when I followed what my Guru had told me, in opposition to what my superiors had insisted.

In *Autobiography of a Yogi*, when Yogananda first saw his guru Swami Sri Yukteswar standing in a narrow Benares lane, looking in his direction, he thought hungrily for a moment, “I have found him! That is my guru!” And then, to test his feeling, he tried several times to walk away. Each time he did so, his feet became so heavy he couldn’t move them. And then, each time he turned back toward his guru, he found himself free to move. Thus, after several efforts, he became convinced that this was no sentimental fancy on his part: That was his guru; his guru was magnetically calling him to come!

In similar fashion, but far less immediately, I tested my inner attunement to make sure that what I felt was, truly, my Guru’s guidance. My fellow disciples assumed, cynically, that I had “leapt in the direction I wanted to go.” Far from it! Little by little, suffering greatly within me, but driven almost relentlessly in the direction I finally accepted I must take, the guidance came. It came in a thousand ways: from within as well as from without. I am sure that the path I followed was the right one, and that commanded me by my superiors was determined by their own convenience, but not by my spiritual needs, and not by our Guru’s wishes.

Attunement, I am convinced, is the first and greatest need on the path. It is the final goal of renunciation. It is the only way to find God.

What is attunement? In the Bible, the beginning of the Gospel of St. John, we read, "To all those who received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Master very often repeated those words. The simple truth is, no human being can make the leap from ego-consciousness to cosmic consciousness by mere believing in an infinite consciousness. Yogananda described this state as "the liberating shock of omnipresence," in the chapter on cosmic consciousness in his autobiography. The ego is not even omnipresent in its own body! How can it make that leap into vast and absolute consciousness?

The essence of the spiritual path is attunement. Devotees often insist, "God is the Guru. What need have I for a human guru?" God, however, does everything through instruments. Even the stars and planets are created by higher beings, in tune with His consciousness. Yes, God is Omnipresence. Yes, He knows our least thoughts. He acts through instruments, however, as we educate a child through teachers, though everything they teach him is information available to him, if he wanted to seek it and knew how to seek it, on his own. God loves His human creatures, and wants them to live in harmony, peace, and happiness, but He will not impose his wishes on them, even for their welfare. So He uses those who have found Him to bring seeking souls to Him.

Renunciation alone will not take anyone to God. Prayer and meditation are not enough. Nor is institutional affiliation, or following the right Guru. In every great guru's ashram there are some disciples who are spiritually deep, and others who are spiritual children. He shines His light equally on all, but not all of them receive those rays equally.

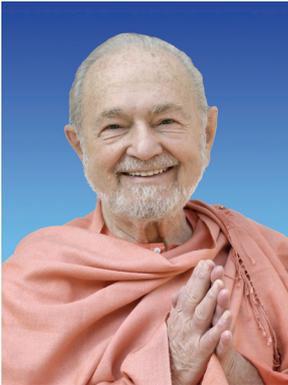
Ultimately, no human effort will take man to God. The whole secret of the spiritual path is to get our egos out of the way, along with our attachments and desires, and to receive into our souls the blessings of God. What the guru does for us is primarily on a spiritual level. He works from within us, on our consciousness. Our job, then, is above all to offer our hearts and minds up to him, that he may transform us. Gradually, his ego-less consciousness seeps into our ego-filled consciousness, transforming us with a new understanding of the truth of our own being.

The true goal of renunciation, then, is only one: to eliminate every attachment to littleness, that the guru may come into us and expand our awareness to infinity.





## *About the Author*



*“Swami Kriyananda is a man of wisdom and compassion in action, truly one of the leading lights in the spiritual world today.”*

—Lama Surya Das, Dzogchen Center, author of *Awakening The Buddha Within*

### SWAMI KRIYANANDA

A prolific author, accomplished composer, playwright, and artist, and a world-renowned spiritual teacher, Swami Kriyananda refers to himself simply as “a humble disciple” of the great God-realized master, Paramhansa Yogananda. He met his guru at the young age of twenty-two, and

served him during the last four years of the Master's life. And he has done so continuously ever since.

