

Yogananda for the World

Freeing His Legacy from Sectarianism

Swami Kriyananda



The cover photograph was taken at the moment when Paramhansa Yogananda – having declared (concerning his concept of world brotherhood colonies), “I am sowing my thoughts in the ether, and my words *shall not die!*” – raised his hands and sent those vibrations out into the world as he uttered three times the mighty mantra, “AUM!” (See Chapter 2.)

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Preface

Where There Is Adherence to *Dharma* (Righteous Action) There Is Victory

by Nayaswami Naidhruva

This book concerns two fundamentally different, and perhaps irreconcilable, interpretations of the legacy that was left by the great spiritual master, Paramhansa Yogananda, author of *Autobiography of a Yogi* and other works of supreme importance to spiritual seekers everywhere, and founder of Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF). Swami Kriyananda has carried on that legacy as his guru told him to, and insists that the legacy was intended for the whole world. Others of the great guru's disciples, however, claim that his legacy should be interpreted narrowly as the founding of a small monastery, and the institution of a sectarian tradition with the kind of narrowness and rigidity that Yogananda himself described as "anathema to religion."

My direct experience of the facts presented in this book came primarily through twelve years of litigation, instituted by SRF against Ananda, the spiritual organization founded by Swami Kriyananda. Though I had been trained as a lawyer, I left the practice of law when I moved to Ananda Village in Nevada City, California in 1980. After SRF filed its lawsuit against Ananda in 1990, I became involved in law once again, working with Jon Parsons, Ananda's attorney, on the SRF case and subsequently on the related Bertolucci lawsuit. I also worked closely with Swami Kriyananda during this time and was in regular, often daily, contact with him.

Many of the attitudes and actions of SRF's leaders discussed in this book were the subject of depositions, court testimony, and documents filed with the court. Most of these documents are a matter of public record; they confirm the picture of SRF presented by Kriyananda in this book.

The SRF lawsuit, as the United States federal court judge correctly perceived, was an attempt by SRF to "put Ananda out of business" through SRF's claim of exclusive rights to Yogananda's teachings. The lawsuit sought not only to eliminate Ananda as a viable Yogananda organization, but also to undermine Kriyananda's reputation and credibility as a spiritual teacher and spokesman for Yogananda. Later, with the filing of the Bertolucci lawsuit, the attempt to tarnish Kriyananda's reputation gained added momentum.

Indeed, from that point on, Kriyananda was under attack in every aspect of his life. Everything he'd ever worked for was in jeopardy—even the copyrights to the many books he had written and the music he had composed.

Kriyananda was not the aggressor in these lawsuits, but when forced to defend Ananda and himself he did so with courage, determination, and creativity. Principles were at stake and he fought hard, at the same time seeking ways to promote harmony between SRF and Ananda whenever possible. Kriyananda was very concerned that this legal fight between two "first-generation" Yogananda organizations would negatively affect the future of Yogananda's work, and he was willing to make appropriate concessions to settle the lawsuit. Despite his best efforts, no compromise or settlement proved possible.

In situations of the type Kriyananda now faced, a person's character is revealed. What I observed was that Kriyananda never flinched before hard truths, and wasted no energy wishing that things were other than they were. Scrupulously honest in the presentation of his defense, he based his positions strictly on the truth of the matters at issue. First and foremost to him was having a clear conscience before God; the courts of man were of secondary importance. He would do his best, but the results were in God's hands.

Though in what might be called absolute personal jeopardy, Kriyananda was always

compassionate, never harsh. Even with everything he believed in at stake, he never neglected his spiritual responsibility to the Ananda members involved in the defense of the lawsuits (“the legal team”). An example: There came a time in the second lawsuit when, with the trial date approaching, Ananda’s legal team decided to hire a trial attorney when Kriyananda was out of the country.

Upon returning, Kriyananda saw at once that the attorney was the wrong choice for Ananda. But when the legal team failed to see what was crystal clear to him, he acquiesced in its choice. He adhered to one of Ananda’s guiding principles, that “people are more important than things”—that people be allowed to make mistakes and learn at their own pace. He writes in this book that it was contrary to his way of leading Ananda to assert his will against others if they were not receptive to his guidance. As things turned out, the choice of trial attorney proved disastrous. Kriyananda had known it would.

In the same spirit of non-attachment and surrender to God’s will, Kriyananda never abandoned his spiritual responsibility to those who formerly looked to him for spiritual guidance. After the lawsuits ended, he wrote a friendly caring letter to a key witness against him and Ananda, a former Ananda member, suggesting that in future she consider more deeply the consequences of her attitudes and actions. Kriyananda apparently still believed that this woman could fulfill the spiritual potential he had once seen in her.

Ultimately the message of this book is one of hope. Kriyananda makes clear that a healthy spiritual organization is based on discernible principles, not happenstance. The final chapters include a detailed listing of the principles he has followed in leading Ananda. Leaders trained by Kriyananda and now leading Ananda according to these principles have shown them to be realistic and attainable—ten years after the end of the lawsuits, Ananda continues to thrive and grow. Seen from this vantage point, *Yogananda for the World* is both a handbook on

leadership and a clear statement of what Kriyananda considers to be the true guidelines Yogananda left for a spiritual work in this New Age of Energy.

Introduction

The purpose of this book is to clarify what I, the author, consider to be Paramhansa Yogananda's true life and legacy. These pages are less a protest than a statement of what may prove to be two utterly irreconcilable positions. My concern is less with individuals than with the validity of the positions themselves. Self-Realization Fellowship (hereafter referred to by the initials, SRF) defines one of the positions. Ananda Church of Self-Realization (hereafter referred to as Ananda) defines the other one. SRF has interpreted the Guru's legacy in the narrowest way possible. (In their lawsuit, they tried to make the words, actions, name, and every public reference to Yogananda their own personal property. Ananda, by contrast, claimed, and after twelve years of bitter litigation won its point, that Yogananda belongs to the world.)

This book will point out ways in which SRF has claimed narrowly to possess every right concerning Yogananda's legacy. Among those ways are the following:

a) Paramhansa Yogananda wrote throughout his life, and spoke often in public, of his vision for what he called "world-brotherhood colonies." To the best of my knowledge, only four months before he left his body he was still doing so. Self-Realization Fellowship has rejected that vision, actually declaring that, at the end of his life, he changed his mind on this important point. To support their claim, they have gone so far as to change one of the basic "aims and ideals" of Yogananda's mission to the world.

I know for a fact that he not only recommended cooperative communities: he was fervent in their support. I was myself present on several occasions when he spoke eloquently on the point. I both heard and saw him. On one occasion, the power with which he declared his belief in this ideal was enough to shake the heavens!

SRF has rejected this important aspect of his legacy. Why? The only reason I can imagine is that they do not feel they could sufficiently control it.

b) This next point may seem trivial, but it shows the lengths to which SRF has been willing to change Yogananda's teachings to anything they think he ought to have wanted and done.

Yogananda always wrote his name: Paramhansa. SRF, willing to believe that he didn't even know how to spell his own title, rewrote it Paramahansa, with an extra a in the middle, making five a's in all. This addition came as a result of a scholarly suggestion by some pundit in India. SRF advances a supportive argument for why they added that a, but their reasoning is specious.

It is important here for Westerners to understand that Sanskrit contains two letters which correspond, each in its way, to the English letter a. The short a in that language is pronounced like the a in our word, account; the long a is pronounced as we do in our word, barter. (I leave out other pronunciations of that letter in our impossibly complex English language: take, for example, and bask, and anomalies like can't, which is pronounced differently in America and in England—including, in America, regional touches such as cayan't.) Often, the short a in Sanskrit isn't pronounced at all, though scholars like to insert it even when Indians never pronounce it. In India, no one ever says, Paramaahansa, with an exaggerated middle a. Yet that is how the title is always pronounced when that word is spoken by non-Indians. In India, what one hears universally is Paramhansa—or, also frequently, Paramhans—but never on any account accenting any one syllable more than another.

Yogananda once spoke to me complainingly about the way scholars have transliterated Sanskrit into Roman characters. He said, "They write jnana, for example, instead of gyana (wisdom), and ajna, instead of agya (the point between the eyebrows—or, sometimes, the medulla oblongata) when there is no 'j' sound in those words at all, and still less a 'jn.'

The words are correctly pronounced ‘gyana’ and ‘yagya,’ each with a slightly nasal sound that doesn’t exist in English, but ‘j-nana’ and ‘yaj-na’ are simply, and laughably, wrong.”

The change in Paramhansa, here, suggests a readiness on SRF’s part to correct the Master on just about anything he ever said or didn’t say, did or didn’t do, if it doesn’t correspond to their own notions of what they think he ought to have said and done.

In countries outside of India, that middle a usually becomes so exaggerated, as I said, that people pause there, like hawks before making their final swoop.

SRF actually went to the length of forging Master’s written signature. To add that fifth letter in the middle, they copied it from another part of the name. The change is obvious to anyone who studies the signature as it appears in their more recent editions of his books (which, to conceal their own further, and innumerable, changes, they call reprints). Two of the a’s are identical.

c) They have also made many changes in his already-printed words, as the reader will see—changes that are not only stylistic but that alter his very meaning and intent. The clear purpose for these changes has been to change, or to redirect, his very legacy.

1. SRF’s editor-in-chief, albeit able at clarifying ideas, was not a poet. She “edited” his beautiful book of prayer-poems, *Whispers from Eternity*, producing thereby a shriveled corpse: grammatically impeccable, but dry, sterile, and lacking in poetic feeling. After making these changes, she actually dared to forge a message from Yogananda purporting to thank her for the work she’d done on this edition. She herself wrote that letter to get anticipated critics off her back. As the following pages will show, Yogananda never even saw the work she’d done on his book. Had he read it, I am certain he would have been appalled.

2. Yogananda often said he had been sent to the West in response to the wish of Jesus Christ, expressed to Babaji during a meeting between the two of them in the high Himalaya. In recognition of this fact, Yogananda often wore a little cross pendant. This pendant was carefully brushed out of photographs later published by SRF, concerned that Hindus in India might object to it. On the cover of this book, the cross appears as he originally wore it.

3. He also established the way he wanted his altars to look. SRF later changed that arrangement, even adding Krishna—unjustifiably, as I’ll explain later, since Yogananda said that Babaji is an incarnation of Krishna.

Some people may object (and have objected), “The wrongs done are in the past. Nothing can be done about them now.” True. Much of what was done, however, can be undone. The acts of unkindness that I present here can no longer be corrected, but any present tendency toward unkindness can be removed. Wrong directions can be set right. Past lies can be erased by now telling the truth. Narrowness can be exploded by expansiveness.

d) The greatest of all the errors committed by Self-Realization Fellowship is that it has tried to confine Yogananda, his teachings, and his mission within the high, narrow walls of an organization. He himself stated repeatedly, “We are not a sect.” What he had brought to the world was a teaching, a principle, a new way of living for God. Self-Realization, to him, was an ideal which needs to be embraced universally for people’s own highest fulfillment. Fellowship, to him, was (again) an ideal for all mankind: a concept that would enable all people to live together as brothers and sisters—children together, equally, of our one Father/Mother God.

The leaders of the organization Yogananda founded have disagreed with him, confining his legacy to only one example of the truth he left and thereby betraying the principle itself. Laurie Pratt (Tara Mata), his chief editor, once said to me, “I

know Master [the name by which we all called Yogananda] said we aren't a sect. Well, we are a sect!" Her peremptory declaration permitted no qualification; she didn't even bother to justify it.

During SRF's lawsuit against Ananda (about which I'll write later), I said to Daya Mata (the president of SRF), "Master said 'Self-realization' would someday become the religion of the entire world. He can't possibly have meant, 'Self-Realization, Inc.'!"

"That," Daya replied, "is your opinion." Obviously, she believed that Self-Realization Fellowship would evolve in time to become a sort of super Roman Catholic Church, with a massive hierarchy and all the trappings of orthodox Churchianity.

This, to my mind, has constituted SRF's greatest betrayal of Yogananda's true legacy, which he had intended to change the way people approached everything—schooling, family life, business, politics—indeed, the entire structure of society!

1. My Position in Yogananda's Work and Legacy

This book will deal with facts. It will be important for the reader, however, to know my credentials for writing it. He can then decide for himself what right I've had to make the statements in these pages.

I came to Paramhansa Yogananda late in his life: on September 12, 1948, and was accepted by him as a disciple at that meeting. I was twenty-two at the time. I lived with him for the last three and a half years of his life, and spent many hours with him alone, most notably at his desert retreat in Twentynine Palms. In 1950, he placed me in charge of the other monks. Less than a year after accepting me as a disciple, he made me a minister. He appointed me to give Kriya Yoga initiation only eight months after accepting me as a disciple. He planned to take me with him to India (a plan that was canceled, finally, by his physical death in 1952). Perhaps most important, he spoke to me often, personally and at length, about his deeper teachings and his mission's future.

He said to me many times, and not only in confidence when we were alone, "You have a great work to do." That these words were directed to me personally, and were not meant as a general statement concerning the work as a whole, was very clear. Sometimes he would add statements like, "Therefore you must (or must not) do [such and such]." The first time he said those words to me—it was in the presence of certain long-term disciples including Daya Mata—I was standing outside his car with another monk, Herbert Freed. After saying, "You have a great work to do," he added, significantly: "It's you I'm talking to, Walter."

One day Master and I were standing out of doors by the garage at his Twentynine Palms retreat. After a silence of several moments, he suddenly spoke with great earnestness: "Apart from St. Lynn, every man

has disappointed me—and YOU MUSTN'T DISAPPOINT ME!!!" This was the only time he ever spoke to me personally with such intensity.

I knew his meaning could not be that all his other male disciples had disappointed him spiritually. Many of them, indeed, were deeply devoted to God. Obviously then, his disappointment had to be due to the fact that, if his world mission was to be spread far and wide, masculine energy was needed for the job. Yet most of the men who had come to him so far had shown themselves interested primarily in their own spiritual progress. Only one of them, St. Lynn (Rajarshi Janakananda), had understood and demonstrated deep and practical interest in the mission itself.

An interesting fact of human nature is that men's energy is directed more naturally outward, even as the male organ is placed outward in body. Feminine nature, by contrast, is directed more naturally inward, even as the female sexual organ is placed inside. For the Master's work to be launched with the necessary vigor, male energy was not only desirable, but essential.

In my own case, even as I was crossing the country to meet him in 1948, my constant thought was, "This message is so wonderful, I'd like to share it with everybody in the world!"

He once said to me, "Your duties in this life will be editing, lecturing, and writing."

Is it not clear, from all of the above, that I have a right—indeed, a Guru-given duty—to present the facts contained in this book? The fact that I came to him late in life is irrelevant. I had to come late, to ensure that I'd live long enough to complete his commission to me. Saint Paul never even met Jesus Christ in the flesh, yet he played a vital role in the completion of that great master's mission on earth.

2. Two Directions

Yogananda's mission has taken two divergent directions: the one, toward narrow institutionalism; the other, toward universality. I represent the expansive interpretation of his mission. SRF represents the narrower view. Which of the two is correct? Are they even compatible? If SRF's interpretation is right, then is mine wrong? And if mine is correct, then is theirs, albeit understandable, unlikely to prevail for long?

They have seniority on their side. On mine, I have common sense. I also have backing me Master's own words—not to me only; I also have his oft-reiterated public statements. I stated in the Introduction that Yogananda spoke fervently throughout his public life of the need for spiritually minded people to join together in cooperative, harmonious, self-sustaining communities.

a) In article after article, and in lecture after lecture, he emphasized his deep conviction that such communities were needed. On numerous occasions I heard him express himself with great enthusiasm on this issue. It was a basic theme of his long before I arrived on the scene—as long ago, indeed, as the early 1930s.

b) In 1949, a woman named Mrs. Myers gave a garden party in Master's honor in Beverly Hills, a wealthy section of Los Angeles. About eight hundred guests attended, among them many famous Hollywood figures. At the end of the party, Mrs. Myers invited her special guest to address the gathering.

What would have been an honored guest's usual response to such an invitation? Under the circumstances, surely, he would have offered a few gracious words of thanks and appreciation to his hostess; a few pleasant words of welcome to the guests themselves; and perhaps—in Yogananda's case—a few kindly and thoughtful insights on life in general.

What actually happened? It could not have been more different from such a tame expectation! Virtually, what he delivered that day was a verbal explosion!

Speaking in a voice of thunder, his words filled with divine power, the Master shouted: "This day marks the beginning of a new era! My spoken words are registered in the ether, in the Spirit of God, and they **SHALL MOVE THE WEST!** . . . We must go on—not only those who are here, but thousands of youths must go north, south, east, and west to cover the earth with little colonies, demonstrating that simple living plus high thinking produce the greatest happiness."

Years later, those words were read during a Sunday service at Ananda Village. Gently and devotionally the speaker whispered, "Thousands of youths must go north, south," etc. At this point I cried out, "Give me that book!" I thereupon read the words as I had myself heard them delivered that day by the Master. Everyone present that day was shocked by their power.

c) Virtually all of his monastic disciples were present on that occasion. I cannot believe that Daya, his personal secretary, would have been absent. But even if she was, she had certainly heard him address this subject on many other occasions, and with only slightly less fervor.

Yet when I asked her, in 1958, "When are we going to start creating Master's world-brotherhood communities?" she replied casually, and much to my amazement: "Frankly, I'm not interested."

d) The party line now being offered by SRF is: "Master changed his mind toward the end of his life. He lost interest in the idea of communities." Mrinalini Mata herself, whom I used to consider truthful, was the one responsible for making this incredible misstatement to me. Evidently, in her mind, loyalty to the "party line" claimed the highest priority.

I state categorically therefore, in absolute contradiction to her words, that Master never changed his mind on this issue, or indeed on any other important one—least of all, certainly, on this one. He was, after all, a spiritual master! For him to have stated with so much power, “My spoken words are registered in the ether, in the Spirit of God . . . and they shall move the West! . . .” and then, years later, simply to “change his mind” would have been completely—and laughably!—unthinkable.

In fact, Kamala Silva, in her book, *The Flawless Mirror*, wrote that only four months before his death Master had spoken to her with great enthusiasm about the need for spiritual communities. (This fact, too, may have been one reason for Daya’s displeasure with Kamala—which, toward the end of Kamala’s life, became painfully evident.)

e) In the original “Aims and Ideals of SRF,” Master wrote (as I stated earlier) that one of his mission’s main purposes was “To spread a spirit of brotherhood among all peoples; and to aid in establishing, in many countries, self-sustaining world-brotherhood colonies for plain living and high thinking.”

After his death, SRF changed that basic mission statement to read: “To encourage ‘plain living and high thinking’; and to spread a spirit of brotherhood among all peoples. . . .” The new wording omits all reference to the founding of communities.

Today, as I said, there is no reference in any SRF publication to world brotherhood communities, and to this concept as being one of the basic “aims and ideals” of Self-Realization Fellowship.

f) Ananda, for its twentieth anniversary in 1988, organized a pilgrimage to Encinitas and to the other SRF colonies. In Encinitas, SRF’s Sister Shanti announced to a little group of us in my presence, “Oh yes, I know many people have tried to start cooperative communities, but none have succeeded.” And this was Ananda’s twentieth anniversary!

Ananda Village, near Nevada City, has in this year, 2011, completed its forty-third year of thriving existence.

What SRF has done is try to change at least this one basic aspect of Yogananda’s legacy for the world. There are others, as I shall explain in the following pages. But this basic change alone, and Daya’s words to me (“Frankly, I’m not interested”), show a readiness to betray his entire legacy. Indeed, what is this if not betrayal?

