

# *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons*

By Paramahansa Yogananda

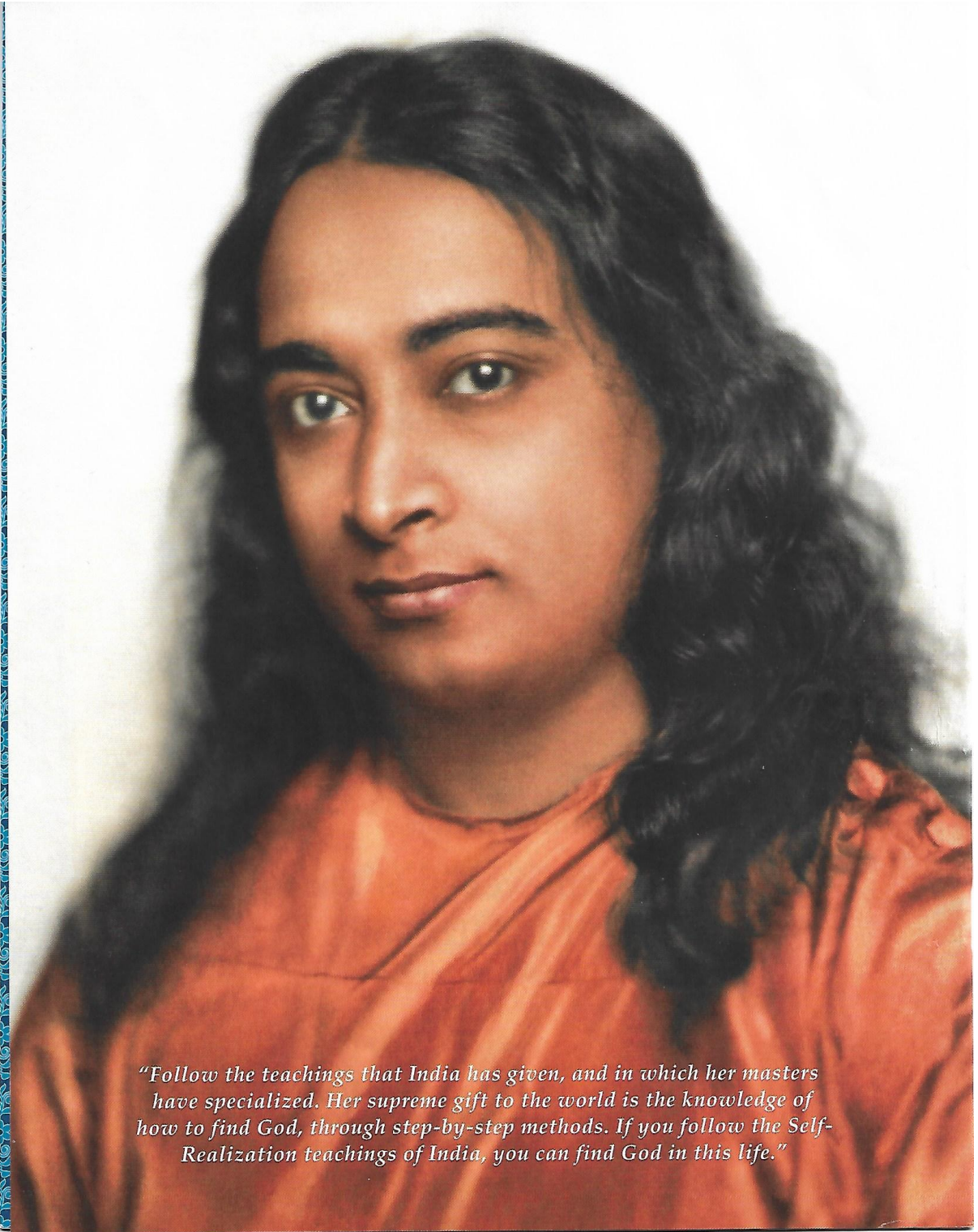


Introduction

**Highest Achievements Through  
Self-Realization**



*Self-Realization Fellowship*  
FOUNDED 1926 BY PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



*"Follow the teachings that India has given, and in which her masters have specialized. Her supreme gift to the world is the knowledge of how to find God, through step-by-step methods. If you follow the Self-Realization teachings of India, you can find God in this life."*

## Highest Achievements Through Self-Realization

*What is the purpose of your life on earth? Are you here just to be born, go through the mistakes of youthful life, get married, have children, earn money, and then — after your fleeting years of alternating pleasures, sorrows, struggles, boredom, and fears — be buried beneath the sod? Is that all you can expect from life? Is that its highest achievement?*

Most persons rush aimlessly through their span on earth, rarely taking time to make a conscious plan or discover the purpose of their journey. They have never been equipped with the wisdom that would enable them to avoid sorrow-producing mistakes and to guide their lives toward true and lasting fulfillment.