Kriyananda was born in Rumania of American parents, and educated in Europe, England, and the United States. Philosophically and artistically inclined from youth, he soon came to question life's meaning and society's values. During a period of intense inward reflection, he discovered Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and immediately traveled 3,000 miles from New York to California to meet the Master, who accepted him as a monastic disciple. Yogananda appointed him as the head of the monastery, authorized him to teach in his name and to give initiation into Kriya Yoga, and entrusted him with the missions of writing and developing what he called "world brotherhood colonies."

Recognized as the "father of the spiritual communities movement" in the United States, Swami Kriyananda founded Ananda World Brotherhood Community in 1968. It has served as a model for a number of communities founded subsequently in the United States and Europe.

In 2003 Swami Kriyananda, then in his seventy-eighth year, moved to India with a small international group of disciples, to dedicate his remaining years to making his guru's teachings better known. To this end he appears daily on Indian national television with his program *A Way of Awakening*. He has established Ananda Sangha, which publishes many of his eighty-six literary works and spreads the teachings of

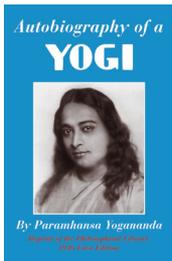
Kriya Yoga throughout India. His vision for the next years includes founding cooperative spiritual communities in India, a temple of all religions dedicated to Paramhansa Yogananda, a retreat center, a school system, and a monastery, as well as a university-level Yoga Institute of Living Wisdom.

## *Further Explorations*

If you are inspired by *Sadhu, Beware!* and would like to learn more about Paramhansa Yogananda and his teachings, or about Swami Kriyananda, Crystal Clarity Publishers offers many additional resources to assist you.

### BOOKS BY PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA

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### **Autobiography of a Yogi**

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

*Autobiography of a Yogi* is one of the best-selling Eastern philosophy titles of all time, with millions of copies sold, named one of the best and most influential books of the 20th century. This highly prized reprinting of the original 1946 edition is the only one available free from textual changes made after Yogananda's death.

Yogananda was the first yoga master of India whose mission was to live and teach in the West. His account of his life experiences includes childhood revelations, stories of his visits to saints and masters in India, and long-secret teachings of Self-realization that he made available to the Western reader.

In this updated edition are bonus materials, including a last chapter that Yogananda wrote in 1951, without posthumous changes. This new edition also includes the eulogy that Yogananda wrote for Gandhi, and a new foreword and afterword by Swami Kriyananda, one of Yogananda's close direct disciples.

PRAISE FOR *Autobiography of a Yogi*

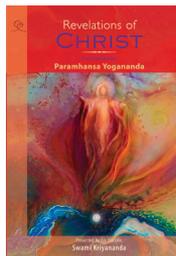
*“In the original edition, published during Yogananda’s life, one is more in contact with Yogananda himself. While Yogananda founded centers and organizations, his concern was more with guiding individuals to direct communion with Divinity rather than with promoting any one church as opposed to another. This spirit is easier to grasp in the original edition of this great spiritual and yogic classic.”*

—David Frawley, Director, American Institute of Vedic Studies, author of *Yoga and Ayurveda*

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## Revelations of Christ

Proclaimed by Paramhansa Yogananda,  
*Presented by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda*

Over the past years, our faith has been severely shaken by experiences such as the breakdown of church authority, discoveries of ancient texts that supposedly contradict long-held beliefs, and the sometimes outlandish historical analyses of Scripture by academics. Together, these forces have helped create confusion and uncertainty about the true teachings and meanings of Christ's life. Now, more than ever, people are yearning for a clear-minded, convincing, yet uplifting understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

This soul-stirring book, presenting the teachings of Christ from the experience and perspective of Paramhansa Yogananda, one of the greatest spiritual masters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, finally offers the fresh understanding of Christ's teachings for which the world has been waiting. This book presents us with an opportunity to understand the Scriptures in a more reliable way than any other: by learning from those saints who have communed directly, in deep ecstasy, with Christ and God.