Such is my point of view, and it is morally justifiable for me to say so if only to answer their charge of my treachery. Yet, in all fairness I must add that the pathway to truth has many ramifications. Daya’s love for Master was very personal—indeed one might say, feminine. Mine has been more impersonal and, perhaps, masculine. Her loyalty has been to him as a human being. Mine has been to him, as he himself urged me to see him, as a “bulge of the Ocean”—that is, as a manifestation of Infinite God. Master himself counseled this kind of loyalty. On leaving Boston for the West Coast, he said to Dr. Lewis, “Never mind what happens to me, Doctor. Just don’t forget God.”

My loyalty to him was personal also. Once in India I visited Morarji Desai (who later became India’s prime minister) to solicit his support for my Delhi project. He spoke deprecatingly of my guru and, indeed, of all gurus. Turning to the person who’d come with me, I said, “Let us leave.” Not another word did I address to Mr. Desai. He phoned later and apologized, but from then on I was never able to hold him in the high esteem his high position demanded.

Daya’s loyalty to Master, however, was personal in a way that I could never share. She seemed to feel almost as though she owned him. His writings, his recordings: these were, to her, personal possessions to be kept precious, protected from others. This attitude was one that I could never hold.

3. Schools

It is well known that Paramhansa Yogananda started schools in India. He wanted to start schools, similarly, in America. In fact, his first plan for Mt. Washington was to make it a school. But of course he needed first to educate parents to the need for his new form of education. And he must have known from the beginning that this was the case. I cannot but think he announced this concept not as another “idea to be changed toward the end of his life,” but rather as one that he foresaw and desired for the future, whenever the time was right.

SRF has evinced no interest in starting such schools. Ananda, however, saw schools from the beginning of its existence as intrinsic to Yogananda’s community idea. We have several schools in various Ananda communities throughout the world, following the principles outlined in my book, *Education for Life*, which in turn was inspired by Paramhansa Yogananda’s educational ideals. In this important way also, Ananda has kept alive one of the basic aspects of our Guru’s mission.

Schools are now integral parts of our communities at Ananda Village near Nevada City, California; in our suburban community at Mountain View, California; in the Ananda community near Portland, Oregon; in the Ananda community at Seattle, Washington; in the Ananda community near Assisi, Italy; as a part of our growing Ananda community in Gurgaon, north India; and in our new community near Pune, south India.

Some of our schools teach only the elementary grades, but in some of them we offer education also up through the university level, especially at Ananda Village—a facility which will soon be moved to our new community at Laurelwood, Oregon.

High praise has been given the Ananda schools by persons respected in the field of education.

4. The Timid Approach

While I lived in SRF, it became gradually clear to me why it was that our Guru had told me so frequently, “You have a great work to do.” There had to have been some definite purpose for his telling me that. What I have come to realize is that he depended on me, more deeply than he ever let on, to save his work from later misinterpretation, dilution, and even worse: eventual dissolution.

I was deeply shocked when Daya once told me something Master had said to her. Evidently she had not realized the degree to which his statement was directed at her, personally; had she done so, she probably would have kept it locked in her heart. I repeat Master’s words here exactly as she reported them to me:

“How you all will change the work after I am gone. I just wonder, were I to return in another hundred years, if I would even recognize it.”

I have described Ananda’s relative credentials for claiming to represent our Guru. Surely the seniority claimed by some of them is not the only worthwhile credential! Doesn’t what we’ve done with what Master left us count also? Indeed, it must count for much more than the passive fact of having lived with him for “x” number of years? Any turtle could have done that.

How much has SRF accomplished in these sixty years since Yogananda’s passing? They closed down works that Master had begun: the restaurants in Hollywood and Encinitas; the hotel in Encinitas. They froze the creativity of their branch centers, concerned lest the center leaders, just possibly, dilute the teachings. They haven’t trusted their own ministers to respond spontaneously to questions. Instead, they offer prepared answers to artificially concocted questions. The ministers read the title out loud: “Answers to Frequently Asked Questions,” then give the carefully constructed solutions, painstakingly worked out no doubt by committee.

They timidly opposed every creative idea I ever proposed to them, offering the counter suggestion that we check first to see what had already been done “in the field.”

Two persons, Kamala Silva and Durga Mata, wrote books about our Guru. In consequence, they were ostracized. Yet SRF itself produced nothing in place of such works. They were like the dog in the manger in Aesop’s fable, in which story the dog wouldn’t let cows near the straw even though the dog did not personally eat the straw. And SRF won’t eat the manna of riches in Yogananda’s teachings, but they bark loudly to keep others from sampling it.

I myself have written nearly 140 books, all of them intended to make Master’s teachings better known. To SRF’s view, which Tara herself expressed to me, “People already have all the books they need for their salvation.”

I am told that there have been, so far, over 500,000 viewers of my Youtube videos. In the last month there have been over 20,000. Most of the shows are on Yogananda’s interpretations of the Bhagavad Gita. If SRF even knows of the existence of Youtube, I shall be pleasantly surprised. Indeed, according to very recent information, they don’t even offer their members an address by which SRF can be contacted by email.

I don’t mention my accomplishments in order to boast of them, but rather to say only, “Look what can be done—what all of us can do—to make our Guru’s work better known!” But to SRF this is megalomania. I sometimes wonder what they think his reason was for even coming to America! Could it have been merely to proclaim that the sacred truths he taught were secret?

I once discovered an ancient treatise in India, written supposedly 5,000 years ago, that accurately describes, and makes predictions for, the lives of countless people who are alive today. This remarkable testimony to the greatness of ancient India had no further meaning for Tara or SRF than

that it said complimentary things about me—an unthinkable defect, inasmuch as they know of no record that says anything about them. (How could they know? None of them has taken the trouble even to investigate the phenomenon.) Tara’s comment to me was, “The only reason you mention that book at all is that it says such good things about YOU!”

Timidity about even quoting their own Guru in ways that might be misunderstood by a few is one of their basic defects. Yogananda more than once proclaimed that he had been Arjuna in a former life. Tara insisted, “We can’t say that! We have no proof!” And I couldn’t help asking myself when she said that, Isn’t it proof enough that he himself told us he’d been Arjuna?

I’ll be mentioning later Tara’s timidity in editing out some of his bolder statements for fear of “what people might think.” This fear of making the wrong impression on others is fundamental to everything SRF does. It has led to the gradual shrinking of his mission, legacy, and teachings to the point where I’m afraid that his work may some day become like the most watered-down Protestant sect, declaring essentially, “Go on just as you are, earning money and breeding like flies. Only take the name of our Savior occasionally, and you’ll be saved.”

Yogananda brought to the world a work of world-changing importance. They have treated it like an old ladies’ sewing circle.

5. How Were the Changes Possible?

There was a significant difference between the respect given our Guru by his early disciples, and that which we gave who came to him closer to the end of his life.

During his early years, he had done his best to make people understand that whatever he had accomplished, they too could accomplish. He played down his own spiritual greatness in order to help them accept their own high potential. In his last years, he spoke more frankly—as Jesus Christ often did—of his own state of oneness with God. His early disciples saw him as a great man, but for all that still a man, and fallible. We who came later—those of us, anyway, who tuned in deeply to what he was saying—saw him as a window onto Infinity.

To me, Daya's closeness to him appeared to be centered above all in the thought of him as a human being. It was also centered in organizational matters, and in personal exchanges with him. Where his actual teachings were concerned, and certainly in their more abstract aspects, she was astonishingly deficient. Once she explained to me the meaning of Christ Consciousness, for example, as being “when you see everyone in the world as your own brother and sister.” How completely different, her explanation, from the cosmic explanation our Master gave!

Master, quoting the words of Jesus, often said to us, “The last shall be the first.” The number of years Daya was with him must be balanced against what she herself was capable of absorbing, with her human understanding. Physical proximity is not enough. Seniority is not enough.

The Master often referred quite casually to a former incarnation of his own: as William the Conqueror. For me, this news came as something of a shock. My early education had been in the English system, which had conditioned me to view William I as one of history's great villains! This revelation of

Master's made me ponder, and study, the Conqueror's life more deeply.

Many years later, I gave to Catherine Kairavi, a member of Ananda, the job of researching William's life, as well as that of his fourth son, Henry I, whom history depicts as William's spiritual heir. Catherine's book, published in 2010 under the title, *Two Souls: Four Lives*, shows William to have been a deeply spiritual man, blessed with a difficult but distinctly spiritual mission. Among many other things, she points out that William's body was found incorrupt—as happens only in the case of great saints—430 years after his death.

Her book also makes a very strong case for something no doubt surprising: for my having actually been his son Henry. The similarities are compelling.

But much more importantly, Catherine's book shows that the reason Master shared with us the memory of that incarnation was to help us understand that his role in the present lifetime, too, is destined to have a great impact on the world. Indeed, I believe it will be instrumental in changing the course of civilization itself—as in fact William's life did. Such, indeed, is the final message of Catherine Kairavi's excellent book.

Daya told me, in substantially the following words: “I was William's daughter Agatha.¹ William sent me to Spain to be the wife of the heir to the king of that country (Castile-Leon). But I had a deep desire to dedicate my life to God, and prayed to be spared the destiny my father wanted for me. When the ship arrived in port, I was found kneeling by my bed in an attitude of prayer, dead.”

Daya related this story to me as evidence of her own deep devotion to God (a quality she certainly did possess). To me, however, it has always seemed that

¹Agatha is not listed in many English-language histories of William's life, perhaps because she died at a young age. There are records, however, especially in Spain, that Agatha was one of William's daughters, affianced, as Daya told me, to the heir to the throne.

Agatha's posture in death may also have been less praiseworthy, indicating as it did a rejection of her own guru's will for her, and a failure to recognize the true greatness of her father/guru in either life. Had she become the queen of Spain, she might have gained an understanding of leadership qualities which, in this life, have been lacking. Maybe her Guru was even then aware of today's realities. Had she been a queen in that life, that experience might have made her a better SRF president in this one.

She also said to me, "In this life, I have had trouble with my knees." Had she died on her knees in accordance with God's will, would not her knees have been, if anything, blessed in this lifetime, instead of giving her trouble?

Yogananda himself, in a letter to Rajarshi Janakananda (the Master's most advanced disciple), once lamented "Poor Faye's" deficiency in leadership qualities. As he wrote: "Faye through my incapacity does not know to do things any way as I did, money or no money she has none to guide her. As a result the work has started going back." He concluded, "Everyone in the work is terrified about the work's future."

In her present lifetime also, Daya has repeatedly equated Yogananda's will with her own wishes. A case in point is her declaration that his primary reason for coming to the West was to create a monastery. Obviously, her indifference to his fervor for starting "world brotherhood colonies" is another case in point.

6. Was Yogananda the Last of the Gurus?

In this chapter I will present a few examples of fundamental changes that SRF has imposed over the years on Master's message and mission.

a) Yogananda often spoke of "Churchianity" as distinct from Christianity. Obviously, he didn't want his message to become distorted by organizationalism. With me, even though he spoke frequently about the future of his work, he almost never spoke of the work in organizational terms. Obviously too, then, what mattered to him most was the mission itself, not the mechanics of its diffusion. I think that he saw my real work, also, as being outside the organization.

SRF has done its utmost to institutionalize both the Master and his teachings. It has done so, indeed, in the very spirit that Master excoriated in contrasting Christianity to "Churchianity." SRF has become, since his passing, almost "more papal than the pope." Practices that the Catholic Church eschewed centuries ago hold full—indeed, vigorous—sway among Yogananda's own disciples.

b) SRF has declared that, with Yogananda no longer in the body, his written lessons have become the guru.² It is true that Yogananda said he himself was the last in our line of gurus. That statement must be understood, however, in context with other statements he himself made. For example:

1. He told me personally, "No scripture can be the guru. If one challenges a scripture, the scripture itself can't answer. But if a true man of God is challenged, he will be able to reply according to the questioner's needs." Not the Master's teachings alone, then, but the vibrations of his consciousness are what constitute his gift to the world and above all

to his disciples. To say, in contrast to that teaching, that his lessons are the guru—when in fact he, personally, didn't even write them—: Well, what can one possibly say in reply?

2. In John 1:12, the Holy Bible states: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Jesus brought to earth the power to infuse a higher consciousness into those disciples who tuned in to his spirit. This is the function of the true guru; his job is to transmit to his disciples his own freedom from ego-consciousness.

3. It is not enough, then, to receive the guru's teachings only intellectually, even if one is blessed with considerable intellectual understanding. The guru's bliss and wisdom must be absorbed into one's very being. Only by such absorption can the guru's higher awareness expand the disciple's ego-limitation to expanded soul-consciousness. Indeed, only to the extent that one banishes the all-but-universal ego-hypnosis from his awareness can a person truly rise, spiritually. This freedom comes when the disciple willingly receives into himself a higher consciousness, from divine levels of awareness.

4. It is for this reason, above all, that the truth-seeker is counseled to seek an enlightened guru. Otherwise, even the highest knowledge will be tainted with ego. It is the awareness of one's own impotence to raise himself that rescues one from the delusion of clinging to ego-guidance and, by bringing a true guru into one's life, takes one from discouragement to enlightenment.

In my own case, the realization of how difficult it was to bring even one virtue to perfection was what drove me finally, in desperation, to the conclusion, "I need help!" Yogananda then, by God's will, entered my life. In meeting him, I was completely convinced that in him I had found someone who could give me the guidance and understanding I so badly needed.

5. Many people resist the idea of needing a guru. When such persons challenge me, "Do I really need a

²SRF's Board of Directors has also enunciated as its basic policy its belief that, now that they no longer have Yogananda's direct guidance, they should always be guided by the single consideration, "What is best for the organization?"

guru?” I may answer, “You don’t need one at all! Just keep on being your own guru.”

In *The Jewel in the Lotus*, a stage play I once wrote, Romesh, a wealthy but comically materialistic merchant, shares this piece of “wisdom” (as he defines the term): “God is in money, too. Therefore, the more you have of money, the more you have of God. Simple!” I wrote that role to demonstrate the inadequacy of reasoning if it lacks intuitive understanding.

Those who sincerely seek enlightenment, however, never pose such a challenge. If they ask me sincerely, “Do I need a guru?” my reply to them is very different. “Can you lift yourself by your own bootstraps?” I ask. “Wisdom implies a heightened state of consciousness. A true guru will be able to lift you to that state. In the end, it is God’s grace alone that saves; the guru is a channel for that grace. God never acts except through instruments, whether they be angels, lower deities, or—in this case—enlightened human beings.”

These truths must be shared, however, only with those people who are willing to listen, not with those who love to argue.

c) When Daya Mata went to India in 1958 (I was included in her party), she learned that followers of the Sikh religion accept their scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, as their guru. Daya seized eagerly on this fact to justify her claim that Master, too, had declared that the lessons would, after his passing, become the guru. The statement Master made to me personally on this point flatly contradicts this claim. Indeed, from his statement to me it is clear that he could never have told Daya anything even remotely similar. As for the Sikhs, I don’t know much about their religion, but I do know many Sikhs who also have personal gurus. From this fact I assume that sincere—as distinct from merely orthodox—spiritual seekers in Sikhism understand, and accept, that every true seeker needs a Self-realized guru. Indeed, living in India as they do, it seems to me unlikely that any of them would not be familiar with this true teaching.

As for Master’s own lessons, it may help the reader to know that Master told me—again, personally; I heard this with my own ears—that he himself had not even written the SRF lessons. They were compiled, he told me, and not always well compiled—for example, they contained quite a number of word-for-word repetitions—from articles he had written, and from lectures and classes he had given over the years.

d) Master made another important statement to me; this one he made personally, also. For all I know, I may be the only one to whom he ever made it. Nevertheless, I swear before God, my Guru, and every great master who ever lived that he did indeed make it. His statement was, “There must be at least one physical contact with the guru in the disciple’s present lifetime.”

This statement obviously meant that the guru has to be in his physical body for there to be that one, minimal contact. Master’s statement to me flies in the face of the belief, widely held in SRF and indeed founded on something Master actually did say, that he was the last of the gurus. What could he have meant in making this statement? I will try to explain.

e) He once told me that for a person to become fully liberated, he must first free at least six others. (By “free,” Master obviously referred to a state of consciousness lower than final liberation; otherwise how could anyone ever attain that highest state? Each of those freed would, in turn, have had to free at least six others; and each of those six others would have to have freed. . . . Well, surely you get the picture!)

f) Now that Master is no longer in the body, I find a plethora of actual or potential contradictions in SRF’s explanation of Master’s continued position in the work. What, one may ask—for those who have come to Master’s work since he left his body—are the chances, for those who follow him, of their finding God? They won’t have met Yogananda physically. How, then, if a physical meeting with the guru is essential, is the hapless seeker, by merely following his teachings, ever going to attain the goal?

In short, how can any late-comer to his path even claim Master as his guru?

Please understand that I am not saying these claims are false or unrealistic. What I am saying is that, since Master is no longer in the body, his way of reaching people must be through human instruments. Everything God does on earth is accomplished through earthly instruments—even if it be only bees pollinating the flowers. Even direct visions of a great master can only inspire: they cannot actually save. Those who come to Yogananda now must accept that his power can also animate certain of his living disciples, and will continue to animate those who continue to come to his teachings, if they are themselves sufficiently in tune with him to guide others truly.

It cannot mean, of course, that everyone who follows him will be graced with the same power. We are not discussing, here, a line of officially ordained priests. But among his followers there will be some more qualified than others to teach in his name. It will be by their attunement with his particular ray of divine grace that they will continue to be able to bless others.

1. There is a story I was told in 1960 by a great saint, Sri Rama Yogi, whom Master had met in India during his 1935–36 visit to the ashram of Ramana Maharshi. This man was the only fully liberated soul my Guru ever met, apart from his own line of gurus, and apart from two disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya: Swami Pranabananda (the saint with two bodies as he is described in *Autobiography of a Yogi*), and Ram Gopal Muzumdar (the sleepless saint). (I don't include here Yogananda's own disciples.) I asked Master about many of the other saints in *Autobiography of a Yogi*. In each case his answer was the same: "He had reached the stage of *jivan mukta*, but was not yet fully liberated."

The only other fully liberated saint he'd encountered (though he hadn't mentioned him in his autobiography) was Sri Rama Yogi.

The story told me by Sri Rama Yogi was about a saint called Namdev, who used every day in vision to see and speak with Krishna. To make a long (though delightful) story very short, I will say only that this saint once asked Krishna to liberate him from delusion. Krishna replied, "For liberation, you need a human guru." Namdev answered, "But I see you in vision daily, Lord. Can't You, Yourself, free me?" Krishna answered, "I can inspire you, Namdev, but for salvation it is My law that you must receive it through a human instrument."

2. Yogananda came on earth to bring people salvation. His mission was much more than to inspire, though even that would have been much. The salvation he brought, and even much of the inspiration his followers will need for attaining salvation, can be conveyed only through ongoing generations of sincere disciples whose discipleship to Master is cemented by an unbroken line of living instruments.

3. The Bible, in John 4:2, states, "Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples."

4. And in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Master's sister Nalini is quoted as saying, "Your master has blessed our home, our entire family. . . . The presence of such a man is a sanctification on the whole of India. Dear brother, please tell Sri Yukteswarji that, through you, I humbly count myself as one of his Kriya Yoga disciples."

In Nalini's case, Master himself describes her as being unaware of how great he himself was. But Yogananda also makes it clear that it was not wrong for her to accept him as a channel for his own guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar.

5. In this way also, lines of disciples will continue down through the ages, carrying the baton, so to speak, from generation to generation.