Underlying all genuine spiritual teachings of the world is a common foundation of universal Truth, which will give you complete and permanently satisfying answers to the supremely important questions of life, if you will but take the time to seek them.

### Analyze and Understand the Goal of Life

If we analyze the motive behind anything that we do, we find that ultimately all actions, all undertakings, have a common and universal goal: the avoidance or removal of pain, and the attainment of permanent Bliss.\*

The world teaches you to seek happiness in money, sex, human love, various forms of entertainment, even destructive indulgences such as liquor or drugs — only to disillusion you again and again when you find that, like poisoned honey, they may be sweet at first taste but bring disappointment, boredom, or misery in the end.

No matter what your achievements are, pause and think. Introspect and impartially survey yourself and the degree of fulfillment you feel in your life. Unless and until you have truly understood what life is all about, you will always find a leak

---

\* Every student of these *Lessons* ought to read my book *The Science of Religion*, in order to thoroughly understand these ideas. [These ideas are also discussed in Lesson 2, "Yoga: The Universal Science of Knowing God."]

through which your happiness is constantly ebbing away—a subconscious insecurity or nagging uncertainty that you are not really living life to its full potential.

Do not be satisfied being what you are, but try to be what you can and should be. If you are one of those who are really thirsty to solve your individual problems, or the universal human problem of understanding the mystery of life, learn and follow the teachings of Self-Realization Fellowship—the scientific spiritual teachings of India, handed down by her illumined seers and sages from time immemorial. Therein you will find the answers.

**Will the Answers You Seek Come From Outside, or From Within?** India's philosophy points out that human life is constantly subject to the threefold sorrows:

1. *physical suffering* born of disease, injury, poverty;
2. *mental suffering* born of fears, bereavement, unfulfilled desires;
3. *spiritual suffering* born of ignorance of the meaning and goal of life, and ignorance of how to attain that goal.

Without scientifically analyzing human life, many so-called "practical" people put all their trust in material methods of addressing these three kinds of human ills. They believe the answers come from outside—more money, advances in technology and medicine, a proliferation of new inventions and modern conveniences.

No doubt there is tremendous value in the scientific progress of man.\* But human life, even in future states of greater material development, will always be uncertain—subject to suffering from accidents; disease or failure of the bodily mechanism; unforeseen financial reverses; natural catastrophe; or the horror of war. To be truly practical is to make contact with God, the Eternal Refuge and Infinite Dynamo that invisibly powers our lives and all our abilities from within.

For life's highest achievements, it is necessary to apply the untapped potentials of the human body and mind—powers that flow from the innermost essence of your being: your true Self or soul, made "in the image of God."

---

\* The use of the masculine gender in Paramahansa Yogananda's *Lessons* and other writings is rooted not in the narrowly exclusive sense of the word *man*, denoting only half of the human race, but in its broader original meaning; the word is derived from the same root as Sanskrit *manas*, mind—the uniquely human capacity for rational thought. The science of yoga deals with human consciousness from the point of view of the essentially androgynous Self (*atman*). As there is no other terminology in English that would convey these psychological and spiritual truths without excessive literary awkwardness, the use of *man* and related terms has been retained in the Guru's writings. (*Editor's Note*)

The sages of India anciently developed the techniques and methods of yoga, the science of the soul. Its practice not only enables you to rise above the threefold sorrows, but to gain the positive state of ever new bliss through inner communion with God.\*

**Complete and Balanced Development of Body, Mind, and Soul** The effectiveness of individual effort in any direction—whether in business pursuits or in humanitarian work, in health culture or in spiritual development—requires the efficient control of the soul’s two vehicles: body and mind.

Many efforts have been made by psychologists, physical culturists, and educators toward the partial development of one or more aspects of body and mind. The teachings of Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) are a complete and balanced system of definite scientific techniques—universally applicable psychophysical methods—for harmonious development and full expression of the latent capacities of body, mind, and soul. These methods have hitherto been unknown in the West and only partially known in the East.

