

BIRTH ANNIVERSARY
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PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA
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PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

A YOGI FOR EAST & WEST



Yogoda Satsanga Society of India
FOUNDED 1917 BY PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

Paramahansa Yogananda

(JANUARY 5, 1893 – MARCH 7, 1952)

Paramahansa Yogananda, author of the spiritual classic *Autobiography of a Yogi* and widely revered as one of the preeminent spiritual figures of our time, contributed in far-reaching ways to a greater awareness and appreciation in the West of the spiritual wisdom of India. Regarded as the “Father of Yoga in the West,” Paramahansa Yogananda left an indelible impression on the spiritual landscape of the world.

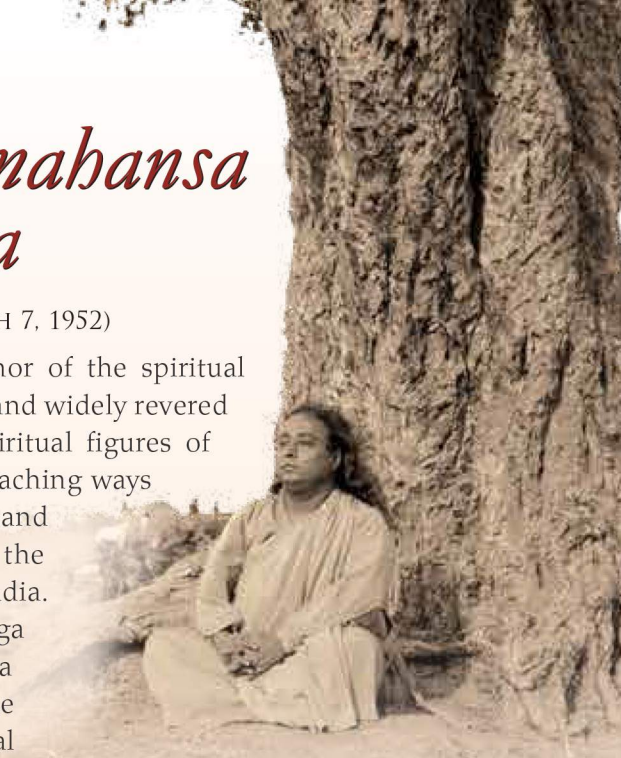
Paramahansa Yogananda was born Mukunda Lal Ghosh on January 5, 1893, in the sacred city of Gorakhpur, into a prosperous and devout Bengali family. From his earliest years, it was evident to those around him that his awareness and experience of the spiritual was far beyond the ordinary. As a youth he sought out many of India’s saints and philosophers, hoping to find an illumined teacher to guide him in his spiritual quest.



Swami Sri Yukteswar and Paramahansa Yogananda in religious procession, Calcutta, 1935.

In 1910, at the age of 17, he met the revered sage Swami Sri Yukteswar, in whose hermitage he spent the better part of the next ten years. After graduating from Calcutta University in 1915, he became a monk of India’s venerable monastic Swami Order, at which time he received the name Yogananda (signifying bliss, *ananda*, through divine union, *yoga*).

Sri Yoganandaji began his life’s



Paramahansaji at Dihika 1935.

work with the founding, in 1917, of a “How-to-Live” school, where modern educational methods were combined with yoga training and instruction in spiritual ideals. Visiting the school in 1925, the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi wrote: “This institution has greatly impressed my mind.”

Gandhiji and Paramahansa Yogananda met a decade afterwards when the latter made a return visit to India in 1935–36, after first touring parts of Europe and the Middle East. At the Mahatma’s request, Paramahansaji instructed him and several of his followers in the spiritual science of Kriya Yoga.

Paramahansa Yogananda founded Yogoda Satsanga Society of India (YSS) in 1917, and in 1920, he carried

India’s sacred, soul-liberating science of Raja Yoga to the West where, in Los Angeles, California (USA), he established the sister organization Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF).

The non-sectarian and scientific yoga teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda have a universal appeal to people of all faiths and walks of life. Sri Yogananda founded YSS/SRF for the purpose of fostering a spirit of greater understanding and goodwill among the diverse peoples and religions of our global family by demonstrating the underlying unity of all humankind under the one God, and to provide peoples of all nations—irrespective of nationality,



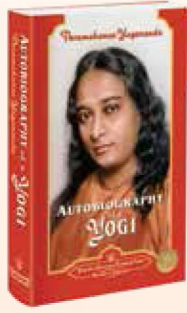
Administration building at international headquarters of Self-Realization Fellowship.



At Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram in Wardha, 1935. Yoganandaji is reading a note that Gandhiji (right) had just written.

race, and religion—with definite scientific Raja Yoga techniques of meditation, known as Kriya Yoga, that lead to realization of one's full potential and the divinity of the human spirit.

Autobiography of a Yogi, Paramahansaji's life story, was published in 1946 and expanded by him in subsequent editions. Recognised from the beginning as a landmark work in its field, the book has been in print continuously since its initial publication more than 72 years ago. Honoured as one of the 100 best spiritual books of the 20th century, it remains one of the most important, and most readable, works on Yoga and Eastern spiritual thought. It has been translated into 50 languages, including 13 Indian languages.



On March 7, 1952, the great guru entered *mahasamadhi*, a God-illuminated master's conscious exit from the body at the time of physical death. He had just finished giving a short speech at a banquet honouring India's ambassador to the United States, Dr. Binay R. Sen, at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles.

His passing was marked by an extraordinary phenomenon. A notarized statement signed by the Director of Forest Lawn Memorial-Park testified: "No physical disintegration was visible in his body even twenty days after death.... This state of perfect preservation of a body is, so far as we know from mortuary annals, an unparalleled one.... Yogananda's body was apparently in a phenomenal state of immutability."



A photograph taken an hour before Paramahansa Yogananda's mahasamadhi.

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Paramahansa Yogananda's passing, his far-reaching contributions to the spiritual upliftment of humanity were given formal recognition by the Government of India. A special commemorative stamp was issued in his honour, together with a tribute that read, in part:

"The ideal of love for God and service to humanity found full expression in the life of Paramahansa Yogananda.... Though the major part of his life was spent outside of India, still he takes his place among our great saints. His work continues to grow and shine ever more brightly, drawing people everywhere on the path of the pilgrimage of the Spirit."

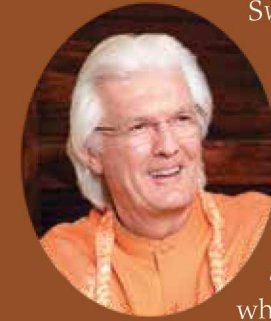


Yogananda's long-awaited interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita (*God Talks With Arjuna*)—a profoundly enriching journey into the deeper meaning of Bhagavan Krishna's counsel to aspiring yogis—was released in 1995.

Among Paramahansa Yogananda's other writings are acclaimed interpretations of Jesus' universal teachings (*The Second Coming of Christ: The Resurrection of the Christ Within You*) and the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam (*Wine of the Mystic: A Spiritual Interpretation*), a multi-volume anthology series (*Collected Talks and Essays on Realizing God in Daily Life*), two collections of poetry and prayer, and numerous volumes of spiritual counsel. Yogoda Satsanga Society of India also publishes a series of rare audio recordings of talks given by the great guru during the latter years of his life.

An award-winning documentary feature film chronicling the extraordinary life of Paramahansaji, *AWAKE: The Life of Yogananda*, was released in 2014 and shown worldwide.

Today, 125 years after his advent on earth, Paramahansa Yogananda is being increasingly recognised as one of the great spiritual sons of Mother India, a harbinger of Yoga to the West, and an incarnation of Divine Love who embraced the whole world.



SWAMI CHIDANANDA GIRI is the current President and Spiritual Head of YSS/SRF. He has been a monk for forty years, and was trained for many years by close direct disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda. As president, Swami Chidanandaji is assisted by a Board of Directors, which includes other monastics who have been trained by direct disciples of Paramahansaji.

Under the direction of the President and Board of Directors, monks and nuns of YSS/SRF serve in many capacities in the society's ashram centres: publishing the writings, lectures, and informal talks of Paramahansa Yogananda, and of his close disciples; overseeing its nearly 800 temples, meditation centres, and retreats; conducting annual lecture and class series in cities throughout the world; coordinating the Worldwide Prayer Circle, a network of groups and individuals dedicated to praying for those in need of physical, mental, or spiritual aid, and for global peace and harmony; and providing spiritual counsel and guidance—by phone, letter, and in person—to students of the Yogoda Satsanga/Self-Realization Fellowship teachings. Many dedicated YSS/SRF lay members also serve Paramahansa Yogananda's worldwide work in indispensable ways—working with the monastics at the YSS/SRF ashram centres, and carrying many responsibilities in the meditation centres around the world.



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