6. Why, then, did Master say he was the last of the Gurus? He did so quite simply because he was the last in the line of avatars, or descended masters, whose God-given task it had been to found this

particular ray of divine grace—this particular mission. Our line of gurus comprise the divine messengers sent to us, and to all mankind, in these times.

Therefore we keep their images on our altars. Normally, we don't place any other photograph there. If, however, any individual feels inspired to put someone else's image also on his own personal altar, Master himself permitted it.

There was a certain disciple who kept a photograph of Dr. Lewis on her private altar. When someone accused her of wrongdoing, she questioned the Master on this point. He reassured her, "It is fine for you to do so. Just keep it off to one side."

7. Some people claim that it is sufficient for them to go straight to Yogananda, seeking no intermediary to him. In my sixty-three years of discipleship (so far), I have not known this belief to produce a single convincing result. To me it is obvious that Master's meaning was not, "I am the last of the gurus," but rather, "I am the last in our line of founding gurus," of which there are only five. Master's statement that he was the last of the gurus cannot possibly have been meant to deny the possibility of any future guru within his work, if every sincere devotee needs a guru whom he has met personally in the flesh. Obviously, the Master can only have meant that he was the last of the gurus of this work, and not in the work—that is to say, the last guru his mission would ever produce.

8. Yogananda, the last of our founding gurus, was (like his predecessors) an avatar. And what is an avatar? He—or she, presumably, though I've never actually heard of a female avatar—is a completely liberated soul who, out of extraordinary compassion, comes back to earth to save others. He thereby delays his own complete absorption in God.

An avatar is also something more: He comes with full divine power to liberate as many devotees as attune themselves with his consciousness.

Paramhansa Yogananda was sent to earth, as were also Jesus, Buddha and many other avatars throughout history, with the full blessing of God to save as many souls as came to him in purity, and to bring divine grace also, more broadly, to the whole world. The avatars are the founders of the great religions. Yogananda stated in his poem "God's Boatman":

Oh! I will come back again and again!

Crossing a million crags of suffering,

With bleeding feet, I will come,

If need be, a trillion times,

As long as I know that

One stray brother is left behind.

For mortal minds, such compassion is simply inconceivable.

Lesser saints—at least usually—are followers of an avatar; they also draw on his power. An avatar is greater, in a human sense, than even a completely liberated master, for he returns to human life with the complete and undiluted power of the Lord Himself. Even newly liberated saints have the power to free only a few others.

9. When people speak of Christ's suffering on the cross, they don't realize how far above suffering an avatar like him really is. Yes, Jesus did suffer on the cross, but he suffered only in the sense of grieving for human ignorance, and for people's perennial indifference to their own highest good: their reabsorption in absolute, divine bliss. "Father," Jesus said, "forgive them, for they know not what they do."

g) When Sister Gyanamata died, Master remarked to a small group of us monks, "I saw her sink back into that watchful state"—in other words, into final liberation in God. This complete oneness with the Infinite comes only when one has attained final release from all past karmas.

1. Master had already told me that to achieve perfect freedom one must first free at least six others. At this point, therefore, I wondered, “But how could she have achieved liberation, since she had no disciples?”

2. Master caught my thought; his reply was important to my present argument. What he said then was, “She had disciples.”

Obviously, his meaning was that Sister had been acting as his channel for the salvation of certain others. One can only assume that, if Sister did so, then Rajarshi, and perhaps others, also, must have done so too, acting as his channels.

h) Peggy Deitz was a devoted disciple of Master’s who lived for some years at Mt. Washington. Master told her at one point in her life to live outside the monastery, and serve a larger public. This evidently was what she herself needed, for her own spiritual development.

One day he requested her to start giving Kriya initiation to others. Because she no longer lived at Mt. Washington, she asked him in astonishment, “What will the organization say?”

The Guru replied, “Are you following the organization? Or are you following me?”

i) SRF claims that loyalty to the organization itself is essential for the devotee of this path. Obviously, Master, in the above case, was demanding loyalty not to SRF, but to himself as the Guru.

What SRF has done is change Master’s very definition of loyalty. Yogananda didn’t necessarily include, in that word, loyalty, loyalty to his organization. Neither, on the other hand, did he equate loyalty to him with loyalty to SRF. He often said, “Loyalty is the first law of God,” but the loyalty of which he spoke was a feeling of heartfelt dedication to God alone, above all. Such loyalty has little if anything to do with signing a membership pledge.

j) It must also be in the rightness of things, that when SRF demands loyalty of its members, for it also to offer them loyalty in return. Instead, SRF, while demanding loyalty of others, gives none to them. I make this statement both from observation and from my own experience. For I myself was thrown out without even a hearing, though I had been serving the organization loyally for fourteen years. My own case, moreover, is far from unique. Many others have been treated somewhat similarly.

k) It may interest the reader to learn of a peculiar philosophy of Tara’s, which she once expressed to me after I myself had been elected to the Board of Directors. What she said was, “In an organization, no one except the members of the Board of Directors has a right even to think!” I find this blatant disregard for the individual’s free will simply an outrage to all spiritual law, and wholly in opposition to Master’s fundamental concept of Self-realization.

l) Let me reiterate: A guru is an absolute necessity for finding God; the ego cannot lift itself out of the mire of delusion, any more than could Baron Münchhausen, in the satiric German fable that recounted his outrageous lies, have really lifted himself and his horse out of the mud by pulling upward on his own hair. This is why Shankaracharya, the great Master who lived many centuries ago in India, said that the greatest blessing in all the three worlds—the causal, the astral, and the physical universes—is the guidance of a true guru.

1. Jesus Christ, on the Mount of Olives, as he gazed down upon the city of Jerusalem, cried out in agony: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” The Jewish people have a collective need to recognize the need for an enlightened, and living, teacher.

2. Man needs the company of other human beings for his own spiritual advancement. Satsanga, good company, is essential for spiritual advancement. The caste system of India was created in recognition of this truth. Members of the Shudra, or lowest, caste can rise most certainly by keeping company with people who belong by right to a higher caste, for people at the lowest level of advancement feel little, if any, incentive toward spiritual progress. Without higher influences, they have virtually no incentive at all.

Vaishyas—the next caste up—may feel some such incentive, but will be spurred upward more rapidly if they can have some contact with Kshatriyas, the next stage above them.

Thus, in every case, the company of those whose consciousness is higher than one's own is extremely helpful. Yogananda condensed this thought into the simple dictum: "Environment is stronger than will power."

3. Yogananda also said that God first sends the seeker uplifting books; then inspiring teachers and other spiritually beneficial human instruments; then finally He leads one to one's true guru.

The guru's role, ordained by God, is to bring people to God. This is not a personal choice. As Master said to me the day I first met him, "I am seeing you only because Divine Mother told me to, not because you have come such a distance [I'd just come all the way to Los Angeles, non-stop, from New York]." In India there is a saying, "When the disciple is ready, the guru appears." One doesn't have to shop the length of the counter. If he calls deeply to God, the Lord Himself will show him where to place his next footstep.

4. In my own case, it was God Himself, through Autobiography of a Yogi, who led me to Yogananda. I had never before even heard of the high teachings of yoga. Had my parents been nearby (God took them abroad to the distant land of Egypt), I might well not

have had the courage to make such a sudden and complete change in my life.

5. During my years as a minister in SRF after Master's passing, I was told by Daya to bring people to Master through SRF, and then turn them over to the organization. She said I would then have no further responsibility in the matter.

I came to realize in time, however, that people need ongoing help. It isn't enough simply to turn them over to an organization, or even to the guru. It was, I realized, important for me, or for someone equally interested in the students' spiritual well-being, to maintain personal contact with them and continue to lead them upward on the path to God.

6. One of SRF's greatest mistakes has been to disclaim any spiritual responsibility for its members. Daya Mata used to tell people, "I do not presume to bless." She would then stand before people, her palms folded in reverence, praying to Master to bless them. She didn't realize that, in that very act, she was actually blessing them herself—acting, in other words, as the Master's living channel of blessing.

7. It is every true disciple's duty to channel his guru's power, understanding, and blessings to others to the best of his own ability. Before every lecture he gives, before any counsel he offers, before any work he does, he should pray, "Master, please guide me, help me, and bless me." This point Daya Mata never understood or accepted. She viewed it as the bounden duty of every disciple to represent only the organization, and—I might add—only her will for it. Discipleship, in her eyes, was an outer thing. Utterly foreign to her understanding were the words in the Gospel of St. John: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

7. Rules Are Secondary to the Spirit

Master is often presented by SRF as a harsh, even intolerant, disciplinarian. In fact he was the sweetest, most loving, most unconditionally forgiving human being I have ever known. The only desire I ever beheld in him was a longing to help others achieve victory in their own struggles to reach perfection.

To my dismay, I have found some of my fellow disciples ignoring this aspect of his nature, focused as they are on creating rules to represent what they think ought to be his mission.

a) Many years ago, a friend of mine worked for six months in the guest quarters at Encinitas. One day, she rearranged a few spices on a kitchen shelf. The cook scolded her heatedly, crying, “Master would never have allowed such liberties!” (As if it really mattered where the spices were placed. I suspect the cook was only using his name to reinforce her own authority.)

b) I never saw in Master even a hint of intolerance. I can, indeed, offer another story from my personal recollections: Once, when he entered the monks’ dining room unexpectedly, he found everything there in disarray. The table and a few of the chairs needed wiping. (At least the dishes had been washed!) We were all painfully embarrassed, but Master seated himself calmly on one of the cleaner chairs, glanced about him briefly, then remarked with a rueful smile, “Well, things might be worse!”

c) He could also, on the other hand, be very decisive in his training. A scolding from him could be far from gentle. Naturally, if a disciple was steeped in ego-consciousness, those scoldings could seem harsh. The disciple’s perception, however, merely reflected the disciple’s own ego.

1. I cannot but think that certain disciples have emphasized the harshness of his discipline only to underscore the steadfastness of their own discipleship.

2. A fellow monk, Bernard Cole, once said to me in confidence, “If you ask me, Old William [William the Conqueror] isn’t dead yet.” Bernard himself, however, had a very strong ego, and, incredibly, made it a point again and again to “correct” his guru.

Ten years after Bernard came as a disciple, Master said to him one day, “For years I’ve listened in silence while you upbraided me. Now I have only this to say to you: ‘I am not impressed!’”

3. Some four years later, Bernard left the path. I met him again in the late 1970s, shortly before his death. I hope I succeeded in helping him to open his heart to Master once again. Certainly I did my best to bring about this happy ending to his present incarnation. I was reassured by the fact that, when we parted, he hugged me and gave me a warm smile.

4. Such twists and turns are normal on the soul’s long, winding journey toward its goal of union with God. When the seeker has finally achieved the supreme blessing of attracting a true guru, and has received from him the gift of the guru’s unconditional love, the guru then assumes full responsibility for the disciple’s continued upward evolution. This is a divine duty, and one which the guru takes very seriously, for he is “in it for the long haul.” Naturally, the disciple makes mistakes along the way. The guru waits patiently for him to return to the path of wisdom, and never forces his will on the disciple. For free will is, ever, a divine birthright.

5. A disciple of Yogananda’s (Norman) once lamented, “I don’t think I have very good karma, Master.”

Vigorously, to dispel any doubt, the Master countered, “Remember this: It takes very, very, VERY good karma even to want to know God!”

Look with sensitive gaze at the crowds in any public place on earth. I think you will see his statement amply confirmed: peaceless faces; confused faces; puzzled faces; angry or covetous faces; grimly egoically directed faces, all of them with their eyes fixed on goals that will eventually bring them nothing but disillusionment.

d) Yogananda once said to SRF's center leader in Mexico City, Señor J. M. Cuaron, "I lost sight of you for a few incarnations, but now I will never lose touch with you again." Señor Cuaron thereafter would sometimes remind him, "Remember your promise!"

"I won't forget," Master would reply. "I will never lose touch with you again."

How many stories might be told in the same vein!

e) My own experience on the path has taught me something very interesting: The deeper a person's inner bliss, the more decisive he becomes in whatever he says and does. Usually, he becomes more considerate of other people's feelings, but he may also at times—toward those who depend on him for guidance—be very firm. I don't mean he is rigidly fixed in his ideas: I mean only that he is interested only in what is true; he is not interested in mere opinions—not even his own opinions. Thus, his decisiveness comes not from self-affirmation, but from the mental clarity that comes with expanding inner bliss.

f) On the subject of the higher decisiveness which comes from living in and for God, I remember my delight in reading a story about Therese Neumann, the Catholic stigmatist in Konnersreuth, Germany. When she was a young maiden, swains from the nearby village would sometimes come "a-courtin'." Therese rejected them firmly, sometimes actually driving them off the land with a pitchfork! The average Christian might ask, "Was this an example of Christian humility?" No, it was an example of Christian bliss!

g) It is intensely painful for me to hear my Guru described as being harshly centered in rules—like the unloving "mother superiors" in many Catholic convents. He himself said to us, "Don't make too many rules. It destroys the spirit." SRF has patterned its development on the Roman Catholic Church, and on the rigid rules that have often been the norm in its monasteries. Yogananda's only real interest, on the other hand, was in guiding people to their own spiritual enlightenment. He never related to anyone from ego-consciousness. Indeed, he had no ego from which to relate! On the infrequent occasions, for example, when he scolded me, I always observed in his eyes not only regret at having to speak to me in that way, but also the bliss he wanted to share with me, and the spiritual determination he hoped to instill in me to keep me striving resolutely toward my own salvation. In no way did he ever try to suppress me.

Only someone with a strong sense of his own ego could have been offended by anything Yogananda ever said or did.

h) What would Master really have allowed in others? Almost anything! His desire was to help all. Never was it to order anyone around or to control anyone's movements. He only wanted to see us achieve inner freedom.

i) In this new age of Dwapara, it is becoming more and more natural for people to think in terms of energy. Try this little experiment: Look at some perfect stranger and ask yourself, "Where is that person's energy centered? From what point in his body does his energy seem to radiate?" Almost always—the more sensitive you are, the more will you see this to be the case—it is centered in the medulla oblongata at the base of the brain. This is the seat of ego-consciousness in the body. Notice how a proud person tends to hold his head up and back, perhaps actually looking down his nose at everyone around him.

Notice also whether a person's energy seems to be withdrawing into that medullar center, or

expanding outward from it, or moving forward from there to the point between the eyebrows.

Then notice whether the energy in his whole body seems to be moving upward toward the brain, or downward toward the base of the spine.

All these foci and directions of energy are indications of a person's state of consciousness.

There are two good directions for a person's energy to move: forward from the negative pole of ego at the back of the head toward a point midway between the eyebrows; and upward in the spine toward the brain. The point between the eyebrows (or, to be more exact, the region just behind that point, in the frontal lobe of the brain) is the positive pole of self-consciousness.

Notice whether a person's energy seems to be rising in the body, and moving forward in the brain, toward that frontal point, or backing away from that point and moving downward in the body. With a little sensitive awareness, you will find it relatively easy to sense these things.

I could tell that my Guru's energy was completely centered in superconsciousness, at the point between the eyebrows. I could almost see his energy there. The entire flow of his consciousness was upward in the body, and forward in the brain. His whole presence emanated a sense of absolute freedom from ego.

j) I wish everyone could understand, in the name of truth itself, how deeply grateful everyone should be for Paramhansa Yogananda's inspiring life of wisdom, compassion, universal love, and perfect bliss: a life ever immersed in, and emanating, God-awareness. Perhaps what we face here, in the contrast between the two organizations that exist in his name, is a conflict between Kali Yuga and Dwapara Yuga consciousness: Kali Yuga being the age we've just left behind us, of matter-centeredness; and Dwapara being the present age of energy-consciousness. My reference here is to an ancient system of chronology which the reader would do well to read about. I

highly recommend *The Yugas*; (subtitled, *Keys to Understanding Our Hidden Past, Emerging Energy Age, and Enlightened Future*), by Joseph Selbie and David Steinmetz. According to that ancient system, we entered a new age of energy in the year 1900. At present (in 2012) we face a struggle between the pull of the past, rooted in a more heavily materialistic age, and the new, more freeing rays of energy-consciousness.

k) At Ananda, which holds itself deliberately open to the rays of Dwapara Yuga, we have only two basic rules. Beyond that, we have flexible traditions. The two rules are: 1) People are more important than things; and 2) Where there is adherence to right action, there lie success and fulfillment of all kinds.

8. SRF's Treatment of Others

An astonishing feature of SRF's official treatment of others, especially as it has developed over recent decades, is its lack of both kindness and sympathy. This indifference to the feelings of others may even be deliberate, as if to demonstrate non-attachment to outer realities. Were the organization a bank or a court of law, such an attitude might be understandable even if it weren't approved of. But Yogananda, before his passing, declared, "Only love can take my place." Does SRF think he meant, Only love for him? or, Only love for God? God is in everyone! The Bible says we should love our neighbor as ourselves. When Yogananda said "only love can take my place," he cannot possibly have meant, "Love for God alone, but indifference to other people's feelings." It is one thing to be non-attached, but surely quite another to be callous. I am reminded of a sentence in a book by Karen Armstrong, *Through the Narrow Gate*, about her former life as a nun: "She (the mother superior) stood there, a pillar of unloving righteousness."

a) Meera Ghosh was the daughter-in-law of Yogananda's older brother, Ananta. Yogananda himself, during the year he spent in India from 1935 to '36, selected Meera as the bride for his nephew, Ananta's son. Years later, Meera became widowed. Master then wrote her from America and gave her the home in which she and her husband had been living (formerly, Ananta's home). The Master promised her an allowance of sixty rupees a month, which in those days was quite adequate for her maintenance.

Gradually, however, owing to inflation, the rupee lost its value and fell to the point where that sixty-rupee allowance reached the equivalent in value of about U.S. \$2.00 a month.

When Meera became old and dependent on medical assistance, she wrote to Daya Mata requesting that her monthly stipend be increased. Daya herself (not SRF, but Daya Mata) wrote back to

say that the organization would continue to honor Master's pledge of sixty rupees a month and would give no more. (Master himself sometimes said, "Faye is a Scotchman," meaning, tight-fisted in regard to finances.)

Not long thereafter, Daya wrote Meera to say that the building in which this relative of Master's lived was the property of YSS (SRF's Indian branch), and was now needed for use as an ashram. She asked Meera to move into the "carriage house"—a fancy name for the garage. The new quarters consisted of a single room, windowless, with an open drain in the floor.

Meera had been settled here for some time, with her grown family, when YSS changed its mind about having an ashram there. The building was now to become a rental property. Meera was not asked to move back into it. Her home, still, was to be the "carriage house."

Several years later, a group of Ananda representatives on a tour of India paid Meera a visit. Appalled by her living conditions, they decided it was simply out of the question for a relative of our own Guru's to live in such privation. We were in a position as a community to ease her burden, and decided to contribute \$100 a month toward her maintenance. For the rest of her life she lived comfortably, and was able also to get the medical assistance she required. We spent an additional U.S. \$13,000 to buy her and her family a large flat.

Could even the most hardened cynic sneer that we'd performed this simple act of charity for selfish gain? It would have been almost an insult to our Guru for us to do otherwise.

During the 1990s I visited Calcutta, and there had an opportunity to meet Meera personally. I was horrified to see with my own eyes this sweet, humble relative of my Guru's and to contemplate how she had been treated by the organization he himself had founded.

b) Yogananda's younger brother, Sananda Lal Ghosh, wrote to Daya Mata in his old age, informing her that he had been diagnosed with cancer. The disease seemed terminal, but he said his doctors had informed him that in America, with its advanced technology, his life might at least be prolonged. Would Daya Mata (Sananda asked) pay his way to America and assist with his medical needs?