For thousands of years, since long before the Christian era, the East has specialized in perfecting the inner man. Numerous have been its discoveries in the realm of applied psychology, practical metaphysics and philosophy, and the means of quickening human evolution. SRF teachings have distilled from this ancient hidden wisdom the definite methods by which spiritual truth, free of dogma and unscientific beliefs, can be demonstrated and utilized to bring the best possible results in daily life.

SRF students are taught the art by which all mental faculties, as well as the life energy (*prana*) that sustains the body cells, can be brought under conscious control. Control of these subtle forces underlying all life is the real security of existence, for Cosmic Life Energy is the cause and sustenance of all creation. With the mind and body thus under perfect obedience, one develops the ability to accomplish anything one desires. Definite methods and training are necessary to achieve this mastery, such as the *pranayama* techniques of the Kriya Yoga science taught in the *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons*.

SRF teaches how to heal the body through superior, spiritual methods (with-

---

\* Though many people think of yoga only as physical exercises—the *asanas* or postures of *Hatha Yoga*—these are actually only the most superficial aspect of this profound science. Its true value and purpose is unfolding the infinite potentials of the human mind and soul. The word *yoga* itself means “union”: of the individual consciousness or soul with the Universal Consciousness or Spirit. There are various paths of Yoga that lead toward this goal, each one a specialized branch of one comprehensive system, as taught in later Lessons in this series. (*Editor’s Note*)

## Thoughts to Live By

*Excerpts from Paramahansa Yogananda's Collected Talks and Essays\**

When we begin to understand the total being that is man, we realize that he is no simple physical organism. Within him are many powers whose potential he employs in greater or lesser degree in accommodating himself to the conditions of this world. Their potential is vastly greater than the average person thinks.



In ages past, the rishis and masters of India, secluded in their hermitages, unraveled the mysteries that hide the Omnipresent Spirit. Their research has given us the valuable techniques and methods that tune the body and mind to the Illimitable Source of life and intelligence residing in every human being. By concentrating within on the Infinite, you can receive this boundless power.



Many people may doubt that finding God is the purpose of life; but everyone can accept the idea that the purpose of life is to find happiness. I say that God is Happiness. He is Bliss. He is Love. He is Joy that will never go away from your soul. So why shouldn't you try to acquire that Happiness?

---

\* A multi-volume series published by Self-Realization Fellowship.

out discarding medical science)—how to depend more on mind and less on physical methods of healing.

It teaches how to scientifically make the mind 100% efficient. This way, the less efficient develop more efficiency, and the efficient develop maximum efficiency. Mental efficiency—consciously harnessing the untapped potentials of the human mind—is the key to health, achievement, and finding the source of the fulfillment of all our needs: God.

Self-Realization Fellowship students, while learning the most efficacious psychophysical laws for attaining all of life's worthwhile goals, are taught to keep them in proper perspective: God-contact first, health second, intellectual culture third, prosperity for self and others fourth, social status and popularity last. The supreme object of life is to consciously know God.

**What Is God?** The vaguest of all human conceptions is man's idea of God. Researchers on food, finance, health, and family relationships have to be very definite to gain your approval. But have you ever thought how quickly you are satisfied with your idea of God? Are your beliefs about Him only what you have been told from your childhood, or your rebellion against a God you falsely believe inflicts suffering—the dogmatic idea of a vengeful Deity ready to punish us with “hellfire and brimstone”? That is not the God about which I teach. Indeed, it is the vindictiveness in man's own heart that imputes such awful cruelty to the infinite Divine Lover of our souls.

We read about God in the various scriptures. We hear of His presence and listen to praise of Him in the sermons of religious teachers, clergy, and saints. We imagine Him behind the veils of nature's beauty. We think about His existence through the logic within us. But all of these windows through which we try to see God are fitted with the opaque glass of inference derived from unscrutinized, untested data.

People tell me, “Well, I have read the Bible”; or, “I have learned the *shastras*.” “I have found truth this way (or that way, or some other way).” But I find that they do not really know the truth, for they cannot answer their hearts' questions about God satisfactorily.

Deeply thinking persons will always wonder: If God is all-wise and all-powerful, why does He not drive away poverty, disease, sickness, sorrow, and all other ills in a minute? If He is perfect, why does He contradict Himself by creating a defective, evil-laden world?

If God knew that we would hurt ourselves by misusing free will, then why, *why* did He give it to us? God must be very ignorant if He did not know what a mess He

was getting humans into by giving them this free will. He is enjoying a wonderful consciousness of ecstatic bliss in Himself, while we are wallowing in sorrow.