### PRAISE FOR *Revelations of Christ*

*"This is a great gift to humanity. It is a spiritual treasure to cherish and to pass on to children for generations. This remarkable and magnificent book brings us to the doorway of a deeper, richer embracing of Eternal Truth."*

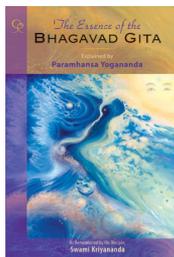
—Neale Donald Walsch, author of *Conversations with God*

*“Kriyananda’s revelatory book gives us the enlightened, timeless wisdom of Jesus the Christ in a way that addresses the challenges of twenty-first century living.”*

—Michael Beckwith, founder and Spiritual Director, Agape International Spiritual Center, author of *Inspirations of the Heart*

THIS TITLE IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN:

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## The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita

Explained by Paramhansa Yogananda

*As remembered by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda*

Rarely in a lifetime does a new spiritual classic appear that has the power to change people’s lives and transform future generations. This is such a book.

This revelation of India’s best-loved scripture approaches it from a fresh perspective, showing its deep allegorical meaning and its down-to-earth practicality. The themes presented are universal: how to achieve victory in life in union with the divine; how to prepare for life’s “final exam,” death, and what happens afterward; how to triumph over all pain and suffering.

PRAISE FOR *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*

“The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita is a brilliant text that will greatly enhance the spiritual life of every reader.”

—Caroline Myss, author of *Anatomy of the Spirit* and *Sacred Contracts*

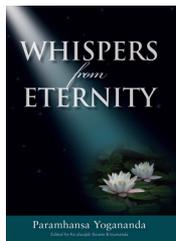
“It is doubtful that there has been a more important spiritual writing in the last 50 years than this soul-stirring, monumental work. What a gift! What a treasure!”

—Neale Donald Walsch, author of *Conversations with God*

THIS TITLE IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN:

Audiobook (MP3 format)

Also available as paperback without commentary, titled  
*The Bhagavad Gita*.



## Whispers from Eternity

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

*Edited by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda*

Many poetic works can inspire, but few, like this one, have the power to change your life. Yogananda was not only a spiritual master, but a master poet, whose poems revealed the hidden divine presence behind even everyday things.

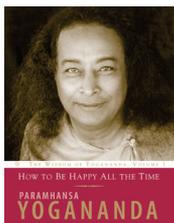
Open this book, pick a poem at random, and read it. Mentally repeat whatever phrase appeals to you. Within a short time, you will feel your consciousness transformed. This book has the power to rapidly accelerate your spiritual growth, and provides hundreds of delightful ways for you to begin your own conversation with God.

THIS TITLE IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN:

Audiobook (MP3 format)

### *The Wisdom of Yogananda Series*

*This series features writings of Paramhansa Yogananda not available elsewhere. These books include writings from his earliest years in America, in an approachable, easy-to-read format. The words of the Master are presented with minimal editing, to capture his expansive and compassionate wisdom, his sense of fun, and his practical spiritual guidance.*



### **How to Be Happy All the Time**

The Wisdom of Yogananda Series, Volume 1  
*Paramhansa Yogananda*

Yogananda powerfully explains virtually everything needed to lead a happier, more fulfilling life. Topics covered include: looking for happiness in the right places; choosing to be happy; tools and techniques for achieving happiness; sharing happiness with others; balancing success and happiness, and many more.



## Karma and Reincarnation

The Wisdom of Yogananda Series, Volume 2

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

Yogananda reveals the truth behind karma, death, reincarnation, and the afterlife. With clarity and simplicity, he makes the mysterious understandable. Topics covered include: why we see a world of suffering and inequality; how to handle the challenges in our lives; what happens at death, and after death; and the origin and purpose of reincarnation.



## Spiritual Relationships

The Wisdom of Yogananda Series, Volume 3

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

Topics include: how to cure bad habits that spell the death of true friendship; how to choose the right partner and create a lasting marriage; sex in marriage and how to conceive a spiritual child; problems that arise in marriage and what to do about them; the divine plan uniting parents and children; the Universal Love behind all your relationships.



## How to Be a Success

The Wisdom of Yogananda Series, Volume 4

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

This book includes the complete text of *The Attributes of Success*, the original booklet later published as *The Law of Success*. In addition, you will learn

how to find your purpose in life, develop habits of success and eradicate habits of failure, develop your will power and magnetism, and thrive in the right job.

## *Books by Swami Kriyananda*



### **The New Path**

My Life with Paramhansa Yogananda

*Swami Kriyananda*

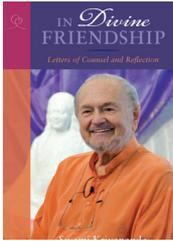
This is the moving story of Kriyananda's years with Paramhansa Yogananda, India's emissary to the West and the first yoga master to spend the greater part of his life in America.