Months passed. At last he received a reply—not from Daya Mata, but from SRF's lawyers, stating that SRF would accede to his request on the condition that he deed his home (which had also been Yogananda's boyhood home) to YSS. Sananda, heartbroken, died a few weeks later.

I know there is a story concerning Sananda and his own treatment of Master (Master himself told it to me), but people can change. Sananda had changed. Master, who never held grudges, would certainly have forgiven him. As a point worthy of further consideration: Sananda had written a book, *Mejda*, about his own recollections of Yogananda's boyhood. SRF had published it, and was (presumably) absorbing at least some of the income from its sales.

c) The home of Tulsi Bose, a close spiritual friend of our Guru's during their boyhood years, was inherited by Tulsi's daughter, Hassi, who lives there still. Hassi's husband, Devi, died recently. While he was alive, SRF/YSS offered to buy their home. This was a natural offer to make, considering Paramhansa Yogananda's sentimental associations with that house. What was very unnatural, however, was YSS's reaction to the couple's decision not to sell. Devi and Hassi were cut off from further communication with YSS, and their free subscription to *Yogoda Magazine* was canceled; their names were removed from the YSS mailing list.

d) Kamala Silva had been a close disciple of Master's since the mid-1920s, when she was a child. At the time I knew her, she headed the SRF meditation center in Oakland, California. I was then the head of the SRF center department, and was responsible for guiding SRF's centers and meditation

groups throughout the world. Oakland is situated relatively near to Los Angeles, and I often visited and lectured there, particularly after Kamala's health became fragile. In my opinion, this center was the best SRF center in the world. It owed its excellence entirely to Kamala's spirit of humility, devotion, and attunement with Master.

Kamala had lived for some years at Mt. Washington as a nun. She had left to get married. Master told me himself that it had been his will for her to marry. He also told me, "I selected her husband personally." On another occasion, Master, speaking of Kamala's husband, said to a group of us monks, "He is a true sannyasi [renunciate]."

Kamala became impoverished in her old age. She also, I am sad to say, became a little senile (for women, the actual word is anile). In consequence of both conditions, she was no longer able to take care of herself. Friends of hers appealed to SRF for the assistance she needed. Daya Mata refused to take responsibility in the matter.

Ananda, on learning of Kamala's predicament, took her in and cared for her. This was my own personal decision. I was happy to overlook a fact that might have influenced me against her: Years earlier, Kamala had actually spoken against me to Daya Mata in what appeared to me a pathetic attempt to win Daya's acceptance and approval. From what I was able to learn, Daya was displeased with Kamala for writing an autobiographical book about her life with Master. Evidently, Daya felt that only she herself had a right to represent our Guru! But why this callous rejection of Kamala's book? It is heartfelt, genuine, and (for devotees) deeply inspiring.

I gladly assigned to Kamala the permanent use of my own guesthouse. I also gave her several hundred dollars a month out of the money I occasionally received from Ananda members and friends who have supported me over the years (I get no salary or royalties from my books, music, and recordings). Several Ananda members also contributed directly

toward Kamala's upkeep. Others went to her house daily to cook, clean, and attend to her personal needs.

At this time, I apprised Daya Mata of the situation, and asked if she would like to help out. Another board member responded to say that they, as renunciates, were unable to give money to any individual. Also, the letter stated that since SRF was a nonprofit religious corporation, it could not extend help personally to individuals. The letter added, however, that after consulting with their lawyers they'd decided that SRF might send Kamala a contribution of \$250 a month—a pittance compared to her real needs—with the single provision that the money never be sent directly to me, Kriyananda.

In the end, unfortunately, Kamala's condition worsened, and at last required more specialized care than we were able to provide. Relatives of hers came and took her to an elder care facility in Castro Valley, California. There, a few years later, she died.

e) Ananda has received numerous complaints from people in prison to the effect that Self-Realization Fellowship has refused to help them with lessons, teachings, or guidance. The excuse given has always been that no one was available for the "special assistance" required by prisoners. Our correspondents in prison have also written that the reason given for refusing to send them the lessons was that these might end up being shared with other prisoners.

Such explanations seem makeshift, uncharitable, and in fact inexcusable. Ananda, when appealed to for help, has always done its best to help wherever it possibly could, regardless of anyone's personal situation. We have corresponded with prisoners, and have even visited them. In some cases, Ananda ministers have actually gone in person to a prison to initiate into Kriya Yoga inmates who were considered worthy. To our way of thinking, those persons are human beings in desperate need of improving their lives, beings who can benefit from our help. Whatever help we've extended to them has

been free of charge, in a spirit of kindness and charity.

f) In my opinion, SRF is not representing Master in the noble role of unconditional love that he lived. Many of its members have told us that they have felt put off not only by the chill they feel from SRF ministers and other representatives, but by the picture those representatives paint of Master as a disciplinarian, lacking in warmth, humor, and any genuine human feeling.

I have no wish to hurt anybody, but I do intensely want to see my Guru well served, and it hurts me to see him presented, and represented, and misrepresented, as harsh, callous, and domineering.

9. “Kindness” Among the Disciples

Master urged us to be kind. His words to us monks were, “I want you all to respect one another, as you respect me.” Respect in SRF seems to be reserved and expected only for persons in authority. As for kindness, this quality seems to be virtually ignored—in the name, I suppose, of “non-attachment.” Indeed, I’ve deliberately put the word “kindness” in quotation marks in the title of this chapter.

Tara’s statement to me says it all: “In an organization, no one except the members of the Board of Directors has a right even to think!”

a) Dan Hart, a younger disciple than I, and one who came after Master had left his body, was a friend of mine though sometimes he opposed me on minor issues.

After I was elected to the Board of Directors, there was an occasion when Dan said something that sounded to me like a challenge (I’ve forgotten what it was). I mentioned the matter casually to Daya Mata during a conversation with her.

“Well,” she said brusquely, “he’ll have to go!”

I was horrified. To me, there was no justification at all for even disciplining the poor fellow. What made her reply even worse in my eyes was that I knew she’d made it only to please me. How could she possibly have thought I’d be pleased by her offer? I wanted to help Dan, not to destroy him! I’m sure she wouldn’t have actually dismissed him for so flimsy a reason, but even to make such an offer—just to flatter me! All I can say is, some compliment!

b) Daya once related to me this story about herself and two other Directors: Tara and Dr. Lewis.

Tara tended to be somewhat absentminded. Once the three of them (and probably also Daya’s sister, Ananda Mata, who usually did the driving), traveled

by car. They came to a red traffic light, and stopped. Tara saw a bookstore nearby, got out, and blithely entered the store to glance over a few books. When they’d resumed motion again, Dr. Lewis teased her in a friendly manner. Tara, instead of reacting in any way (a friendly chuckle would have sufficed), gazed ahead stonily as if Doctor had not spoken a word.

To continue the story in Daya’s own words: “I said to Tara a few days later, ‘I was amazed at how calmly you took his words to you.’”

“Tara replied, ‘As if it mattered to me what anyone so insignificant as Dr. Lewis said!’” Concluding the account, Daya laughed delightedly. Why? Was it so funny, that a senior disciple should consider an even-more senior disciple “insignificant?”

I remember Daya saying approvingly of Tara once, “She doesn’t care!” This was with regard to some other situation. But indifference is not the same thing as non-attachment. Daya saw the two as essentially the same thing. She explained Master’s statement to her, “only love can take my place,” as meaning love for God alone.

c) There was another close disciple whom Daya didn’t like: Durga Mata (Florina Darling). Durga was senior to Daya, and, from what I could gather, had been left in charge at Mt. Washington during the year Master spent in India from 1935–36. I rather think Daya had resented Durga’s treatment of her then. Whatever the facts of the matter, Daya once told me with a smile of satisfaction, “Tara [who, against her own Guru’s expressed wishes, practiced astrology] says Durga’s horoscope is at present too powerful; nothing can be done about her. But in another five years her planetary positions will change. Then she’ll get a shock from which she’ll never recover!”

Daya related this story—the “resolution of the problem with Durga”—with a smirk.

Years after my dismissal from SRF, I spoke with Durga Mata on the telephone. She told me then, “Tara came charging up the stairs to my apartment

one day, determined to force a confrontation with me. I knew intuitively the reason for her visit, and as she entered the room I glared at her so fiercely, inspired by Master's power, that she began to shake all over. She turned abruptly, then fled back downstairs again. Since that day, she has never dared to speak to me again!" (Tara had a different version of what happened, but of course she would need to have had.)

d) Durga Mata left her papers to a close friend and supporter of hers, Joan Wight. After Durga's death, SRF (presumably under Daya Mata's instructions) made a concerted effort to obtain those papers. Daya's motive may have been simply to ensure that only her own wishes be generally known as the wishes of Master. Quite possibly too, however, she was concerned lest a book on Durga's life with Master appear in print. She wanted only her own version of him to be known—"as he really was." And Daya herself (to the best of my knowledge) never wrote such a book.

As I mentioned earlier, Daya had not wanted Kamala's book, *The Flawless Mirror*, to be published. It takes very little stretch of the imagination to guess that what Daya wanted most in getting hold of Durga's papers was to suppress her book also. The book did finally appear, under Durga's name. It is titled, *A Paramhansa Yogananda Trilogy of Divine Love*. Joan Wight turned to Ananda for help in protecting her against SRF. It took considerable effort on our part to get SRF to back off from its threatened lawsuit. This beautiful book, filled with stories of Master and Rajarshi Janakananda, is now available to the world.

e) Let us ask ourselves: How can deeply spiritual people, among whom one must certainly count Daya and Tara, possess such glaring defects? A possible explanation comes to mind: A stained-glass window, before sunrise, looks uniformly grey. After dawn, and once the sun's rays pour fully through the panes, each color becomes radiant. If a pane is smudged or muddy, or if it contains any less-than-

luminescent colors, those defects become clearly visible.

Similarly, most people in this world, being animated from within by only dim energy, may be described as grey and colorless. Even murderers have been described as mild by their neighbors. ("But he seemed so harmless!") It is only as people develop their inner potential that their traits—faults as well as virtues—become evident, in some cases painfully so. Seeing a defect in oneself makes it easier, certainly, to correct it.

Spiritual energy also, however—in this case, less fortunately—can make one indifferent to the feelings of others, shouldering dimmer colors out of the way like a sun-illuminated, but conscious, stained-glass window!

The Law of Karma is not cheated, of course. It forces one, sooner or later, to deal with all his misdeeds. Daya and Tara will certainly have to pay for their mistakes, as do we all for our own. Their very clear spiritual sincerity will surely aid them greatly, in the end, to win through to victory.

In fact, apart from the above explanation (the kindest I can suggest) there is also the truth that, when rules are given primary importance in an organization, charity is almost always the first quality to suffer. And when the organization itself is given importance over its potential for serving others, any ideals it upholds will become compromised and, in all too many cases, betrayed.

10. My Frustrations as a Man Working in SRF

My experience in working at SRF was largely involved in interactions with the women, since it was they who were in charge simply because, during Master's early years in America, men were slower to come to the spiritual path.

"In the beginning," Master used to say, "the men who came here as monks couldn't understand why they shouldn't go dancing on Saturday nights!"

The women leaders were not against me, personally, but they were against change. They were against expansion. They were against anything that brought Master's work outwardly into the world. And I came gradually to represent in their minds that force within SRF which bucked this established, inward-shrinking tendency. To them I represented change, expansion, unnecessary development. And to them also, my eagerness to spread the work beyond its present narrow boundaries looked like outright treachery.

Even projects that Master himself had initiated were abandoned with the excuse of "the growing pressures of the work" (which in reality was not growing at all).

His restaurants in Encinitas and in Hollywood were closed; his hotel in Encinitas was closed. Gradually an attitude seeped into the organization that no one, except for those who worked at headquarters, had any right or competence to serve Master's work at all, except passively. Daya Mata favored people who gave her their support. She also tended to consider those who weren't "yes men" to be disloyal.

One time, after I myself had been placed on the Board of Directors and made the first vice president, she said to me, "We must centralize everything."

I replied, "Isn't there much to be learned also from people in the field? Centralization alone, surely,

isn't workable. I think we should balance centralization with a little judicious delegation of power."

Daya's answer was brusque: "The Board feels differently. Don't you think you ought to go along with the Board?"

I was myself on the Board, of course. But then, I was a man—the only male member. My opinion would always count for less. As Daya once said to me, "Let's face it, women are more spiritual than men."

a) I was also the only male member of a committee of fifteen responsible for guiding the work in its day-to-day aspects. To my mind, the discussions at these meetings seemed endless, and mostly non-productive.

One year we gathered several times to organize the approaching annual summer convocation. The discussions dragged on interminably. When it came time to organize the final event—an open house at the SRF Lake Shrine—I thought, "Here, at least, is an opportunity for me to take direct action."

"We have a little group of helpers at our Hollywood church," I announced. "Will you let me give them this job?"

My proposal was accepted with sighs of relief.

The following Sunday at church I announced, "Would anyone like to help organize the upcoming event at our Lake Shrine? Those who would so like please remain behind after the service." About twenty people remained after the rest of the congregation had departed. I then asked for volunteers in helping to prepare a buffet luncheon. A few raised their hands. We discussed what dishes to serve. I then asked for volunteers to set up the necessary tables; for someone else to see to it that chairs were rented for the occasion; and, finally, for a show of hands of those willing to move chairs about, as the situation required.

Halfway through the week, I telephoned everybody to make sure everything was being done.

The big day arrived. Tables were set up; steaming food was placed on them. Smiling ladies stood behind them, ready to serve. The rental company had been phoned, and the needed chairs arrived; these were placed in convenient spots for people to sit on comfortably. When the time came for lectures to begin, I asked the male volunteers to carry chairs over to the lecture area. This simple task was carried out promptly. The whole event went like clockwork.

Later, Sister Shraddha, a member of the committee and also a Board member, complimented me on how smoothly everything had gone.

“And do you know,” I replied, “it required almost no work!” (My remark was a slight dig at the endless discussions at our committee meetings.)

“No work for you, maybe, but plenty of work for those who organized it!”

“In fact,” I replied, “I organized the entire event myself.”

She scorned my answer, which I could see, to her, only demonstrated my colossal egotism.

b) Most of my efforts to serve Master were vetoed by the women. It may seem almost comical, now, to consider so much of what I knew to be good work scorned, set aside, then cast (figuratively) into the dustbin. I prefer, after all these years, to see the humor of the situation, but I cannot help wondering whether things in future will ever improve.

11. India—and My Dismissal from SRF

When I went to India in 1958 with Daya Mata and two other nuns, my frustration continued also in that land. For there too, “ingrownitis” ruled supreme. (And this time it was ancient tradition, rather than femininity, that did the damage.) Yogananda’s work was seen by the directors there as merely the work of another saint, among the many thousands in India’s long history. We “pilgrims” from America were appalled to see how little the Indian devotees understood the importance of Master’s mission.

The members in Calcutta (one of the largest cities in the world) met together on Sunday mornings, about twelve of them; performed traditional puja (worship) ceremonies; gave endless, banal discourses; sang one or two chants listlessly in Sanskrit or in Bengali; then dispersed. They didn’t seem to have even a clue to the freshness, depth, and universality of Master’s teachings. Nor was any serious effort being made to promote his teachings.

Daya Mata returned to America after a year in India, leaving me behind with instructions to travel around the country giving lectures. After a period of seclusion near the Himalayan village of Lohaghat, I gave lectures and taught in Simla, Patiala, Chandigarh, and New Delhi. The response, everywhere I went, was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Thousands attended. I became known across northern India as the “American Yogi.”

In a book of mine, *A Place Called Ananda*, I have told the story of what happened then. It was dramatic, but I’ll only encapsulate it here. The drama revolved around the fact that I endeavored strenuously for many months to make Paramhansa Yogananda’s name and mission known in India. After great effort I got Prime Minister Nehru personally to endorse my plan for a center in the so-called “green belt” of New Delhi, very near Birla Temple and near the center of the city. My success in

this regard has to be classed as a miracle. 1,700 other societies had tried to get land there; all of them had been refused.

When I announced my truly amazing success to the Board of Directors in America, they were the opposite of thrilled. Indeed, they were outraged. While resting in Darjeeling, exhausted after my long labors, I received a long-distance phone call from Tara.

“We do not want that property!” she shouted down the line. I said, “Fine, if you don’t like what I’ve done, we’ll abandon it.” I was disappointed, but at the same time I was willing to obey. A letter followed. It was filled with condemnation. Not only had everything I’d done been “outrageous”; my presumption in doing it was “unbelievable.”

From then on it was, for me, a long downhill slide. Nothing I did could compensate for my supreme sin of not having waited to do what I was told.

Had I done wrong? I cannot for the life of me believe so. Rather, I had acted in complete accordance with what my own Guru had told me to do. The women directors’ point of view regarding the very essence of his mission, and my own view of what he wanted of me, could not have been more divergent.

In July 1962, I was summoned from India to New York.

“New York!” I thought. “Why New York, of all places?” Three thousand miles from our Los Angeles headquarters! Something, obviously, was in the air—something ominous!

I landed in that city on Saturday, July 28; the day is branded forever on my memory. Tara and Daya met me at the airport. Little was said in the taxi on the way to our hotel—the Penta. Tara looked out the back window of the taxi and commented with evident relish on the relative positions of Saturn and Jupiter. Apparently, the placement in the heavens of those two planets held special significance for her.

Apparently, too, she considered whatever was “in the air” to be of great importance. (I should perhaps mention that both Daya and Tara—Laurie Pratt—were ex-Mormons. So also is Mrinalini Mata, SRF’s fourth president. Tara was related to one of the Mormon founders, Orson Pratt. In the Mormon Church, the bishop is considered, in everything, the supreme and absolute authority.)

a) The next morning, I found a long letter from Tara shoved under my door. The letter was a document of about thirty pages, single spaced, filled with vitriolic accusations regarding my countless alleged misdeeds. Its final message contained the appalling news that I was no longer a member of Self-Realization Fellowship, and would never again be welcome on any SRF property.

b) Later that morning I met Daya and Tara in person. At this meeting, Tara, who did most of the speaking, repeated much of what she’d said already in her letter. She accused me again of unbelievable presumption, deceitfulness, lying, treachery, and egotism; of being a megalomaniac; of trying to set myself up as the new guru of SRF/YSS; of plotting to take over the leadership from Daya Mata; and of behaving in a manner so utterly vile that I was no longer fit to represent SRF or Master in any capacity whatsoever.

My dismissal was absolute; there was no hope of appeal.

c) At this meeting, Tara underscored the message of her letter by the denunciatory tone of her voice. So fixed was she in her opinions, and so forceful in their expression, that there was simply nothing I could say in reply.

These were the two persons in the world whom I had held in the highest love and esteem. For most of that one-and-a-half-hour tirade I knelt before them, my arms crossed over my chest in an attitude of unbearable anguish. Surely, I thought, this meeting could not be happening!

But it was. I was being thrown to the wolves.

d) One time some years later—I think it was in 1970—Daya Mata said to me, “I recently called all the monks and nuns together and said to them, ‘I know some of you have heard that Kriyananda was dismissed. He was NOT DISMISSED, he RESIGNED!’”

She demanded that I endorse this statement. I replied in amazement, “I can’t say that. It isn’t true, and you know it isn’t true!”

She paused a moment in frustration, then stated with deep feeling, “Well, you SHOULD have resigned!”

e) This demand that I change my story to her version made one thing clear to me: The true purpose for the tone of that meeting in New York had been to force my resignation: to make me storm out of the room shouting angrily, “You can’t dismiss me: I resign!” How little they knew me! I had given Master my unconditional love and loyalty. Nothing could—not even possibly—make me resign.