These questions are often asked but seldom answered. However, God is never afraid of questions. It is only the dogma of religion that is afraid of questions. God answers all such cries of the heart satisfactorily when you learn to contact Him by the real practice of meditation.\*

We cannot have full or direct knowledge of God through the limited power of the intellect, which affords us only a partial and indirect comprehension. To view an object intellectually is to study it while standing apart from it. But intuition is direct grasp of truth: understanding an object by being one with it. God-consciousness may be realized only by intuition, the all-knowing faculty of the soul.

The Hindu scriptures, received through the meditation-awakened intuition of divinely illumined *rishis*,<sup>†</sup> declare that though the manifestations of and names for Spirit or God are myriad, inexhaustible, in essence God is infinite, ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss (*Sat-Chit-Ananda*).

**Is There a Personal God?** To many people, the concept of God as having a personal form is not appealing—the idea of an anthropomorphic Deity seated somewhere away in some unknown region above the cosmos. They think only of an Impersonal Spirit, an all-powerful Intelligent Force pervading and governing the universe. This is not incorrect, but it is incomplete. Our Creator is also personal. He has created us as personal beings with individuality: We think, feel, will; and God has given us not only the power to appreciate the thoughts and feelings of others but to respond to them. This is the *lila*, the play or dance of His universal creation. The Lord Himself is surely not any less personally responsive than His own creatures. When we have the necessary reciprocity, each one of us can enjoy a personal relationship with the Divine.

God is both impersonal and personal. In response to the love of exalted devotees, God has manifested Himself in various cosmic forms. He appears before His saints in the form each of them holds dear: a Christian sees Christ, a Hindu beholds Krishna or the Divine Mother, and so on. Devotees whose worship takes an impersonal turn become conscious of the Lord as an infinite Light or as the wondrous sound of *Aum*, the primal Word, the Holy Ghost. God also manifests in realizations of truth, in divine qualities (such as love, wisdom, joy), in the creative

\* The true nature of God—as well as the origin and purpose of creation, and why evil is a part of it—are fully discussed in Lessons 8 and 9. (*Editor's Note*)

† Illumined sages.



power and beauty in nature, in the lives of great saints and avatars (divine incarnations), and in the soul of every human being. Thus meditation on any of these concepts brings a deep realization of the omnipresent Absolute, of Him who is ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss.

The ever-increasing joy felt in practicing the various techniques of meditation given in the *Lessons* is the most satisfying proof of the existence of God. Self-Realization Fellowship techniques—if conscientiously applied—will bestow this proof beyond doubt, and help you to erase forever all uncertainty about the existence, nature, and power of God.

Unscientific doctrines of “churchianity” from the Dark Ages have left a great deal of nonunderstanding about the word “God.” Now we are entering a new age, in which scientific training in spirituality will replace blind beliefs and people will seek the realization of God and truth within themselves.

**Self-realization Defined** Self-realization is the knowing—in body, mind, and soul—that we are one with the omnipresence of God; that we do not have to pray that it come to us, that we are not merely near it at all times, but that God’s omnipresence is our omnipresence; that we are just as much a part of Him now as we ever will be. All we have to do is improve our knowing.

Self-realization is knowing one’s Self, one’s soul; and realizing that the soul is one with God.

**Union With God Is the True Goal of Existence** Everyone’s goal in life is to acquire happiness, peace, love, satisfaction, security, wisdom, and immortality. These longings for perfection spring from the soul, the image of God that lies hidden within every human being. This perfect image of God seeks to manifest itself in each human life.

We are immortal, blessed children of God, sent on earth to demonstrate the perfection of our Father; but because we misuse our independence, we suffer from disease and sorrows and go from this earth shattered and scarred. The scriptures told the truth when they said that we are made in the image of God. What is it then that you are now displaying? Is it an image that has been desecrated by the hand of ignorance?

We were sent here as immortals, but instead we have started begging, forgetting our divine heritage within. Remember, no matter what you want, if you seek it from this illusive world it will never satisfy you. Hence life is an amazing paradox, because we are trying to find permanent fulfillment of our dreams through our impermanent lives here. But if we consciously contact God first, then all things else will follow.

## Thoughts to Live By

*Excerpts from Paramahansa Yogananda's writings*

Religion should be treated as a science; it is right that it be subjected to the test of experience. For millenniums in India, the rishis, as spiritual scientists, employed reason, observation, and systematic investigation to arrive at definite and replicable proof of divine truths.