When Swami Kriyananda discovered *Autobiography of a Yogi* in 1948, he was totally new to Eastern teachings. This is a great advantage to the Western reader, since Kriyananda walks us along the yogic path as he discovers it from the moment of his initiation as a disciple of Yogananda. With winning honesty, humor, and deep insight, he shares his journey along the spiritual path through personal stories and experiences.

Through more than 400 stories of life with Yogananda, we tune in more deeply to this great master and to the teachings he brought to the West. This book is an ideal complement to *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

THIS TITLE IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN:

Audiobook (MP3 format)



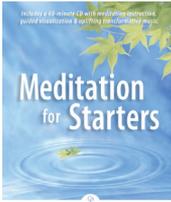
## In Divine Friendship

*Swami Kriyananda*

This extraordinary book of nearly 250 letters, written over a 30-year period by Swami Kriyananda, responds to practically any concern a spiritual seeker might have, such as: strengthening one's faith, accelerating one's spiritual progress, meditating more deeply, responding to illness, earning a living, attracting a mate, raising children, overcoming negative self-judgments, and responding to world upheavals.

Connecting all of these letters is the love, compassion, and wisdom of Swami Kriyananda, one of the leading spiritual figures of our times.

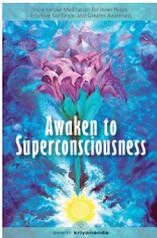
The letters describe in detail his efforts to fulfill his Guru's commission to establish spiritual communities, and offer invaluable advice to leaders everywhere on how to avoid the temptations of materialism, selfishness, and pride. A spiritual treasure that speaks to spiritual seekers at all levels.



## Meditation for Starters

*Swami Kriyananda*

Have you wanted to learn to meditate, but just never got around to it? Or tried “sitting in the silence” only to find yourself too restless to stay more than a few moments? If so, *Meditation for Starters* is just what you’ve been looking for, and with a companion CD, it provides everything you need to begin a meditation practice. It is filled with easy-to-follow instructions, beautiful guided visualizations, and answers to important questions on meditation such as: what meditation is (and isn’t); how to relax your body and prepare yourself for going within; and techniques for interiorizing and focusing the mind.



## Awaken to Superconsciousness

Meditation for Inner Peace, Intuitive Guidance, and Greater Awareness

*Swami Kriyananda*

This popular guide includes everything you need to know about the philosophy and practice of meditation, and how to apply the meditative mind to resolving common daily conflicts in uncommon, superconscious ways. Superconsciousness is the source of intuition, spiritual healing, solutions to problems, and deep and lasting joy.

PRAISE FOR *Awaken to Superconsciousness*

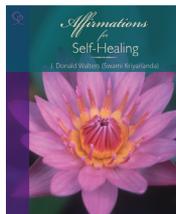
*“A brilliant, thoroughly enjoyable guide to the art and science of meditation. [Swami Kriyananda] entertains, informs, and inspires—his enthusiasm for the subject is contagious. This book is a joy to read from beginning to end.”*

—Yoga International

ALSO AVAILABLE IN THIS SERIES:

*Music to Awaken Superconsciousness* (CD)

*Meditations to Awaken Superconsciousness* (CD)



## Affirmations for Self-Healing

Swami Kriyananda

This inspirational book contains 52 affirmations and prayers, each pair devoted to improving a quality in ourselves. Strengthen your will power; cultivate forgiveness, patience, health, enthusiasm, and more. A powerful tool for self-transformation.

PRAISE FOR *Affirmations for Self-Healing*

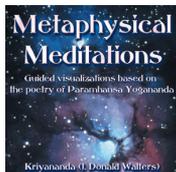
*“[This book] has become a meditation friend to me. The inspiring messages and prayers, plus the physical beauty of the book, help me start my day uplifted and focused.”*

—Sue Patton Thoele, author of *Growing Hope*

THIS TITLE IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN:  
Audiobook (MP3 format)

## *Music and Audiobooks*

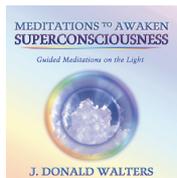
We offer many of our book titles in unabridged MP3 format audiobooks. To purchase these titles and to see more music and audiobook offerings, visit our website [www.crystalclarity.com](http://www.crystalclarity.com). Or look for us in any of the popular online download sites.