Since I had not behaved as they’d expected, they were determined to say anyway that I’d resigned. They couldn’t let people know they’d been so heartless as simply to dismiss me, after so many years of loyal service! Therefore, they lied.

f) For myself, I simply could not believe that these (to me) dear sisters could be heaping me with such abuse. Tara’s personality was forceful and caustic to an unnatural degree, but I’d never realized she could be ruthless. Daya was much younger than she, and deferred to her habitually. Indeed, although Daya was the president, it may be said that Tara was the real “power behind the throne.” Both of them, however, were disciples of a great saint of love!

g) Tara warned me sternly never again to contact any SRF member. She added, “If you do, we’ll expose you for your countless lies and treacheries!”

“From now on,” she concluded, “we want to forget that you ever lived!”

I was thirty-six at the time. The only people in the world whom I could regard as my friends were members of SRF. Now I was never again to contact any of them! This fact did not seem to weigh on them either lightly or heavily in any way. They told me to keep whatever money I had with me. And then I was free to wander the streets of New York until I found a job. As Tara said to me, “Just take any job that comes along.”

She also proclaimed, “You are never again to tell anyone that Master is your guru. We don’t want anyone to know that he had such a despicable disciple!”

The deliberate purpose of her tirade was to reduce me forever, from that day on, to the status of a “non-person”—not only in the eyes of SRF and its members, but in my own eyes. Worse still, perhaps, she did her utmost to obliterate my very discipleship to Master.

h) One memorable statement Tara made to me at that meeting was, “Before I die, I’ll make sure that no one will ever admit you back into Master’s organization.”

i) Was there anything else she told me at that meeting? It is not pleasant to recall, certainly, but here are a few things:

1. “Never again will we have to deal with all the suggestions hatched in that fertile brain of yours!” As she made this statement, she heaved an exaggerated sigh of relief.

2. “You are deceitful, dishonest, an utter liar, a hypocrite!”

In fact, there was hardly a fault possible to human nature of which she did not find me as guilty as if I’d been caught holding the bloodstained weapon in my hand.

I have never recognized any of these shortcomings in myself. When I told my mother some of what Tara had said, she exclaimed

indignantly, “Why, you’ve never told a lie in your life!” I knew she was right. But what could I say?

3. At a certain point in the proceedings, Tara, looking at me with an expression of triumph, demanded, “Can you tell me why every single thing you’ve ever tried to accomplish has ended in DISASTER?”

Nonplussed, I inquired, “Can you give me an example?” I could remember any number of considerable victories, but not a single real failure—unless, indeed, their own continual rejection of my ideas constituted failure on my part.

Tara appeared stumped for a moment by my demand. Then she grabbed the upper hand again, retorting, “That’s your style, see? Asking questions to get the other person confused!”

Is there anything that anyone, anywhere, might possibly have said to her in reply? I might have shouted back emotionally, but it is simply not in my nature to shout, and in any case when it came to lung power she was an athlete.

j) At one point in the proceedings I exclaimed in utter bewilderment, “But none of the things you’ve been saying are true!”

Tara declared contemptuously, “I don’t want your opinions!”

Was my own certain knowledge of events, then, only an “opinion”?

k) At the end of the meeting she gave me a letter to sign. It stated that I resigned from the Board of Directors and from the vice presidency. I signed the document willingly. What had those positions mattered to me? Nothing! I never resigned from anything else.

And there lay Daya’s only possible justification for telling people that I’d resigned.

l) The next morning, the telephone in my hotel room rang. Tara was on the other end, having returned to Los Angeles immediately following our

little “get-together.” Brightly she inquired, “Were you able to get the check cashed yet?”

“What check?” I asked.

“Daya and I agreed after our meeting that we should give you five hundred dollars for being cooperative.”

I told her I’d received nothing so far. Privately, however, I decided that when I did get the check I would never cash it.

Later that morning I revisited Daya briefly in her room. She gave me the check. When I told her that I had already paid my room bill, she replied, “You shouldn’t have done that.” She made no offer to reimburse me, however.

m)By seeming coincidence (but surely by divine providence), my parents, who had been vacationing in Europe, returned that very day to America, landing in New York. I was able to contact them in Scarsdale—a suburb of the city, located to the north, in Westchester County—where they were staying. We had lived there as a family, years earlier.

I mentioned this fact to Tara during her telephone call to me.

“Isn’t it wonderful,” she exclaimed exuberantly, “how Master has worked this whole thing out!”

“What can I possibly say in reply?”

Tara: “Why won’t you answer? Don’t you think it’s wonderful?”

Kriyananda: “I’d rather not say anything.”

She was uncomprehending.

Together, my parents and I drove across the country to their home in Atherton, south of San Francisco. Several days later, Daya and I spoke by telephone. When she learned where I now lived, she exploded in anger. “You’ve actually had the temerity to land right in our back yard!” Her intention, as much so as Tara’s, had been to leave me stranded in New York, nearly three thousand miles away from SRF’s headquarters, and “safely” out of their hair.

At about this time I also asked Daya, “Where can I go? What can I do? My life is completely dedicated to serving Master. There is nothing else for me to do with it.”

“I seem to recall,” she replied, “that you had a good response in the Fiji islands.”

Anything, just to get me off their scene forever!

n) Is there any point in my recounting the entire tale? Well, Tara did say a few more things that might deserve mention here, if only to underscore the hopelessness of my position. Here is one of them:

At one point in our “discussion” I said to them, “Put it in writing, if you like, that I will never do anything more in Master’s work than wash dishes. I came to him to find God. It was he who gave me whatever position I’ve held in his work. Position, in itself, has never meant anything to me. I’ll be willing to sign any document you give me, stating that I will do nothing for the rest of my life but wash dishes. All I ask is to be allowed to stay in my Guru’s organization and serve him.”

“Never!” replied Tara with grim determination. “The slightest toehold you get and you’ll only worm your way to the top again.” My years of loving service, dismissed as merely “worming my way to the top.” It was too painful to contemplate.

For a time, I wondered seriously whether Master himself hadn’t abandoned me. Indeed, Tara at that meeting said to me, “If Master hadn’t endorsed your dismissal, do you imagine for a moment that he wouldn’t be able to prevent it from happening? You have disappointed him greatly!” By these words, Tara struck at the very roots of my spiritual tree of life. I said to him in prayer, “Even if you abandon me, I will never abandon you!”

o) I was denied a re-entry visa into India on the grounds that I had been reported to be a CIA agent, and a Christian missionary in disguise. When I was finally able to clear myself of these ridiculous

charges, an Indian friend of mine who worked in the Indian high court discovered that the report about my supposedly covert activities had come from someone in YSS—SRF’s affiliate in that country.

p) For several months after my dismissal, I sent SRF donations as a means of expressing my continued devotion to Master, as well as my support for his work. My checks were never cashed. On one occasion I sent my donation in cash. This time, Daya returned the money to me in person, explaining, “People might ask questions.” From then on, I withheld my monetary support.

q) In 1968, when I started Ananda, I made it a point to require that all Ananda members become members also of SRF; that they take the SRF lessons and, when possible, attend SRF services. I knew that anyone who went to SRF and made his affiliation with me known would receive a stern warning to avoid all further contact with me. (This happened, indeed, repeatedly; I might even say, infallibly.) Nevertheless, I determined to be as dharmic (devoted to right action) as possible. When anyone asked an SRF representative why I was no longer with the organization, he was told, with an eyes-heavenward expression, “Oh, if you only knew what he did!” No further explanation was ever given. I doubt that those who answered this way had any notion, themselves, of the facts.

r) Two or three times over the years I personally offered to give Ananda to Daya and SRF. In my heart, I felt that everything I had done was for Master. On one such occasion I actually said to her, “I would be willing even to leave Ananda after giving it to you, if that were your will.” Daya’s only response was, “We wouldn’t want to inherit your debts.” (As if my only possible motive for making this generous offer could have been that we were in imminent danger of bankruptcy. As a matter of fact, we were thriving!) In this case, as in most others, my quotations are exact.

Daya’s incapacity to imagine that there might have been an unselfish motive behind my offer, and

also the way in which she worded her reply, left me with no other alternative than to respond, “And I would not give you Ananda, if I thought you would only run it into the ground.”

That was the last time I made that offer. Always, however, I have done my best to promote harmony between our two organizations. And always, their response has been condescending, contemptuous, and wholly negative.

s) Is Daya Mata a Self-realized being, as is widely claimed? Let me repeat here a story that may have a bearing on this question. One evening, Master, in speaking to us monks, listed his most advanced disciples in the order of their spiritual development. “First in Self-realization,” he said, “comes Saint Lynn; second, Mr. Black; and third, Sister Gyanamata.”

Faye Wright (Daya Mata) was at that time in charge of the office at Mt. Washington. Naturally, the question popped into our minds: “What about Faye?” Master answered that thought. “And Faye?” he asked rhetorically. “Well, Faye still has her life to live.”

t) I should repeat that Daya was never appointed to or proposed for the presidency of SRF by our Guru himself. She was simply elected to that position by the Board of Directors, after Rajarshi Janakananda’s passing. In fact, the appointment came after two other candidates had been offered that post, and had rejected it.

u) Tara once announced at a Christmas banquet, “Master predicted that no future president would ever fall short of his ideals.” This was at a function for the nuns; the monks were having their own Christmas banquet in Encinitas. I had been obliged to attend the nuns’ banquet because I’d just given the service that morning at our Hollywood church, and wouldn’t have been able to reach Encinitas in time for the monks’ meal.

v) I had grave doubts at the time about the veracity of Tara’s statement. It seemed an awfully large claim to make considering that I, a complete

insider, had never heard it before. I'd also learned by then that Tara was not above occasionally stating the "convenient untruth."

w) Years later, to my astonishment, I learned that the rumor mill had exaggerated Tara's statement to a claim that Master had predicted that every future president of SRF would be Self-realized. I am absolutely certain he never made any such prediction. How, indeed, could a mere organizational appointment accomplish such a miracle? It ranks up there, among institutional conveniences, with the dogma of papal infallibility. Ridiculous! Indeed, organizational prominence is something the sincere truth-seeker usually avoids like the plague. And the future covers a very long span of time: human nature is notoriously fallible.

x) When I met Sri Rama Yogi, the fully liberated saint mentioned earlier, he asked me, "What are Daya Mata's responsibilities?" He explained that she had written him once or twice. I described her responsibilities, in part.

"Oof! What a burden!" he exclaimed sympathetically.

"Is it only that?" I asked in reply. "If so, one would have to attribute her high position only to bad karma!"

"Of course I didn't mean that!" the great yogi answered with a smile. "It is her good karma which has placed her in a position where she can work out her karma more quickly. But that doesn't mean that everyone would be helped karmically by holding such a high position. For others, it might be an unfortunate burden, indeed."

Finally, as I've said, how could anyone be raised to a state of Self-realization by mere human election? The claim is preposterous!

y) What is my own attitude towards everything that happened to me? Am I bitter? Is there in my heart any desire for vengeance? Astonishingly, perhaps, I bear those people only good will. Their work is my work; their aims, my aims. The truth is, I

am happier loving them than I would be if I permitted hatred a place in my heart. With God's grace, I have never in my life experienced that darker emotion. I can't say that I even really understand it.

I think the only possible way to regard everything that happened to me is to view it as the result of my own karma. There must have been something in me that attracted so much opposition, and such fierce retribution. Assuming this to be true, I must, and fortunately do, feel deep gratitude. At least I can say, "Well, that's one more debt paid!" Or maybe this was the tapasya (penance) necessary to do the "great work" my guru predicted for me.

1. A reading I received in India, early in 2010—it was purported to have been written some 5,000 years ago (during descending Treta Yuga), and then copied 400 years ago into "modern" Tamil—gave many facts that cause me to believe it true. It stated that, owing to my doubts in past lives, I have faced countless obstacles in my present efforts to serve my Guru. (Master himself told me, "You were eaten up with doubts.") The reading also said that this bad karma has now been expiated; everything I attempt from now on will flourish. The worst period of that bad karma, obviously, was during the years I spent in SRF and immediately afterward. Since then, I have indeed encountered unusual success in my life. If still more success is to attend my efforts, well, it will enable me to serve my Guru all the better!

2. The best way to look upon our past karma is not to grieve over its blows, but simply to smile, keep a sense of humor, absorb those blows willingly into ourselves, and then offer them up to God in the knowledge that He will help us, finally, to reach the highest bliss in Him.

My case, however—though tragic enough to me at the time—was by no means unique. If it had been, it might be explained away entirely in terms of my own bad karma. The sad truth is that others have been dismissed similarly since then, without compunction—though perhaps not so harshly. (Some of them may have been less stubborn in their loyalty

than I.) Always, SRF's reasoning has been taken from Tara: "Ask yourselves in every situation: What is best for the work?" And, to her, "the work" meant not Yogananda's legacy of truth, but his SRF organization.

Were anyone to challenge an SRF member on this point, I think that member might answer, wide-eyed, "Why, what's the difference?"

A good leader is more concerned with the spirit in which people do things than with what they do.

I thank God that my experience has ended up giving me our two basic guiding principles at Ananda: "People are more important than things"; and, "Where there is right action, there lie success, true fulfillment, happiness, and victory."

Even so one can't help asking, How has it been possible for spiritual people to treat others so unkindly? I have felt the incentive, certainly, in my own life to ponder this question many times.

In 1972 I flew to the south of India to meet Sathya Sai Baba, a well-known saint. When he emerged from his quarters to meet the gathered crowd, he came right over and greeted me. Shortly afterward, he invited me indoors for a private talk. At one point during this conversation his expression suddenly became indignant. "Very, very bad!" he exclaimed. "So many people have tried to hurt you. But don't care for them. It's just selfishness and jealousy!" He said more that was supportive of my years of service to my Guru. I have told this story in my book, *Visits to Saints of India*.

Well, it seems to be what happens when religious faith becomes encrusted with rules and self-interest, forgetful of love. This is a dark-age (Kali-Yuga) way of thinking. During that dark period form was considered more real than its infusing energy.

Look at how St. John of the Cross's fellow monks treated him, imprisoning, punishing, and abusing him. The history of religion is littered with such bleak examples.

When the Italian distributor of my books confided to me once at a meeting, "I'm not a particularly religious man," I answered (much to his amusement), "Neither am I."

Spiritual? Yes! Religious? No.

Therefore did Swami Vivekananda say, "It is no doubt a good fortune to be born into a religion, but it is a misfortune to die in one."

12. SRF's Lawsuit Against Ananda

SRF not only wants its own way in everything: it wants a monopoly on that way. I founded the first Ananda community in 1968–69 in obedience to my Guru's will. SRF and its members tried repeatedly for years to undermine the loyalty of Ananda members to me and to my understanding of his teachings. They failed in those efforts. In 1990, therefore, SRF determined to enforce their will on me through the law courts.

a) In January of that year, Ananda formally changed its name to Ananda Church of Self-Realization. Because "Self-realization" is, in fact, Master's own definition of his mission, I felt that, out of loyalty to him, we needed to include that concept in our name.

The following month I wrote a book compiling some of Master's words, of which, on his urging, I'd kept a careful record. I named this book, *The Essence of Self-Realization*. Two weeks passed. Then I received the first salvo of what was to become a twelve-year legal ordeal.

b) I will not go into all the complex details of that case here. I may state, however, that SRF's first complaint—on the issue of our name—marked only the beginning of a serious attempt on their part to destroy us—me in particular, but Ananda also. It wasn't long before they were claiming a monopoly also on Yogananda's name, voice, image, and likeness. (Would even the Roman Catholic Church dare to make similar claims today regarding Jesus Christ?)

c) The law firm they hired to represent them was Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher—at that time, at least, the third-largest law firm in the world. Ananda, by contrast, hired a sole practitioner, Jon Parsons, who hadn't even a secretary. The reason we chose him wasn't only that we lacked the necessary funds to

hire a large firm, but also that I knew Jon, personally, for a man of integrity.

Ananda lowered its fees to him by helping in many lawyerly functions, doing preparatory work—which SRF paid its lawyers to do—and helping him on legal strategies. I myself spent many months delineating the issues at stake and mapping out suggestions for how to proceed. We named our campaign, as I've named this book: "Yogananda for the World."

d) The cost to us in the end, even with all our own work, came to some twelve million dollars—donated or loaned by people whose faith in us was firm.

e) According to my reasonable estimate of SRF's costs, they must have spent not less than 50 million dollars on their case. It was a veritable David and Goliath struggle, with SRF trying to bash us out of existence, and us struggling merely to stand our ground. Unlike David however, we had no wish, and never made the slightest attempt, to kill or even to harm, the Goliath that was Self-Realization Fellowship.

The story is long. Rather than burden the reader with excessive details, I will state only that SRF did its best to destroy us financially; to strip us of our right to exist as a community; to turn Ananda against me, personally; and to heap me with ignominy. They actually went to the length of trying to deprive me of the copyrights on my own books and musical compositions. They'd have liked to banish me once more to "the streets."

f) SRF lost, legally, on issue after issue. To keep their lawsuit going they appealed every decision to a higher court. Finally they took a part of their case all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court. Fortunately for us, that court refused even to consider their appeal, but mailed its refusal casually by postcard.

g) The fact that SRF's assault was directed mostly against me, personally, is crystal clear from something Daya once said to me: "It isn't the good

people of Ananda I have anything against. It's Kriyananda."

h) SRF tried also by lies, fabrications, and exaggerations to deprive me of all honorable standing in the world. Their effort culminated in 1994 in the filing of another lawsuit, which was ostensibly against an Ananda minister, but which immediately zeroed in on me alone. Even though SRF's name was carefully omitted as plaintiff in this case, we had ample evidence that that organization was intimately involved in it and was in fact behind it.

As the first case trudged its way through twelve years to final trial, we demanded of the discovery judge, Nowinsky, the right to take Daya's deposition. (A deposition is an interrogation by the opposition's lawyers, taken under oath, but out of court.) SRF's lawyers fiercely resisted our demand. Finally the judge remarked, "The very fact that you are resisting so intensely makes me think you have something to hide." He ordered Daya to be deposed.

i) Daya then, desperately anxious to avoid deposition, invited us to a meeting in Pasadena. At that meeting she radiated sweetness, kindness, and love. She completely disavowed any intention of initiating more lawsuits against us. She began her disavowal by stating that Master himself had appeared to her in a vision and commanded her, "Settle!" Every Ananda member in that room very clearly remembers this statement of hers. We remember also the way she smiled with great charm while stating, "No more lawsuits!!!" Her expression radiated so much sincerity that not one of us could doubt that she was being anything but truthful. Her later actions, however, proved her to have been not only untruthful, but utterly duplicitous.

j) She seemed eager at that Pasadena meeting to make friends with us, and to compensate for the ruthless way she had treated us until now. Naively we granted her request, and canceled her deposition.

Such depositions can, and often do, last for hours. They are "no-holds-barred" events. I myself

was deposed for eighty hours in what I have called SRF's second lawsuit, during which the opposing lawyers tried their best—with sneers, innuendos, and outright insults—to knock me "out of the ring." Only a few months before that, I'd had open-heart surgery; the doctor had commanded me (it was by no means a mere suggestion) to take a whole year off from work. My personal physician, to protect me, attended every deposition. Their lawyers did their best to override his every precaution. They placed a video camera before me. In an attempt to rattle me, they instructed that the camera be pushed closer and closer to my face until the lens almost touched my skin. (I simply ignored it.) They mockingly asked my doctor, "Are you a veterinarian?" They tried to prevent me from taking bathroom breaks, and each time I took one followed me all the way to the door with the urgent demand, "Just one question."