Yoga is definite and scientific. Yoga means union of soul and God, through step-by-step methods with specific and known results. It raises the practice of religion above the differences of dogma.



The disagreement between science and metaphysics has been a divisive one, because of the difference in the way each views truth... Science looks at truth only from without. The metaphysician looks at the truth from within to without. That is why they clash. But realized souls like my master, Swami Sri Yukteswarji, who knew science as well as metaphysics, find no difference at all. They see the parallelism between science and truth because they see the whole picture. We have to look at truth from within to without; and from without to within, in order to see the whole of it.

If you think that you can live happily in forgetfulness of God, you are mistaken, for you will cry out in loneliness again and again until you realize that God is all in all: the only Reality in the universe. You are made in His image. You can never find lasting happiness in any *thing*, because nothing is complete except God.

Nothing except God can satisfy you and wipe away your miseries completely. Your soul, an individualized part of God's consciousness, must realize its oneness with the Whole in order to be complete. Your longing for satisfaction can find perfect satisfaction only in God. Your desire for knowledge can quench its thirst only by drinking of His wisdom. Your peace can be fulfilling only in union with His peace. Your existence can be immortal only when merged with Him who is ever-existing. Your consciousness can be unceasing and omnipresent only when it is united with His cosmic consciousness. Your joy can be unending, ever-enter-taining, only when it has become one with His ever new bliss.

### Seek God the Scientific Way

*Science Versus Religion* Most religious denominations are based upon individual opinions of truth or on blind belief. That explains the apparent conflict between science and religion and the stagnation of religion that has accompanied the rise of modern science.

Science is progressive. It is constantly winning new inventions because it is based on the laws of reason. Does anyone pause to think how ridiculously futile it would be for scientists to try to receive inventions and new knowledge of nature's secrets just by shutting themselves in a church and praying for this knowledge? Scientists get results because they apply the laws of impartial reason and the universal laws of Nature. Spiritual seekers, likewise, must endeavor to discover and apply the subtle spiritual laws underlying the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of their being if they are to bring Divinity into manifestation in their lives.

Scientists generally agree on the nature of water and of electricity, for example, because they have thoroughly investigated the constituents and properties of these two phenomena. But who is sure whether Hinduism, or Buddhism, or Judaism, or Confucianism, or Islam, or Christianity is the real means to ultimate salvation and the best solution to the problems of life?

Except in ancient India, religion has not been taken seriously by scientists; it has not been made the subject of lifelong research and practical scientific study conducted to reveal the origin, end, and purpose of human life.

***Yoga: The Science of Religion*** Since ancient times, religious experiments have given India's yogis knowledge of truths only now being "discovered" in the West by pragmatic scientific research. There is a definite need today for scientific religious experimentation applying the yogic methods of India.

True religion is like a well whose divine water permanently quenches humanity's threefold thirst: material, mental, and spiritual. Instead of blind acceptance of any religious path, the student should ask: "What is this teaching contributing to my physical, mental, and spiritual welfare?" Self-Realization Fellowship teachings can pass such a test. They enable one to prove truth through personal experience—through practical techniques of God-realization, of spiritualizing the body cells by a definite system of physical development, of keeping in touch with the Supreme Source of cosmic supply that governs and provides for all aspects of our material and spiritual life.

Self-Realization Fellowship was formed for the distinct purpose of presenting to you those practical truths which have already been scientifically tested and found to be universally beneficial in thousands of lives. The masters behind this movement have extracted only the best and most usable truths from the mine of God-perception—omitting unproved, dogmatic theologies. SRF instructions foster goodwill and fellowship among all true religions, and invite them to cooperate in God's name to find those spiritual truths which develop individuals in the most efficient and balanced way, in the light of Self-realization: personal experience of Truth.

True fellowship among souls of diverse religions comes by realizing the one Spirit and beholding Him as the Indwelling Self in all persons.

***The Universal Spirituality Underlying All World Religions*** If different people are travelling to New York by airplane from Los Angeles, India, Europe, and South America, their routes will be different and they will have different perspectives and scenery on the way. But when those planes hover over New York, they will all have the same view. Likewise, the various religious paths and beliefs travel by different routes toward God; but as they near the goal the followers of each have the same experience.

Religions are many; but in the course of realizing Truth, or God, all seekers—be they Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, or follower of any other path, or none—will discover that true religion, or the actual experience of God, is the same for all. God is One; and there is only one truth, though its aspects are myriad.