### **Metaphysical Meditations**

*Swami Kriyananda (J. Donald Walters)*

Kriyananda's soothing voice guides you in thirteen different meditations based on the soul-inspiring, mystical poetry of Paramhansa Yogananda. Each meditation is accompanied by beautiful classical music to help you quiet your thoughts and prepare for deep states of meditation. Includes a full recitation of Yogananda's poem *Samadhi*, which appears in *Autobiography of a Yogi*. A great aid to the serious meditator, as well as to those just beginning their practice.



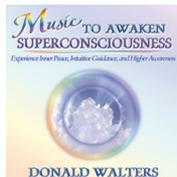
## Meditations to Awaken Superconsciousness

Guided Meditations on the Light

Swami Kriyananda (J. Donald Walters)

Featuring two beautiful guided meditations as well as an introductory section to help prepare the listener for meditation, this extraordinary recording of visualizations can be used either by itself, or as a companion to the book, *Awaken to Superconsciousness*. The soothing, transformative words, spoken over inspiring sitar background music, creates one of the most unique guided meditation products available.

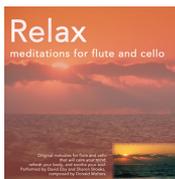
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## Music to Awaken Superconsciousness

Donald Walters

A companion to the book, *Awaken to Superconsciousness*. Each of the lush instrumental selections is designed to help the listener more easily access higher states of awareness—deep calmness, joy, radiant health, and self-transcendence. This beautiful recording can be used simply as background music for relaxation and meditation. Or, you can follow the instructions in the liner notes to actively achieve superconsciousness.

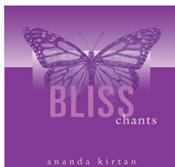


## **Relax: Meditations for Flute and Cello**

*Donald Walters*

Featuring David Eby and Sharon Nani

This CD is specifically designed to slow respiration and heart rate, bringing listeners to their calm center. This recording features 15 melodies for flute and cello, accompanied by harp, guitar, keyboard, and strings.



## **Bliss Chants**

*Ananda Kirtan*

Chanting focuses and lifts the mind to higher states of consciousness. *Bliss Chants* features chants written by Yogananda and his direct disciple, Swami Kriyananda. They're performed by Ananda Kirtan, a group of singers and musicians from Ananda, one of the world's most respected yoga communities. Chanting is accompanied by guitar, harmonium, kirtals, and tabla.

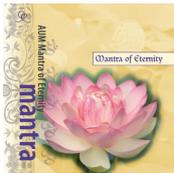
### **Other titles in the Chant Series:**

*Divine Mother Chants*

*Power Chants*

*Love Chants*

*Peace Chants*



## **AUM: Mantra of Eternity**

*Swami Kriyananda*

This recording features nearly 70 minutes of continuous vocal chanting of AUM, the Sanskrit word meaning peace and oneness of spirit. AUM, the cosmic creative vibration, is extensively discussed by Yogananda in *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Chanted here by his disciple, Kriyananda, this recording is a stirring way to tune into this cosmic power.

### **Other titles in the Mantra Series:**

*Gayatri Mantra*

*Mahamrityanjaya Mantra*

*Maha Mantra*

## *Crystal Clarity Publishers*

When you're seeking a book on practical spiritual living, you want to know it's based on an authentic tradition of timeless teachings, and that it resonates with integrity. This is the goal of Crystal Clarity Publishers: to offer you books of practical wisdom filled with true spiritual principles that have not only been tested through the ages, but also through personal experience. We publish only books that combine creative thinking, universal principles, and a timeless message. Crystal Clarity books will open doors to help you discover more fulfillment and joy by living and acting from the center of peace within you.