I think it would be no exaggeration to say that they would have been pleased to see me collapse with a heart attack.

k) Several years later, a woman who had been high up in SRF told us that she had personally heard Daya state to a small group after that Pasadena meeting, "That's the last time I'll ever see him again!" In stating this, she displayed no charm at all.

l) SRF's spirit of reconciliation lasted only long enough to obtain our agreement to cancel Daya's deposition. Despite her disclaimer of wanting "no more lawsuits!", the second case continued to be prosecuted with full force, and (once again) with numerous barefaced lies. The first lawsuit lasted another five years; the second one, which had begun in 1994, finally ended the next year.

m) At some point during these developments, the judge in the first lawsuit ordered both parties to meet and try to reach a settlement. The court-appointed lawyer, a Mr. Lombardini, came with the reputation of being one of the most effective mediators in the business. He spoke first with SRF's Directors. After spending an hour and a half listening to their side, he met with us. Ten minutes into our discussion, he

looked at me with surprise and asked, “Are you Mr. Walters?”

I said I was.

“Boy!” he exclaimed, “You sure aren’t anything like the way you’ve been represented to me!”

After several hours of discussion with both groups, he ended up saying to us, with reference to SRF’s leadership, “Well, we must be compassionate!” What an extraordinary thing for a lawyer to say, after failing to get two spiritual groups to find some way to peaceful coexistence!

n) As the first case proceeded, and as decision after decision went against SRF, Daya and her team remained adamant in their determination not only to beat, but to demolish us. Their every appeal was, as I said, denied. The absurdity reached a point where one of their lawyers said in confidence to one of ours: “I would pay to get out of this case!”

o) Finally, the case went to court. SRF’s lawyers, in their closing arguments, demanded an award of 33 million dollars—a sum that SRF knew would wipe us off the map. To the very end, they never gave up! What they actually did get out of us, in the end, was \$29,000. And this amount I gave them simply in order to get them off our backs.

p) I granted them this “consolation prize” because I’d seen how determined they were to rescue at least one coal from the fire. The only way, I realized, to get them finally to relent would be to surrender on some very minor issue. The concession would put them in a position (of which they later took full advantage) to claim, “We WON!” Though I handed them this minor victory, I have no doubt that we could easily have won this point. The victory, however, would have cost us more than we cared to pay. This point concerned the copyrights of Master’s recorded words, a few tapes of which had been given to me years earlier by a friend in Italy. The originals had been privately gifted to that friend by Dr. Lewis.

In point of fact, I had done the world a favor in publishing those six tapes, for SRF had until then

released only one recording of his spoken words. The actual financial damage to the organization was nil. My releasing of these tapes forced them to release other tapes, also. Thus, the world has since then become aware—in many cases, for the first time—of what Yogananda’s voice actually sounded like, in all its sweetness and power.

q) Naturally, SRF touted this relatively trivial gain as a major victory! “We WON!” they announced, as I said above, to their centers around the world.

The whole story of this lawsuit, and of the second one also, is the subject of an excellent book by our lawyer, Jon Parsons. It will be published at about the same time as this book. Jon has named it, *A Fight for Religious Freedom*. Its subtitle will be, “A Lawyer’s Personal Account of Copyrights, Karma, and Dharmic Litigation.” It will be published by Crystal Clarity.

13. SEF's Second Lawsuit

The second suit was a sordid case of alleged sexual harassment. The cast of characters included:

Anne-Marie Bertolucci, a somewhat attractive young woman from New Zealand who had been for a time a member of Ananda.

Danny Levin, a married Ananda minister whose marriage had resulted in a special-needs child.

Eric Estep, a former Ananda member, but now Ananda's self-declared enemy.

Daya Mata, acting from behind the scenes.

Daya's lawyer, whom I won't dignify by naming him. To us he seemed a veritable incarnation of evil. To Daya Mata he was a friend, though in his own profession he had earned himself the telling nickname: "The Assassin."

A handful of women, assembled by SRF through this lawyer with a view to channeling all possible venom during the trial in my direction.

And, finally: me, bound and blindfolded (so to speak) before the firing squad.

What happened was that Anne-Marie got involved in an affair with Danny Levin. She wanted to marry him. I asked Danny how he felt about it, and he replied that he wanted to save his marriage.

I then told her, "I am going to have to ask you to move to another Ananda community. I won't have you living here, destroying that marriage—especially since it involves a child so greatly in need of support and affection."

"But I would make a good mother to her!" protested Anne-Marie, whose first and only real interest, always, was herself.

I remained firm. As she left the room I saw a fire of rage in her eyes, accompanied by the thought, "Am I going to get you!"

She moved to our community in Palo Alto. While pretending friendship to me she learned about, and then contacted, Eric Estep.

He, too, was a "case." I had allowed Eric, as an early Ananda member, to live in the community for twelve years, never paying the dues that were normally required of all Ananda members to meet our land taxes and pay for utilities. Through all these years, Eric had been a deliberate irritant: sneering at everything we did, disagreeing with almost every decision, and trying constantly to embarrass me, especially, at group meetings.

Finally, a new general manager was appointed at Ananda. This man, Joseph Selbie, called Eric into his office. "Why do you remain here?" he asked. "All you seem capable of doing is find fault with us for everything."

"It seems to me a good thing for the community to have a gadfly," was Eric's response.

"Well, I can accept that," replied Joseph. "But please tell me: What is it doing for you?"

Joseph finally gave Eric an ultimatum: "You've been living here for twelve years, accepting no community responsibility. It is time you participated in the normal duties of every Ananda member. I'm going to have to ask you from now on to pay your normal membership fees."

"What's my alternative?" Eric asked.

"Your alternative is that you will be asked to leave Ananda."

Eric opted for immediate departure. Before leaving, however, he came to my house and devoted more than one hour to bringing me up to date on my innumerable failings. "Your life," he announced to me as if simply making a statement of fact, "has been a complete washout. You've done nothing worthwhile, ever. Your books are shallow and foolish. Your music is intolerable. Your. . . ." He continued this calm recital, as I said, for over an hour. During that whole time I listened quietly, not

responding even by gesture or facial expression. When he ended, I thanked him calmly. Inwardly I told myself simply, "I don't know whether what he's saying is right, but at least I know this: I have always sincerely done my best. But if he's wrong, it isn't for me to tell him so."

The Bhagavad Gita counsels even-mindedness under all circumstances.

Eric left. As the the door closed behind him, I went to my piano, sat down, and composed the melody and lyrics of a new song which was to be one of my very best. Its lyrics are as follows:

Though green summer fade,
 And winter draw near,
 My Lord, in Your presence
 I live without fear.
 Through tempest, through snows,
 Through turbulent tide,
 The touch of Your hand
 Is my strength, and my guide.
 I ask for no riches
 That death can destroy.
 I crave only Thee:
 Your love, and Your joy.
 The dancers will pass;
 The singing must end.
 I welcome the darkness
 With You for my Friend!

Eric remained on the outskirts of our Ananda community in Palo Alto, prowling about like Shere Khan (the lame tiger in Kipling's *The Jungle Book*), growling and snarling with rage as he repeated, "The man cub is mine!" In this case, the "man cub" was my unremarkable self.

Anne-Marie, as I said, discovered Eric. Eric promptly bore her in triumph to Los Angeles, where he introduced her to Daya Mata. Daya Mata invited Anne-Marie to have lunch with her and the Board of Directors. After lunch, Daya asked her starry-eyed guest to meditate in what had been Master's private quarters.

Anne-Marie's first choice of a lawyer was not up to the task of defending her as she desired. Daya

suggested another lawyer, the one I've called "The Assassin," who was a friend of SRF. "The Assassin's" real duty was not to prosecute Anne-Marie's case (which didn't really exist), but to destroy me.

He found a small group of women, SRF members, who were happy to accuse me of sexual harassment. The lawyer proceeded to try, by public meetings in Nevada City (near Ananda), to find others who would be willing to support his cause. He found none; at the end he was left with the same small handful of women.

The women members of Ananda gave me their wholehearted support, writing many long testimonials to my character as they knew it to be from personal experience.

The Bhagavad Gita states: "Of what avail would be mere suppression?" (3:33) What our own nature forces on us, we can at least resist mentally. Such is the path to final freedom. Such was my own path.

"The Assassin," however, placed great emphasis on the fact of my being a swami, while never troubling himself to understand the word. A swami is, in fact, one who is fully dedicated to realizing his oneness with the Swa, or universal Self—the Divine Consciousness beneath all outward manifestation. A swami's renunciation is of ego-consciousness, primarily. To this ideal I have been ever true. The aspects of the struggle on which I have focused primarily have been my commitment to truth, the feeling of universal kindness and good will to all, an attitude of humility, and a resolute attempt to banish every vestige of ego-consciousness. I think it is true to say that I have by now succeeded also in overcoming every other desire and attachment. "The Assassin's" efforts to destroy me were smoke rings. Certainly I have never willingly hurt anyone.

Throughout this lawsuit, I approached all my limitations as I had done, many years earlier, the smoking habit. Every time I'd succumbed to that habit, I'd refused to lament, "I've failed!" Instead, I

told myself firmly and repeatedly, “I haven’t yet succeeded.” In the end, the desire to smoke simply disappeared from my mind as though it had never been.

SRF’s second case was a blatant attempt to humiliate me utterly—indeed, to ruin forever my chances of rendering any further service to my Guru. The judge in our case may have been looking for a promotion to the appeals court. At any rate, he did receive that promotion soon afterward. To ensure a clear victory, he denied our attorney the right even to cross-examine the witnesses ranged against me. We were not allowed to inform the jury that our normal rights had thus been denied us; the jury members were left with the impression that we simply had no questions to ask.

I have often reflected on a possible explanation. Yogananda once described God as “the One Unbribeable Judge.” And I have sometimes wondered, Could our judge . . . ? Certainly, his attitudes throughout the case seemed open to serious question.

Our attorney, on the other hand—a new one hired only for this case—was a defense lawyer. He was accustomed to having clients who were clearly in the wrong. In fact, he had earned what reputation he had by getting clients off with the lightest possible sentences.

To our legal team, once I’d finally met this man, I insisted, “This is not at all the right man for us!” He had addressed me from the moment of our first meeting as though I were guilty of everything of which I’d been accused. Some defender!

“But,” protested our team, “we’ve already paid him \$50,000 in advance.”

I mentally prayed, “It’s all right, Divine Mother. If it is Your will that I be destroyed, I’ll accept that outcome unflinchingly. Everything I’ve done has been for You. I am Yours alone! Do with me as You will. I know You want only my ultimate good.”

What else could I do? I simply would not allow myself to be affected inwardly. Therefore, through

repeated and fierce depositions (prolonged, as I said, for eighty difficult hours); through accusation after humiliating public accusation in the courtroom, accompanied by unceasing ridicule from Anne-Marie’s lawyers; and through gleeful trumpet blasts against me in the press (to which our lawyer would not allow us even to respond), I kept repeating mentally: “Divine Mother, whatever be Your will, I accept it willingly.”

Indeed, it is not really in my nature to get upset. I may feel deeply about things, but the waves of emotion never actually touch me. I determined that whatever happened would be Divine Mother’s will, and would therefore be for my ultimate best.

And so, in the end, it proved to be. They won their case, but it was, for them, a hollow victory.

They will have first, however, to develop a sense of the wonder and adventure of spreading Master's vital and important message to the world.

14. Character Assassination

In all my dealings with SRF, I have stuck rigidly to principle. That has not been the case, however, in SRF's dealings with me. From the time I first wrote to them, in 1961, of my triumphant success in New Delhi, it has, on their part, been character assassination all the way.

When I wrote the first version of my book, *The Path* (now titled *The New Path*; in this version, it has received two major awards), monks and nuns in SRF went through it carefully, line by line, endlessly perusing it for any faults they could find, and counting how many times I—in my own autobiography!—had used the first person pronoun, I.

Never have they addressed any differences between us on the grounds of principle. Always it has been as personal and as damning as possible. If facts could not be supplied, innuendo has been as welcome. Rumors of the worst kind have received exuberant endorsement. A recent statement I heard from their ashram in Encinitas was that I have visited brothels in Nevada! (I'm not sure I've ever actually seen a prostitute.) Never has it been a question of what I stood for. Always, it has been what a scoundrel I, personally, am.

SRF members have tried to make a case that we, in our accusations, have been just as bad as they. Not true at all! First of all, our case has always been merely to respond to their accusations. (Always, we've pleaded for reconciliation between us.) Second, what have concerned us, always, have been principles.

After their dismissal of me, Daya declared, "He has a 'great work' to do, all right—on himself!" Again, petty and personal. Will this attitude ever change? Is there hope for a future reconciliation? I don't see it. But on my side at least, the hope remains.

Someone asked me during a question-and-answer recently, "Do you really think you can change the world with what you're doing?" I replied, "Of course not! But I believe it helps me to think so." In our expectations, as long as we remain inwardly nonattached, the very sky should be the limit! And what is the limit in SRF? Hardly the sky! It is focused altogether on personalities.

15. Changes in *Autobiography of a Yogi*

The number of changes SRF has made in Master's autobiography since his passing is astounding. Here are a few outstanding examples:

a) At least twenty-eight significant alterations were made in the actual meaning of the text relating to Yogananda's life and teachings.

b) There have also been at least the same number of significant deletions of text.

c) Insertions have been made of SRF's name, in ways that change the meaning of the text significantly. Sometimes these changes have introduced entirely new discussions, of which the purpose was simply to promote the organization.

d) There are one hundred and nineteen mentions of Self-Realization Fellowship, as an organization, that were not in the original edition.

e) Over a thousand new lines have been added, sometimes in footnotes, most of them with the clear intention of promoting SRF as an organization, or (in footnotes) of giving the impression that these, too, were written by Yogananda himself—even though they were in fact written by others, and reflected points of view that were not his at all.

f) Very few of the more-than-five-hundred changes since the first edition of the autobiography were made by the Master himself. Most of them—some appearing many years later—were made by SRF, not as editorial refinements, but with the very different purpose of aligning his printed statements with policies the organization formulated since his passing. The following examples should suffice here:

g) In the first edition of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and also in the final edition to appear before Master left his body, the text states, "To fulfill one's earthly responsibilities is indeed the higher path [*italics mine*], provided the yogi, maintaining a mental uninvolvedness with egotistical desires, plays

his part as a willing instrument of God." This statement that the married state could indeed be the "higher path," as a fulfillment of one's earthly responsibilities, seemed unconscionable for the renunciates of SRF.

In the editions released since his passing, the above-quoted lines were changed to: "Fulfilling one's earthly responsibilities need not separate man from God [*again, italics mine*], provided he maintains mental uninvolvedness. . . ." The point in making this alteration was to place the renunciates, who "ran the show," in a position of higher spiritual authority than that of "worldly" people—indignant center leaders, for example, and other "riff-raff." The change, as I happen to know because I was at the center of things at the time and was in charge of the center department, was made because certain SRF center leaders were challenging the right of SRF's leaders to make certain sweeping changes in Master's teachings, his organization, and his writings.

Difficulties arise, however, whenever spiritual laws are ignored. In this case, the renunciates, being only human, developed the superiority complex of being "special"—a race apart from "ordinary householders." This complex can become a loss of all hope, if ever one fails in his or her outward dedication.

Incidentally, these new versions of the autobiography are not called "editions." As I wrote earlier, they are designated as "reprints." The reason for this word choice is obvious: The editors want to suggest that no actual changes have been made.

h) Despite the above emphasis on renunciation as the higher path (in contradiction to what is written in the first edition), almost all the Master's highly advanced disciples were, or had been, married. These individuals included Rajarshi Janakananda, Sister Gyanamata, Dr. Lewis, and Yogacharya Black. Three of these persons were also described by Master as his most highly advanced disciples. Of course, every reader of *Autobiography of a Yogi* knows also that Lahiri Mahasaya was married, and that Sri

Yuktswar had been married. Both men produced children. (Interestingly, when Babaji made Sri Yuktswar a swami, the younger man was still married.)

i) Fourteen lines of Master's great poem, "Samadhi"—very important to the meaning of the whole poem—were deleted from later editions of the book. Among the excisions was this inspiring statement (essential for attaining this high state): "By deeper, longer, thirstier, guru-given meditation comes this celestial samadhi."

j) The first edition of *Autobiography of a Yogi* states: "The actual technique [of Kriya Yoga] must be learned from a Kriyaban or Kriya Yogi." This sentence was rewritten in later so-called "reprints" to read: "The actual technique [of Kriya Yoga] should be learned from an authorized Kriyaban (Kriya Yogi) of Self-Realization Fellowship (Yogoda Satsanga Society of India)."

One wonders whether the disciples of other lines of descent from our gurus (Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yuktswar spring to mind) were thereby deprived of God's former blessings on their own initiations!

k) SRF has constrained not only those who give Kriya initiation, but those also who receive it, to be members of Self-Realization Fellowship. Kriya applicants must first sign a pledge renouncing any tie with other spiritual organizations. Master himself never imposed such a condition; nor did Lahiri Mahasaya. On the contrary, both masters gave Kriya initiation freely to sincere seekers of all paths. Master did indeed, toward the end of his life, ask people to become SRF members before receiving Kriya, but this was only to ensure their sincerity.

Otherwise, I was myself present on one occasion when he gave Kriya initiation to a large group that included the leader of another spiritual organization (Mrs. Clarence Gasque, head of the "Mazdaznans"). At that event, he affirmed publicly that he was doing so because "Kriya is for everybody." At this initiation he also told a story (recounted in my book, *The*

Essence of Self-Realization), concerning one man, a follower of another path, who had been seeking God by that path for twenty years. Master said to him, "It isn't so important what path you follow, outwardly. Your problem is only that you've been trying to get out of the room through the walls. Kriya will show you where to locate the door." The man received Kriya initiation, and within one week had the experience of God that he'd sought for so many years.

l) Tara so drastically changed Master's inspiring book of prayer-poems, *Whispers from Eternity*, that it became a different book altogether. Removed from her version is every bit of its poetic beauty. She published a letter (as I stated in the Introduction) at the beginning of the book that purported to have been written by Paramhansa Yogananda himself. It was, however, composed entirely by her. The letter expressed Master's "gratitude" to her for this new edition. I objected strongly to this act of forgery, for I knew that Master had never written that letter. Indeed, what had actually happened (as Tara herself told me after Master's passing) was that she had once said to him she would love to work on editing this book. And all he had answered at that time was, "Oh, would you?" I even wonder—considering how many lies she told—whether he ever said even that much to her. In any case, her own words prove to me that he'd never approved, for he'd never actually seen, that later edition.

m) Photos, too, have been "sanitized" to reflect SRF's ideas of propriety. The Christian crosses (I mentioned this in the Introduction) which both Master and Rajarshi wore (see the present cover) were later airbrushed out of both their photographs.

n) Even more shockingly, the miraculous photo of Lahiri Mahasaya was replaced, in the 1954 "reprint," by a painting which shows him "decently" clothed, with a white chuddar (shawl) covering his bare chest. The original photo was restored to the book only in 1998. SRF claimed, in the meantime, that Master himself had requested that that master's

bare chest be covered in consideration of Western sensibilities. I cannot but believe that this claim is only one more lie, and that the change was due entirely to the sensibilities—not of those nameless “Westerners”—but of the over-sensitive nuns who commissioned the change.

o) Sri Yukteswar was the fourth in our line of gurus; Yogananda, the fifth. On the altar, Yogananda gave Sri Yukteswar the more central position. Those positions have since been reversed.

p) Originally also, Sri Yukteswar was shown looking outward from the center of the altar. In the new version, the same picture shows him facing inward. This change of direction alters not only the photograph itself, but also its vibration, for the left side of a person’s face is different from the right side. Reversing their orientation changes the impression of their very personalities.

q) People sometimes ask Ananda, “Why have you removed Krishna from your altars?” The truth is that SRF, since Master’s passing, has introduced Krishna onto their altars! Of course Krishna is revered also at Ananda—particularly so because Master stated that Krishna was a former incarnation of Babaji. Master, once he’d made this fact known, used to lead us in prayer to “Babaji-Krishna.” But Krishna was not actually in our direct lineage of Masters, except through Babaji. The reason Master put Jesus Christ on the altar was that it was Jesus himself who had requested that Yogananda be sent to the West as his spiritual representative. The non-inclusion of Krishna is due simply to the fact that Krishna is not in our direct line of gurus. He is our guru through Babaji, as (Yogananda told us) his present incarnation.

r) In the original Autobiography, Master ends with a stirring appeal to the reader to take his idea for “world brotherhood colonies,” or cooperative communities, seriously. That entire appeal, and all other references to communities, have been removed entirely from Autobiography of a Yogi and from all SRF literature.

s) In many other ways also, Master’s words and work have been changed—both outwardly and in spirit—to reflect a determination on SRF’s part to achieve full control over his legacy; to impose their own tastes on every aspect of his mission; and to narrow the scope of that mission to spreading and promoting—not his teachings—but Self-Realization Fellowship as a religious power in the world.