Followers of all creeds may apply Self-Realization Fellowship teachings: the

highly developed meditation techniques of the masters of India (described below), and universal spiritual truths that develop man's potentialities for living a godly life. We do not want to burden your mind with untested, impractical, unfruitful theological beliefs and assertions. Our humble desire is to help you, through these teachings, to expand your consciousness until you understand by your own Self-realization the eternal Truth behind all great religions, and to foster goodwill and universal brotherhood in the name of the one Spirit.

***Balance of India's Spirituality and Western Practicality***

As America has specialized in developing technological and business efficiency, so India, for uncounted millennia, has specialized in the art of spiritual efficiency—the higher culture of the human being for inner happiness and peace.

East and West have both been one-sided, and thus have failed to bring about all-round well-being for their peoples. Material prosperity without spirituality leads to greed, lack of inner and outer peace, and the resultant wars, as evidenced in America and Europe. Spirituality without material development leads to poverty and famine, as evidenced in India. Ultimately, national prosperity cannot be retained without balancing it by spirituality; and spirituality alone cannot feed the stomachs of the starving poor.

The ideal taught by Self-Realization Fellowship is to unite the best of American material efficiency with the exalted spiritual efficiency of India's masters. Only by balancing material life by spirituality, and spiritual life by material progressiveness, can people learn to become ideal citizens of the coming united world.

### The Self-Realization Fellowship Teachings

To know God, you must experience Him within your own consciousness. The best way to attain this realization is to practice the scientific methods discovered and used with proven success by the ancient *rishis* and yogis of India.

***Self-Realization/Yogoda System of All-Round Development***

"Yogoda" is a word I coined for the teachings I have brought for the highest development of man's physical, mental, and spiritual faculties.

The word "Yogoda" is derived from "*yoga*," meaning union, harmony, or equilibrium; and "*da*," that which imparts. Hence "Yogoda" means that particular system whose proper use can impart harmony and equilibrium to all the

## Thoughts to Live By

*Excerpts from Paramahansa Yogananda's Collected Talks and Essays*

The greatest love you can experience is in communion with God in meditation. The love between the soul and Spirit is the perfect love, the love you are all seeking....If you meditate deeply, a love will come over you such as no human tongue can describe, and you will be able to give that pure love to others.... You will commune with all nature, and you will love equally all mankind.



Cessation of fear comes with the contact of God, nothing else. Why wait? Through Yoga you can have that communion with Him....When you find God, what assurance and fearlessness you will have! Then nothing else matters at all, nothing can ever make you afraid.



Knowing God is more satisfying than the fulfillment of any earthly desire. Every lesser wish of your heart will be taken care of when you have Him who is your greatest Treasure. This is my own true testimony. He fulfilled my every desire. I do not seek things now; they seek me. When God gives Himself to you, He will fulfill your slightest wish. It is not necessary to ask. That is the state you want.

forces and faculties that operate for the perfection of man.\*

Yogoda, the Self-Realization teachings, is not a creed or dogma. It is a technique of super-living by which you can scientifically tune your body, mind, and soul to achieve contact with God—and thereby establish within yourself a fit temple for the Divine to manifest as wisdom, peace, love, bliss, and power to succeed in every aspect of your existence.

**Original Yoga and Original Teachings of Jesus**

The Self-Realization/Yogoda teachings combine the highest Oriental and Occidental psycho-spiritual art of ideal living. As I have explained in *Autobiography of a Yogi* and in other writings, the SRF teachings are based on original Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ; and original Yoga, scientific union with God, as taught by Bhagavan Krishna (Christ-na), Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Swami Sri Yukteswar.

Original Yoga systematized the definite techniques of contacting God, the scientific process by which every soul reunites with Spirit; hence it is considered the direct universal highway which all religionists can follow to reach the Infinite. The Kriya Yoga technique, anciently taught by Krishna to Arjuna and referred to in the Bhagavad Gita,<sup>†</sup> is the supreme spiritual science of yoga meditation. Secreted during the materialistic ages, this indestructible yoga was revived for modern man by Mahavatar Babaji. Babaji himself ordained me to spread this holy science of God-union through the Self-Realization Fellowship organization I founded at his behest and that of my guru.

Original Christianity also emphasized direct communion with God and included methods to do so. Jesus was crucified once, but his teachings are crucified daily at the hands of ignorant misinterpretations. The original Christianity, and the original scientific Yoga of India's higher ages of advanced spiritual civilization, have to be resurrected from under the debris of centuries of nonunderstanding.