Crystal Clarity Publishers—recognized worldwide for its bestselling, original, unaltered edition of Paramhansa Yogananda's classic *Autobiography of a Yogi*—offers many additional resources to assist you in your spiritual journey including over ninety books, a wide variety of inspirational and relaxation music composed by Swami Kriyananda, Yoga-

nanda's direct disciple, and yoga and meditation DVDs. For our online catalog, complete with secure ordering, please visit us on the web at:

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*email:* [clarity@crystalclarity.com](mailto:clarity@crystalclarity.com)

## *Ananda Sangha*

Ananda Sangha is a worldwide fellowship of kindred souls following the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda. The Sangha embraces the search for higher consciousness through the practice of meditation, and through the ideal of service to others in their quest for Self-realization. Approximately 10,000 spiritual seekers are affiliated with Ananda Sangha throughout the world.

Founded in 1968 by Swami Kriyananda, a direct disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda, Ananda includes seven communities in the United States, Europe, and in India. Worldwide, about 1,000 devotees live in these spiritual communities, which are based on Yogananda's ideals of "plain living and high thinking."

"Thousands of youths must go north, south, east and west to cover the earth with little colonies, demonstrating that simplicity of living plus high thinking lead to the greatest happiness!" After pronouncing these words at a garden party in Beverly Hills, California in 1949, Paramhansa Yogananda raised his arms, and chanting the

sacred cosmic vibration AUM, he “registered in the ether” his blessings on what has become the spiritual communities movement. From that moment on, Swami Kriyananda dedicated himself to bringing this vision from inspiration to reality by establishing communities where home, job, school, worship, family, friends, and recreation could evolve together as part of the interwoven fabric of harmonious, balanced living. Yogananda predicted that these communities would “spread like wildfire,” becoming the model lifestyle for the coming millennium.

Swami Kriyananda lived with his guru during the last four years of the Master’s life, and continued to serve his organization for another ten years, bringing the teachings of Kriya Yoga and Self-realization to audiences in the United States, Europe, Australia, and, from 1958–1962, India. In 1968, together with a small group of close friends and students, he founded the first “world brotherhood community” in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in northeastern California. Initially a meditation retreat center located on 67 acres of forested land, Ananda World Brotherhood Village today encompasses 800 acres where about 250 people live a dynamic, fulfilling life based on the principles and practices of spiritual, mental, and physical development, cooperation, respect, and divine friendship.

At this writing (printing), after forty years of existence, Ananda is one of the most successful networks of intentional communities in the world. Urban communities have been developed in Palo Alto and Sacramento, California; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Wash-

ington. In Europe, near Assisi, Italy, a spiritual retreat and community was established in 1983, where today nearly one hundred residents from eight countries live. Ananda Sangha also supports more than 100 meditation groups worldwide. Swami Kriyananda currently lives in Pune, India where work has begun to develop both urban and rural communities.

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*online:* [www.ananda.org](http://www.ananda.org)

*email:* [sanghainfo@ananda.org](mailto:sanghainfo@ananda.org)

## *Ananda Sangha*

Ananda's guest retreat, The Expanding Light, a retreat for spiritual studies, is visited by over 2,000 people each year. We offer a varied, year round schedule of classes and workshops on yoga, meditation, and spiritual practices and studies. We also offer personal renewal retreats where you can participate in ongoing activities as much or as little as you wish. The beautiful serene mountain setting, supportive staff, and delicious vegetarian food provide an ideal environment for a truly meaningful, spiritual vacation.

### ***Contact Information***

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Nevada City, CA 95959  
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*online:* [www.expandinglight.org](http://www.expandinglight.org)  
*email:* [info@expandinglight.org](mailto:info@expandinglight.org)

Eastern Religion

## a joyful approach to the spiritual life

This revolutionary approach to the spiritual life offers insight, inspiration and practical advice for the greatest adventure in the world: the inner journey of Self-realization. Householders and renunciates alike, as children of God, can realize their divine potential by learning how to live rightly, renouncing attachments that bring unhappiness and embracing their true nature: inner freedom and divine joy. Crystal clear and easy to understand, this book encourages every seeker to live up to the highest aspirations of heart and mind.

During a period of intense inward reflection, Swami Kriyananda discovered Paramhansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi* in 1948. Kriyananda was accepted as a monastic disciple at the age of twenty-two, and spent nearly four years living closely with the great Indian master, until his passing in 1952.

Yogananda entrusted Kriyananda with life-long missions of writing, editing, establishing spiritual communities, and spreading the Master's teachings the world over.

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