An SRF member in Italy, Contessa Renata Arlini, remonstrated a few years ago to a visiting SRF monk, “SRF is becoming just like the Catholic Church, with Daya Mata the pope.”

“Oh, you’re so right!” the monk replied proudly. “That’s exactly what it is.”

16. Further Important Changes, and SRF's Greatest Lie

Astonishingly, SRF has attempted in many ways to deprecate the knowledge, and even the wisdom, of its own guru.

a) I have already written about SRF's claims that Master didn't know how to spell his own title, "Paramhansa." The word is now officially written, Paramahansa, with an a in the middle—making a burdensome five a's in all.

b) SRF, in attempting to protect itself from being caught out in such matters, has done its best to suppress every expression of Yogananda's teachings but its own. Total control of his mission and legacy is the main motivation behind everything they do.

c) During their lawsuit against us, SRF made an outrageous and unfactual statement about Master's very writings. Their purpose in doing so was to help them win their case against us.

d) Daya herself signed a declaration, under oath, that Autobiography of a Yogi had not been written by Yogananda himself, but by a committee!

e) She also wrote (still under oath!) in that same declaration that he had written Autobiography of a Yogi as a "work for hire."

f) The judge himself was not impressed by these outrageous assertions. In open court he asked SRF's legal representatives, "Are you saying that your guru was only an employee of yours, and had to do exactly as you, his own disciples, commanded him?"

Certainly, this paltering with the truth did not help their case, in the end.

17. How Much Respect Did Master's Chief Editor Have for His Judgment?

I know that Tara Mata, who had been Master's editor-in-chief, had deep faith in him, as well as devotion to his position as her guru. Nevertheless, there were a number of occasions when she could not resist making statements to me on the phone that ridiculed him. (We always spoke by phone, for she lived away from Mt. Washington, and was by nature a recluse.)

a) Laughingly she once said to me, "Even when Master was William the Conqueror, he never mastered the English language!"

English, of course, didn't even exist as a language during William's time! In fact, it was William who helped to create it in its modern form. Master also told us that he had been, in a former lifetime, a (presumably great and famous) poet.

b) Laughingly again—this time to ridicule his lack of practicality—Tara once told me, "Master had a whole team of us stay up night after night, typing up a proposal to Henry Ford [the industrial tycoon] to get him to sponsor the first world brotherhood colony." The obvious motive for her amusement (indeed, she stated it frankly) was to tell me that the entire concept of communities was "totally impractical."

c) Tara—in order to emphasize what she considered his impractical idealism—also stated to me, "I know Master said, 'We are not a sect.' Well, we are a sect!" She saw no reason even to justify this point of disagreement with him.

d) Tara was highly competent, certainly, as an editor. Nevertheless, the fact deserves to be underlined that it was also she who, for years, blocked the publication of some of his most important writings. Would she ever have allowed any serious book written by me to appear in print?

Hardly! (Who was I, after all?) Master had told me to write books, but the only book of mine that she ever published was a collection of childhood accounts, *Stories of Mukunda*, which I had written as a Christmas present for my fellow monks.

In speaking to me once about complaints she had been receiving about her delays in getting out Master's words, Tara once exclaimed to me, "What do people want with more books?! They already have everything they need, to find God." Her excuse for not completing the work Master himself had given her—projects which included his commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita*, on the New Testament, and on the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*—was that she had too little time to spare from her other "duties"—duties which involved, in fact, interfering with everybody else's business.

Daya on one occasion remarked to me, "Master once told me in all earnestness, 'Keep Laurie [Tara] away from people.'" He did so out of an awareness of Tara's tendency to meddle in other people's affairs. Indeed, she seemed to feel that, without her input on everything, the consequence would be ruin and chaos.

e) One time, a committee of fifteen persons, of which (as I said earlier) I was a member, reached a certain decision. The decision, as nearly as I can remember, did not relate to anything very important. Tara, however, when told of our decision by phone, disagreed with it peremptorily. (She always spoke in exclamation marks.)

The nun reporting to her said, "But there are fifteen of us who agree on this matter."

"My dear," Tara answered pleasantly, "that makes you just fifteen times as wrong!"

f) In May 1950, Master told me that he expected his *Bhagavad Gita* commentaries, on which he was then working, to be published by the end of that year. It had been my task to take letters back and forth between him and Laurie (Tara). The day he made that statement to me, I smiled with eager anticipation as I

repeated those words to her. In reply, she laughed merrily at the absurdity of his very suggestion that the book could come out so soon. (Master's comment when I related her remark to him was, "Delays! Delays! Always delays!") She'd had no intention of bringing the book out that year. In fact, it was forty-five long years later that this book finally saw the light of day.

g) When SRF's version of Master's Gita commentaries finally did come out, I, who had helped with their editing, was deeply disappointed. Their edition lacked the clarity of Master's version, on which I had worked. It was not always accurate in its presentation of the truths Master had explained. And it came out so greatly over-edited that it was actually difficult to read. Master's own version had, by contrast, been a pleasure to read!

Years later, I was informed by an ex-nun that she had been commissioned to research some of the things Master had written. I simply cannot imagine what purpose was served by that commission. The book needed no supportive statements, and was in fact only weakened by extra commentaries. Of these, however, the book held a plethora.

h) The following change, which indicated a major policy of diluting Master's true meanings, was made in an audio recording of Yogananda's voice. The change was almost certainly introduced under the influence of Tara Mata herself; she tried constantly to diminish any statement of Master's that might offend orthodox Christian sensibilities. Master, in one of his recorded talks, had stated, "My Master [Swami Sri Yukteswar] was no less than Jesus Christ. Remember that." These sentences were deleted.

18. Re-creating Master's Image

Astonishingly, Tara seemed to feel it necessary to reduce Master's claim to the high status he had attained by removing any statement that appeared to her too strongly self-affirmative. Perhaps her policy strikes me all the more strongly because it was toward the end of his life that I myself came to him. I often heard him speak freely on the subject of his own oneness with God.

a) Daniel Boone, a monk disciple, once asked Master in my presence (this was in May 1950) about a saint who had appeared to him some years earlier in Encinitas. Our Guru replied, "I don't know to whom you refer."

Boone then added, "It was on the bluff in Encinitas, Sir, overlooking the ocean."

Master responded, "Well, so many saints come to me. How can I remember which of them you mean?"

I, in my ignorance, expressed surprise at his answer. Master then said to me, "Why be surprised? Wherever God is, there His saints come."

Master was equating himself, in other words, with God—even as Jesus did. Indeed, Master on another occasion had remarked to me, "When you are one with God, you are God."

I submitted this conversation to the editorial department in response to their request for material for a book of Master's sayings. The book was later published under the name, *The Master Said*. Tara, however, in editing it, did not like Master's (to her) unacceptable claim. When the book appeared in print, I found Master's statement changed from, "Wherever God is . . ." to read, "Wherever a devotee of God is. . ."

Well, I too am a devotee of God, but I cannot claim ever to have been so pestered!

Tara wanted Master to appear humble, but I think she never understood the very important truth that humility need not be self-deprecating: its nature is self-forgetfulness. Tara herself, as I've already indicated, was always strongly self-affirmative. The truth is, however, that the Master during his last years often spoke to us quite openly of the state he'd attained: that of oneness with God.

b) Much of Master's greatness shines out in his delightful sense of humor. To Tara, and perhaps also to others among the SRF leadership, that delightful aspect of his nature evidently seemed an improper want of dignity, for they have done their best to remove every sign of it. Here is an example of what I mean:

In the first edition of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Master wrote: "It was simplicity itself to discover when [Sri Yukteswar] had awakened: abrupt halt of stupendous snores." In a footnote to this sentence he wrote: "Snoring, according to physiologists, is an indication of utter relaxation (for the oblivious practitioner solely) [*italics mine*]." In later editions, that humorous aside, "for the oblivious practitioner solely," does not appear. Evidently it was considered improper for a great master to have made such a lighthearted remark.

c) An ex-SRF nun made the statement to me and a few Ananda members that SRF actually edited out Master's own laughter from recordings of his voice.

d) In the next chapter, I will point out other examples of important changes.

19. SRF's Treatment of Master's Humor

Why has SRF removed so many examples of Master's engaging sense of humor—both from his writings and from his recorded talks? I wonder whether their editors have not deliberately tried to make him seem magnificently dignified—to the point of pomposity! I give you here one example of ways they have tried to “sanitize” him.

a) On Master's last birthday, January 5, 1952, Dr. Lewis said to him, in joking reference to the single candle (symbolizing eternity) burning on Master's birthday cake, “Do you think you can blow out that candle?”

Master retorted in a similarly light vein, “Oh, I think I have a little breath left in me. I just have to be careful I don't blow the cake away!”

When the recording of that verbal exchange was released to the public, the last sentence had been removed. I suppose it was feared that some people might consider it egotistical. For me, such hypersensitivity is hard to believe! If robust humor has no place in saintliness, I think there may exist another heaven from the one I fondly imagine.

b) I still remember the delight with which Master told jokes. Here is a small sampling of them:

1. With glee he repeated to me, personally, a compliment that had “tickled his funny bone”:

“Your teeth are like stars: they come out at night!”

2. Three men were drinking whiskey: an Irishman, an Englishman, and a Scotchman. A fly flew into each of their glasses. The Irishman tossed the fly out of his glass, losing half the whiskey in doing so. The Englishman carefully flicked the fly out of his glass. “But the Scotchman,” Master concluded with a pleased chuckle, “squeezed the

fly!” I still remember the delight with which he pronounced that word, “squeezed.”

3. Three Scotchmen went to church. When the collection plate approached the row in which they were seated, one of the men fainted and the other two carried him out!

4. Those last two jokes had probably been told to him by Harry Lauder, a Scottish singer and composer whom Master went to visit in Scotland on his way to India in 1935. The very fact that he took the trouble to visit Harry Lauder says much regarding the pleasure he himself took in good humor.

c) His own expressions were often charmingly funny. When he described a confrontation he'd had with a few pundits, he said, “I could see they were ready for a theological bullfight.”

d) The only time I was with Master and Tara together—just the three of us—he told us a comical story of how, at his Ranchi school, he had once caught three dogs that had been chasing the horses and generally making a nuisance of themselves. I think Master said they were greyhounds—fast runners, in any case. Master, when he was young, was himself a very fast runner. On this occasion, pursuing those dogs, he had caught each one of them in turn, put it into a gunny sack, and later had the sacks removed to a safe distance before their contents were released.

Master, in telling this story, was laughing so hard that I had (I must confess) some difficulty in understanding everything he said. Nevertheless, the exuberance of his recital was so infectious that I, too, was laughing in sheer delight.

Tara, by contrast, gazed impersonally into the middle distance throughout this recital. Not once did she laugh, chuckle, or even smile. Indeed, her only reaction was to state with distant politeness, “Well, well! Fancy that!” The humor of the story, and Master's energy in telling it, seemed to be leaving her completely untouched.

Indeed, I am not really sure Tara even had a sense of humor—at least, of kindly humor. On the occasions when I did hear her laugh, it seems to me, in retrospect, that it was always at someone else's expense.

e) Tara was in many ways a genius. However, she gave some evidence of the madness to which genius has often been closely related.

One time, I'd heard, she had predicted that Disneyland would be a financial failure. Tara practiced astrology (contrary, as I wrote earlier, to Master's advice), and was convinced that, because Disneyland had opened on the dying moon, the whole enterprise would end in disaster.

Some years after Disneyland had become one of the great financial success stories in history, I asked her whether she had actually made that prediction.

"Oh, yes!" she replied in her usual exclamation marks. "Just think of all the money they've poured into that place!"

To her, Disneyland was a failure already, because she had so decreed it.

f) Tara once said to me, as if marveling at her own goodness: "I have never said an unkind word in my life."

20. A Few Finishing Thoughts

In writing this book, I have felt rather like Arjuna being counseled by Krishna (as we read in India's scripture, the Bhagavad Gita). Arjuna didn't want to slay his own kith and kin (who, in the Mahabharata, symbolized his own negative qualities), but Krishna urged him to fight in the name of right action. I have nothing, personally, against my brothers and sisters on the path. I want simply to correct what I perceive as wrong actions and directions.

The important thing now, as I near the end of this book, is to consider the question: What practical steps, if any, might be taken to solve, or at least to improve upon, the problems I have presented in these pages? Is it possible, even this late in the game, to rescue Yogananda from the prison in which people's recollections have incarcerated him? Facts are facts, but sometimes even the bleakest facts can be converted into blessings.

Let us consider, then, whether anything might be done to bring the facts presented here to the best possible conclusion. What I offer are simply suggestions. Many others may present themselves to you.

a) The first point to consider is this: Do organizations have to be uncharitable? Surely the answer is: Not at all! If it is possible to be less charitable, it must be equally possible to be more so. Ananda Church of Self-Realization and its World Brotherhood Colonies are outstandingly loving and supportive of others, regardless of anyone's beliefs. The first principle at Ananda is: "People are more important than things." The second one, fundamental also, is: "Where there is adherence to truth, there lie victory, happiness, success, and fulfillment of every kind." (The wording in the Sanskrit is: "Yata dharma, sthata jaya.")

b) The human ego has two potential directions of development. It can shrink inward upon itself; or it

can expand outward by serving God—by loving Him, serving Him, and serving the needs of others. The goal of the spiritual life is transcendence of ego-consciousness, which separates us from God and delays indefinitely our ultimate destiny: union with Him. The ego cannot be transcended by ignoring the demands it makes of us. Attempting to acquire humility by self-abasement or self-criticism produces few, if any, positive results. Humility cannot even be acquired: It is a natural quality of the soul. The best way to overcome ego-consciousness is to expand one's self-awareness by giving outwardly to others; by making oneself a channel for God's expansive love; and by including everything and everyone in one's own expanding bliss.

For example, the secret of remaining humble when lecturing is not self-deprecation, but self-forgetfulness while giving outwardly to others in a spirit of sharing. It lies in thinking of the needs of others, rather than concerning oneself with the impression one is making on them. As for me, I have never seen myself as teaching anyone. My feeling has always been that I am only sharing.

In order to conquer desire, try to give more, outwardly, to others, to share your fulfillments with them.

When receiving praise, respond from your heart: "God is the Doer." Amusingly, once when I said that to a lady who had praised a talk of mine she replied in amazement, "Really!"—as if to say, "I knew it was good, but I didn't realize it was that good!" Obviously, I give the credit to God only for whatever level of good I myself have attained. As Yogananda used to pray, "I will reason, I will will, I will act, but guide Thou my reason, will, and activity to the right path in everything."

When people deprecate or insult you, on the other hand, thank them for trying to help you. Then thank God also, and ask Him to help you remain humble.

c) God's nature is bliss. For an organization to serve with an expansive spirit, it is important that its members also work with bliss. In other words, be happy in yourself. Never work with the thought of merely achieving happiness someday: work now with happiness. Be happy now!

d) Self-importance is the death of wisdom. It is most easily combated by a light touch of humor. Learn to laugh at yourself, especially. Never feel that rejecting humor demonstrates proper spiritual dignity. True dignity means to be centered in the inner Self, and to act always from that center. It doesn't mean to be stern. What it means, rather, is to remain inwardly relaxed and natural, centered in the inner Self. Regardless of whether life's circumstances sweep you left or right, up or down, forward or backward, try always to maintain your centerpoise. Self-importance increases inner tension, and thereby reduces one's degree of happiness.

e) I have emphasized the importance of keeping a sense of humor. Remember always, too, that the underlying reality of everything is bliss. Seek bliss at the heart of everything. Laugh with bliss!

f) A temptation on the spiritual path is to tell oneself that one's service to God is important. Never forget that life itself is, essentially, a dream. You will enjoy the dream more, once you learn not to take any of it too seriously.

g) Never consider any position of authority to bestow power over others. See even the highest post as an opportunity to serve others, not to be served by them. People will be far more willing to follow you if they know that your desire is to help them, rather than to be helped by them. In applying Ananda's basic principle, "People are more important than things," it is important to keep referring back to this thought always. At Ananda, we never use anyone, not even for a worthy objective. Our first consideration, always, is a person's spiritual needs. People will work far more willingly if their well-being is given top consideration. If there is a job that needs doing, but no one can be found who might be helped in the

doing, we prefer either to delay the project or to abandon it altogether. I might add that I myself have applied this principle very strictly in my own work with others.

h) How is one to decide in advance whether an act is righteous or unrighteous? The answer is: Visualize the results; then consult your heart. If the act promises greater, more expansive, and selfless happiness, the promise itself suggests good karma. If, on the other hand, the very thought of that act could be a threat to anyone else's true happiness, realize that this very fact suggests bad karma. The saying, "The end justifies the means," is true only if that end is seen as benefiting everybody concerned. If its results threaten the well-being of even one person, eschew that action like the plague!

i) Nothing that anyone does can make a person more or less important in God's eyes. It is one's attitude that God watches, not his actions.

j) Obedience in a monastery should be given above all to truth itself. Freedom from ego can never come through disregard for this principle. Superiors who make unreasonable demands of others in the name of disciplining them, and who demand mindless obedience, only increase their own egotism. They get bad karma, moreover, for weakening others' will power. The primary duty of a superior is to encourage wisdom (which is to say, right understanding) in those working under him. It is supremely important for him to see his high position as a means of helping those lower than himself on the organizational ladder to keep climbing upward in their development.

k) It is natural for organizations to expect loyalty of their members. It is important, therefore, to encourage people to be loyal above all to the truth as they themselves perceive it. The saying, "My country, right or wrong," is dangerous. Organizations—as much so as people—are capable of making mistakes. Never follow blindly any organizational request made of you, or any decision reached by others. A dharmic organization will

always keep itself open to correction. The dharmic individual will prefer even dismissal—or, if not that, then demotion—to acquiescence, if a directive is not dharmic.