Self-Realization Fellowship teaches its students to comprehend the true meaning of Christ's words in the Gospels, and of the Biblical books of Genesis and

\* In the early years of his mission in America, Paramahansa Yogananda used the term "Yogoda" as a general term for his teachings of physical, mental, and spiritual development; and his organization was called Yogoda Satsanga Society of America. In the early 1930s he translated the name of the society to Self-Realization Fellowship. (The earlier name is still used for his work in India, Yogoda Satsanga Society of India.) From that time on, he referred to what used to be called "the Yogoda teachings" (or just "Yogoda") as "the SRF teachings" or "the Self-Realization teachings."

† In Chapters IV:29 and V:27–28, as explained in Paramahansa Yogananda's *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita* (published by Self-Realization Fellowship).

Revelation, whose metaphysical depths are little known in the world. Truths that have remained buried for twenty centuries are being brought to light for the first time. The meanings of resurrection, life after death, the true “kingdom of God within you,” the promise of Jesus to send the Holy Ghost (the sacred, invisible vibratory power of God that actively sustains the universe)—all are explained in these teachings as Christ himself taught to his disciples when he was in the body.

## The Techniques

**What Is Meditation, Really?** Meditation as practiced in Self-Realization Fellowship does not mean musing in darkness, chasing after fleeting thoughts with eyes closed, in a state of dreamy passivity during periods of “sitting in silence.” Real meditation consists of simple but definite scientific techniques for bringing the mind into a focused state of concentration and fixing the attention on a definite perception of God, or Spirit.

The techniques in the *Lessons* are the foundation of the Self-Realization Fellowship teachings. They represent the practical application of ancient metaphysical truths hinted but not fully elaborated in the great scriptures of East and West.

**The Energization Technique and Exercises** Jesus taught: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”\* That is, the human body is not sustained only by external sources of life—food, water, oxygen, sunshine—but also by the inner source of cosmic life-current (the Word, or *Aum*) that enters the body chiefly through the subtle spiritual center in the medulla oblongata, the “mouth of God,” and flows “out of the mouth of God” to sustain and activate all parts of the body. Applying this truth, the SRF Energization Technique and Exercises enable one to recharge the life force in the body at will from the limitless sea of cosmic energy that underlies the material universe and everything in it. Practice of the technique gradually bestows realization that you are not essentially a physical body of flesh and bones, but immortal energy and consciousness.

**The Hong-Sau Technique of Concentration** This is a highly effective method, handed down by the *rishis* of ancient India, of using the science of breath and *mantra* to still the mind so that it can be focused one-pointedly on any subject, or upon God in meditation. “Yoga (union with God) is the neutralization of the modifications of the mind-stuff (*chitta*)” (*Yoga Sutras* of

\* Matthew 4:4.



Patanjali, I:2).\* "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10).

**The Aum Technique of Meditation** The *Yoga Sutras* (I:27–28) teach: "Meditate on *Aum* to actually contact God. *Aum* is His symbol (His manifestation of creation)." The method taught in these *Lessons* shows you how to attune the consciousness with the presence of God as the all-pervading Cosmic Vibration of *Aum* (Amen, the Holy Ghost of Christian scripture), and with the infinite Divine Consciousness and Intelligence inherent therein (the Christ or Krishna Consciousness, *Kutastha Chaitanya* of the Sanskrit scriptures). Jesus promised his disciples that he would send the Holy Ghost to them after he was gone: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). The techniques taught in the *SRF Lessons* are a fulfillment, for all humanity, of Jesus' promise.

**Kriya Yoga** "Kriya Yoga consists of body discipline, mental control, and meditating on *Aum*" (*Yoga Sutras* II:1). The sacred techniques of Kriya Yoga revived for modern times by Mahavatar Babaji (mentioned but not explicated in both the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Yoga Sutras*) are given, along with other advanced methods and auxiliary practices, to disciples of this path who have faithfully practiced and made progress with the three basic techniques listed above.†

**Even the Busiest Person Can Practice Meditation** The primary focus of the Self-Realization Fellowship teachings is *technique*, purged of unnecessary theory. The truths explained in the *Lessons* are universally practical. Their clear and simple presentation makes even the more complex truths readily comprehensible and easy to apply in daily life by young and old alike. These precepts can be observed and put into practice by even the busiest person, for the practice of the techniques requires only a relatively short period of time each day.

---

\* The *Yoga Sutras* of the great sage Patanjali, who lived in India in ancient times, is one of the pre-eminent classical texts on Yoga; but its cryptically condensed language requires a yoga master's interpretation to be fully grasped.