All parties, however, should be generous toward one another, and also lenient—as long as the intentions seem good. Remember, it is difficult to change anyone, including oneself, overnight. This fact is as true for organizations as it is for individuals. Even if someone greatly needs correction, the better part of wisdom is to understand that change often takes time. Often, indeed, the greater the need for change, the greater the time required to bring it about.

l) It is important for leaders never to show personal favoritism. True leadership, though always friendly, must at the same time be both impartial and impersonal. A leader must discipline himself never to show greater appreciation to those who think well of him than to those who offer worthwhile, but possibly non-supportive, suggestions. Indeed, it sometimes happens that a person's critics turn out to be his greatest friends. In practical terms, what all this means is that one should always consider the merits of an idea over the question, "who offered the idea?"

m) Welcome disagreement, if intelligent. Never dismiss it with a wave of the hand merely because it seems, to you, inconvenient. It is usually better to meet an idea with reason than with emotion. And remember again: Never, in any decision you make, show favoritism.

n) Remember this also: right decisions are seldom reached on a basis of personal likes and dislikes. One should always seek solid, objective support for whatever decision he makes.

o) At the same time, it is important to realize that clear intuition is more insightful than logic. If, on consulting your heart, you perceive there any sense of nervousness or uncertainty, or if the guidance you feel is more emotional than intuitive (note, for example, whether it comes with a touch of excitement), view it with suspicion. It is usually best

to be sensible, simply; that is to say, consider every new idea impartially. Yet give supreme importance, always, to that deeper wisdom which arises from the soul.

p) In the above context, be very careful to avoid past karmic influences. Those suggestions can be very subtle, but they can also be very deceiving.

Tara Mata many times told Daya Mata before they dismissed me, "Who knows what karma lies between Kriyananda and me?" She should have heeded her deeper feelings on the matter: they were a warning.

Interestingly, many years later, a young man came all the way from New York to California with the sole purpose of telling me about a vision he'd had recently. In the vision, he said, Tara Mata had appeared to him. She admitted to him that she had allowed herself to be influenced by a memory she'd carried over from a former lifetime.

"Two thousand years ago," she said, "at the time of the Adi, or first, Swami Shankaracharya, Kriyananda and I both were disciples of that great master. [I myself have often wondered whether our guru was not also that great master.]

"I was Kriyananda's younger brother. Kriyananda in that lifetime betrayed our guru and set himself up as a rival teacher, taking students away from the Master, who had placed him in charge of the monks. I felt deep anger toward Kriyananda. That prejudicial memory was what influenced me to insist on his dismissal in this life."

I believe this vision may actually have been true. We all have had many faults, and, during the countless incarnations it takes to find God, commit countless wrong deeds. All our bad karma must be neutralized before final liberation in God can be attained. Master himself told me that my greatest fault in the past was spiritual doubts. "You were eaten up with them," was the way he expressed himself to me. In this lifetime, fortunately, there

remains only enough of a suggestion of doubt in my heart to help me solve other people's doubts.

That young man, having traveled all the way from New York to California for the sole purpose of sharing his vision with me, said that Tara regretted the manner in which she had treated me in this life, and asked me to embrace him on her behalf, to show that I'd forgiven her. Of course, I did so. My visitor then left immediately, not even participating in a satsang that was being held at that moment downstairs in my living room. He returned at once to New York.

q) Yogananda told me in 1949, when placing me in charge of the other monks, "Don't make too many rules. It destroys the spirit." The best rule any organization can make is, "The fewer rules, the better." It is a temptation for organizations to produce rules, like confetti! The result, always, is a diminished application of free will to any new undertaking. Rules establish guidelines, but the guidelines, from then on, require no further testing or consideration. The problem is, they are very often applied to new situations unthinkingly.

r) Never mistake eloquence or cleverness for wisdom.

s) Never mistake self-assurance for Self-, or soul-assurance. Wisdom is often self-effacing, even diffident. Trust people according to their proven wisdom. Don't rely too much on their self-confidence. Self-esteem, though praised by psychiatrists, is a dangerous ideal.

t) Take occasional breaks from serious activity. The search for God is the most serious activity of all, but even so, time should be set aside for fun, laughter, and relaxation. Since God is Bliss, one can (and indeed should) keep a sense of His presence even while enjoying life.

u) Never make the mistake of thinking that seniority in an organization automatically bestows wisdom. Wisdom is of the soul, and comes from many incarnations of experience, with its gradually

unfolding insight. "The last shall be the first," Jesus said. True authority depends not on when you came to a religious work: It comes from the eternal soul. In its own context, this is true for every kind of work, even the most worldly. True authority comes with experience.

v) Never draw attention to your own superior spirituality, intelligence, or competence. All souls, in their inner essence, are spiritual, and are therefore perfect. All of them, equally, are children of God.

There was a certain cartoon I saw many years ago: two monks, one of whom, looking down his nose at the other, protested, "But I am holier than thou!"

w) Never believe that you have overcome a delusion until the very thought of it no longer enters your mind. As long as there remains the slightest fear of that delusion, know that you are not yet free from it. Remember, once a delusion is truly overcome, it will simply cease, for you, to exist. You will then wonder why you were ever enslaved by it, and may well ask yourself, marveling, "What was all the excitement about?"

x) A truly spiritual person is childlike, but not childish. Be open and non-judgmental toward everything and everybody.

y) The fruit of right meditation is inner joy. If your spiritual practices make you solemn or dour, know from this fact alone that there is something amiss in your spiritual efforts.

z) The most important quality on the spiritual path is deep, selfless, heartfelt devotion and love for God.

All of the above qualities were things I learned from observing them in my Guru, Paramhansa Yogananda.

21. Practical Considerations

At present there are two organizations particularly which represent the ray of divine grace that was brought to this world by Paramhansa Yogananda. I would say that, while many organizations may in time strive to represent Yogananda's teachings, those will do so best who understand his mission in the broadest possible sense. I would add that those will be truest to his spirit which take themselves the least seriously, which are the least self-affirming, and which do their best to be of service to others. Here are a few further points to consider:

a) My suggestion for avoiding what I foresee must otherwise be the demise of SRF as an organization, or at any rate of its usefulness to mankind, is that Ananda and SRF work cooperatively together in any and every way possible. Each organization has no doubt something it can learn from the other. Above all, in any case, the best hope I see for us as Yogananda's disciples in promoting the future of Paramhansa Yogananda's mission is for both these organizations to respect and appreciate each other. It is at the same time vitally important, however, to understand that, although organizations are perhaps the surest way these days of spreading a message, no organization can ever fully define that message. The message itself transcends all possible efforts to define it.

b) Is there hope for the future of Master's work? Absolutely yes! Despite the negative sound of much of what I have written in this book, my expectations for the future are entirely positive. I believe deeply in Paramhansa Yogananda, in his mission, and in the reason God sent him to the world at this time in history. The reason for his coming was to uplift a whole civilization—above all spiritually.

Whether or not this transformation occurs through SRF, or through Ananda, or through many organizations, it will happen!

Meanwhile, let us remember that only one thing really matters: God's love. I recently wrote new lyrics to the melody (slightly changed) of a song in the 1949 movie, *Come to the Stable*. That song was inspired, in turn, by a medieval plain chant. Let me quote those lyrics here:

Through a long and lonely night
 I've whispered Your name!
 Through the pains and joys of life
 My plea stays the same:
 Tempt me no longer.
 This world's not for me!
 I have known all its charms—
 Fold me now in Your arms:
 Make me free!
 Lifetimes have passed! I've called out to You
 Through hope and despair.
 Lifetimes I've known the goals that I sought
 Awaited nowhere!
 Help me remember
 There's one goal alone!
 All I am is Yours!
 All I've done is Yours!
 I'm Your own.

22. Why?

As I contemplate the events in my life, I am overwhelmed by a sense of their beauty and perfection. How marvelous—indeed, how bliss-assuring—is karmic law!

I feel no need to declare with jutting jaw: “I believe God’s law is just. I accept whatever pain He sends me as His will for me!” Rather, I laugh with sheer delight, for I know I’ve deserved all the suffering that has come to me in this lifetime. To me, the payment has not been an affliction: It has been a release!

Every slight, every insult, every seeming injustice, every attempt to destroy me is something I’ve deserved! I remember in my soul the injustices I’ve committed in the past. My Guru himself told me as many of them as I was able to absorb at the time. Ancient prophecies about me, which I discovered in India, told me of my past mistakes. I am only thrilled that in this life I’ve had the strength to withstand the waves of karma created by my own past actions, which threatened to engulf me in the present life. This is no cause for regret: It is cause for gratitude and rejoicing!

Everyone, equally, is a child of God. We are not sinners, though we may sin. We are not evil, though we have in the past performed many evils, even great ones. In our souls we are ever perfect. Our goal is to merge back, eventually, in God’s eternal Bliss.

Those disciples of my Guru who punished me so harshly were acting only as instruments of Cosmic Law. They believed—and rightly so, given their own narrow priorities—that they were acting on their guru’s behalf. They also believed that they were acting in his defense. I refuse to judge their actions against me, for I know that all of us are motivated by forces greater than ourselves. As Master wrote in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, “Thoughts are universally and not individually rooted.”

Have those disciples themselves created karma by their actions against me? That question is not mine to ask, or to answer. Nor, where I am concerned, is it the real issue. They have made grievous errors in their presentation of Paramhansa Yogananda’s teachings, mission, and legacy—yes. This I firmly believe. Speaking personally, however, my fellow disciples have helped me immeasurably toward the destiny we all share: freedom in God.

I have felt it important in these pages to point out what I perceive as great errors in the way they have presented our Guru, above all in their determination to confine him within the narrow walls of an organization. His message is too vast to be owned by any single group.

I have written many songs in my life. My favorite of them all is one titled, “Love Is a Magician.” Let me finish this book by writing the lyrics here.

Love is all I know:
 Sunrays on the snow
 Of a winter long
 In darkness, without song.
 Oh, my heart’s afire,
 Burning all desire:
 Only You remain,
 And life again!
 Too long I did stray,
 Flung lifetimes away—
 Imagined You did not care!
 I know now Your smile
 Was mine all the while:
 I listened, and Love was there!
 I can’t breathe for love!
 All the stars above
 Call to me: “Come home!
 Life’s waves all end in foam.”
 Only love can heal
 All the pain I feel.
 What a fool was I
 To turn away!

THE END

Addendum: Letter From Swami Kriyananda to Mrinalini Mata

A Recent Letter, Hand-Delivered, to the President of
Self-Realization Fellowship

Dear Mrinalini Mata:

In a little over a week I will be turning 85. I really would like if possible – indeed, I plead with you to help me – to clear up a few things while I am still in this body. You yourself have just turned – is it 79? Life passes quickly. Soon, it will be gone. And if these things are not resolved a golden opportunity will have been missed – for me, certainly; perhaps also for you. If they must be missed, then I will accept that that is how things are, but my own intense wish is for certain things to be cleared between us before I “shuffle off this mortal coil.” I will try in these pages – which may be long; please forgive me – to be completely truthful and honest with you, and at the same time to express the deep respect I feel for you, at least as a fellow disciple of our great Guru.

I will tell you at the outset that I feel no resentment against you, nor against Daya Mata, nor against Tara Mata. It may have looked to you all as though my actions had been motivated by a spirit of rivalry with you. I can solemnly state before God and Master that such has never been the case.

That I have always been a good and loyal disciple of Master I will not claim, for it is up to him to make that assessment. This much I can claim, however, and I do so sincerely: I have done my humble best to serve him in this lifetime, and to the very best of my capacity. I do not consider that anything I have done is important, except as it has served to promote his message and his mission in the world. When I come before him, after this life passes, the only question I expect him to ask me is, “Have you loved me?” And I earnestly hope to be able to

say to him with all my heart, “You are all I have ever loved.”

In New York at the Penta Hotel, when Tara and Daya called me in for their final confrontation with me, I knelt on the floor before them with my arms crossed over my chest, pleading with them from my heart not to reject me. Tara sternly refused. When I said to her, “But none of these things you’ve been saying against me are true!” she answered contemptuously, “I don’t want your opinions!” Will you answer me the same way? If that is what is in your heart, I invite you to do so. I am completely open to anything you say. I may not agree with you. But I want, if possible, to clear the air of any and every misunderstanding between us.

For I must tell you, my separation from SRF has been the one deep, ineradicable hurt in my life. It has never made me angry. It has never made me resentful. It has never awakened in me the thought, “Well, I’ll show you!” I deeply and sincerely loved Daya Mata, and also Tara Mata. I was hurt to my very core by their rejection of me. I wanted to understand whether there had been any truth in the accusations they hurled against me. For many years I suffered deeply on that account, and I suppose the pain will never completely leave me – though I am grateful to say that I also feel increasing bliss in myself. But that persecution – for that is what it has been – has been heartrending, considering that it came from the two people in this world whom I had long considered my best friends and advisors.

Daya seems to have felt almost a compulsion to destroy me. Why? What did I ever do to offend her? I estimate that she spent some fifty million dollars through those lawsuits, only to encompass my destruction – as if what they’d done to me in New York had not been enough to shatter me utterly. I am her brother. I’ve been her brother in other lives also. Why this need to bring about my utter ruin?

You yourself, Mrinalini, wrote in your letter about me to the Board in 1962, “Kriyananda has the greatest ego I’ve ever seen.” What a strange thing for

me to hear! I had always thought so very highly of you. Have I such an ego? I myself am not aware of it. I don't consider that I even matter. Sometimes I'm not so sure I've done anything meritorious at all. But I can say this: One time, when Master was speaking to us about the men teachers who had fallen due to ego, I said to him, "That's why I don't want to be a teacher, Sir." He answered me calmly, slowly, and very firmly, "You will never fall due to ego!"

In other ways, too, you have not been square with me. I beg you to be so now. You have tried – I won't mention the exact circumstances, though I could do so – to silence me by equivocation – you, who are an essentially truthful human being. Always, I have understood what you were doing. But I have remained silent. It just isn't in my nature to argue; to do so is both foolish and undignified. But please be straight with me. If you are not, I shall understand. And if you try simply to silence me with a true but irrelevant sentence, I shall understand. And if you say nothing at all, I shall understand. I shall understand, yes. But I shall carry the pain to my grave.

The only thing I could not accept was Tara's firm commandment to me in New York never to do anything again to serve Master. My life was committed wholeheartedly to his service. How could I serve him, then, by doing nothing? She said to me, "Just take any job that comes along." I would have died rather than work only for my own support. In fact, for many months I prayed for exactly that: to be allowed to die.

You wrote me once, several years later, as if to hold up Binay Dubey as an example for me, telling me that he had served Master up to his dying breath. You've no idea how deeply that wounded me – when I myself had been debarred from serving him at all.

Tara's statement to me in New York was, "From now on, we want to forget that you ever lived!" But I am your brother – the same to all of you! Ah! the pains I have gone through over this rejection by my own dearest ones on this earth!

No, I have never tried to rival you. But I have always been sitting as if on a volcano of creativity. I can't help it. That's how I am made. It would take much more effort to suppress this volcano than simply to let it erupt.

Brother Bhaktananda used to be a bit jealous of me (I think so, anyway) for my creativity, but I myself, though I loved him for his devotion and humility, was also a bit envious of him for what I perceived as his lack of creativity! I used to think, "Maybe, if I were more like him, I could devote myself to a more meditative life."

But Master himself urged me in my own natural direction. He said to me, "Your life will be one of intense activity, and meditation." But he put meditation second. You all used to wish I were different. I myself wished I were different! But I simply was who I was. I wasn't trying to prove anything. Tara called me a megalomaniac. I've never considered myself at all important. But Master's message has always been, for me, one of world-uplifting importance. I am completely dedicated to making the world know – not him; that would be ego on my part; but the truths and the enormously vital message he brought to mankind. I have tried humbly – yes, I feel I may claim that – and very sincerely to make that message known in the world. That I have succeeded to some extent in that effort, and – indeed – far more so than SRF has done, I don't see as a matter for pride. I have simply thrown myself into my service to him. In many ways, I must admit, it has been a great help to be able to do these things on my own, without the need for committee approval.

Master was about to go out one day by car. Herbert Freed and I were standing nearby. Master was giving him some last-minute advice for his new appointment as minister of the Phoenix church. At a certain point, he paused a moment, then said, "You have a great work to do." I naturally turned to Herbert with a gaze of felicitation. But Master corrected me. "It's you I'm talking to, Walter," he said. Weren't you in the car then?

From then on he often said such things to me. “You have a great work to do, therefore . . .” Or, “Because you have a great work to do, you mustn’t . . .” Usually, when he said such things, we were alone together.

I once mentioned to Daya Mata that he had told me I had a great work to do. “Yes,” she replied, “we all have a great work to do.” But that wasn’t how he had spoken those words to me.

One time we were alone outdoors at his desert retreat. Suddenly, as if out of the blue, he said, “Apart from Saint Lynn, every man has disappointed me.” Then, with deep intensity, he said almost fiercely, “AND YOU MUSTN’T DISAPPOINT ME!”

I knew his meaning couldn’t have been that all the men had disappointed him spiritually, for some of them were deeply devout. What he had meant was that he saw in me a deep zeal to make his message known to the world. Masculine energy is more outward; feminine, more inward. Masculine energy was what his work needed, to become widely known.

Mrinalini, I don’t know whether any point can be served by my saying more. There is infinitely more I could write, and I would love to do so. But I do want, from my deepest heart, to resolve any misunderstanding that exists between me and you. I love all of you deeply, and consider you my own. I am not interested in any organizational reconciliation or justification. I know what I have done for Master. I feel his satisfaction with me in my heart. I am willing to be scolded by him for anything I’ve done wrong. I’m willing to accept his judgment, should he care to deliver it, that my whole life has been wasted. I hope it has not, but the judgment is his to make. I would just like to feel that these deep hurts I hold in my heart can be resolved. I have nothing to defend. All I feel is the desire to be open to you – and, yes, to let you stab it again and again, if that be your desire, even as Tara and Daya did. Cut me to ribbons, if you like. I am willing, in other words, to sustain any hurt, if necessary, in my effort to bring about some

reconciliation between us – even a slight reconciliation, but on a heart-to-heart level. I have not written this letter in a spirit of repentance, for I feel I have lived my life honorably as Master’s disciple. I have done my very best always, through all tempests and storms, to please him.

You have never answered any of my letters in the past. I hope you will answer this one.

With deep, humble, and self-effacing love for Master,

swami kriyananda

May 10, 2011

(Author’s note: This letter has never been either answered or acknowledged.)

Back Cover

A certain cynicism has taken root in the public mind about organizations in general, but perhaps even especially about spiritual organizations. So many of them have proved corrupt. But if organizations can be *bad*, it is equally possible for them to be *good*. Ego—whether institutional or individual—can go one of two directions: either toward self-interest or toward self-transcendence. Each direction has its consequences. To study the successes and failures of others is an important way of learning how to be better, oneself.

Two organizations that claim guidance from the same spiritual master have developed so differently from one another that now they hardly seem to represent the same teaching or teacher. Self-Realization Fellowship has followed the well-trodden path of spiritual authority: power in the hands of a few, obedience from all the rest; governance by rules, the first of which is, “In every situation, ask yourself first, ‘What is best for the organization?’”

Ananda has chosen “the road less traveled”: cooperation; decentralization; not taking oneself too seriously; and following two principles of which the first is, “People are more important than things,” and the second, “Where there is adherence to truth, there lie victory, happiness, and success of every kind” (“*Yata dharma, sthata jaya*” in the Sanskrit original).

This book serves two purposes: one, to restore to people a true and much-needed understanding of the real life and mission of Paramhansa Yogananda; and two, to give hope to people everywhere on earth that they need not compromise even one high ideal to accomplish all their objectives—even the most worldly.

Swami Kriyananda, founder of Ananda, has been a close, direct disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda for more than sixty years. His life has been one of prodigious creativity—author, composer, photographer, screenwriter, dramatist, worldwide

lecturer, counselor and teacher, and founder of more than eight spiritual communities, wherein altogether about a thousand people live. These things he has accomplished by the power he received from Yogananda, bestowed on him for his complete dedication to his guru’s service.