† Please refer to the Self-Realization Fellowship website for more information about the requirements for initiation in Kriya Yoga.

## Thoughts to Live By

*Excerpts from Paramahansa Yogananda's Collected Talks and Essays*

As you march along the twisting and branching pathways of life, seek foremost to discover the path that leads to God. In the time-tested methods of India's illumined rishtis, the universal way has been shown how to conquer uncertainty and ignorance by following the trail of light divine they have blazed, straight to the Supreme Goal.



India's supreme gift to the world is the knowledge of how to find God, through step-by-step methods. If you follow the Self-Realization teachings of India, you can find God in this life. This I declare unto you. Begin now, before the opportunity is lost and you are whisked away from this earth. While the world rushes along, knowing not where, waste not your time in shortsighted pursuits. Why chase after a little money or a little health? These are blind alleys. We appear to be so weak: something goes wrong and we collapse. But behind every bone and fiber, behind our every thought and volition, is the infinite spirit of God. Seek Him, and you shall attain complete victory. You will smile at the world with a smile from within, showing that you have found something far greater than material treasures.

### Instruction and Blessings From God-Realized Souls

**Truths in the Lessons  
Come From Divine  
Perception** These truths that you will be studying are not compiled from different books, but are the results of my direct experiences of Spirit during years of training with great masters—realized perceptions of the various steps and progressively higher states of consciousness that ultimately lead to union with God, the infinite Secret Indweller of the universe.

Most lecturers go to books or libraries for information and then pour those intellectually acquired but spiritually unrealized “inspirations” on others. Jesus and the masters of India, by contrast, went to the library of Cosmic Consciousness, and came back to impart to people by intuitional transmission the truths they perceived through their own realization.

Jesus Christ taught that you cannot remove the flaw from another’s eye unless you have first removed the flaw from your own. The Hindu scriptures say the same thing, that a spiritually blind leader cannot guide a spiritually blind seeker to the destination of supreme happiness, for both would stumble into pitfalls of ignorance and misery along the way.

That is why Self-Realization Fellowship points out that you will not reach your goal if you try to learn the ways of divine wisdom and God-contact from teachers who may be well-known for their inspirational speaking abilities but have not banished the ignorance of cosmic delusion from their inner and outer lives.

**SRF Lessons Link You  
With the Help and Bless-  
ings of the Masters** When your desire for God or Truth is in its initial state, you will find that God leads you to some spiritual books or teachers to help you on your way. But when words and intellectual teachings no longer satisfy your thirst to solve the mystery of life and understand the purpose of your existence, when you become deeply desirous to actually know God through personal contact, then by the divine magnetism of that heartfelt yearning God will draw unto you a true and complete teaching of spiritual training (*sadhana*) emanated by a master or a lineage of masters.

In *Autobiography of a Yogi* you will read, or perhaps you have read, about the great masters who are behind the Self-Realization Fellowship teachings. It was Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Swami Sri Yukteswar, in communion with Christ, who sent this teaching of Self-Realization, the Kriya Yoga highway to God, to America and thence to the world—so that all religionists may actually commune with God within themselves instead of having to be satisfied with mere

words or unproved beliefs.

By studying the *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons*, you are not taking an ordinary correspondence course—you are not connected merely with the printing machine of an organization out to make money. You are connected with a hierarchy of true masters of spiritual perception who are in communion with Jesus, Krishna, and God.

By following Self-Realization, you will better understand the religion you might have formerly pursued in vainly seeking the answer to the almost unsolvable enigma of life. Not only that, but you will be connected with the living link of masters who, being in touch with God, will help you to prove that you too, by proper effort, can come in contact with the Life of all lives, the Supreme Power of the universe, your own infinitely loving Heavenly Father-Mother-Friend-Beloved God.

If you form this secret inner link with the Masters through Self-Realization Fellowship studies, then you will also find—according to the depth of your attunement—divine protection, healing, bestowals of unending bliss, communion, and infinite wisdom in this life.

So do not start with superficial eagerness that does not last, but with calm, resolute, continued determination make Self-Realization teachings a part of your life. Then you will see a new light of perception and understanding glow within you. Earthly life, which is usually a valley of sorrow, will become a beautiful garden of your fulfilled dreams.

### A Seeker's Affirmation

- I will lead myself from theory to experience through Self-realization.
- I will lead myself from weakness to power.
- I will lead myself from fatigue to vigor.
- I will lead myself from ignorance to wisdom.
- I will lead myself from sickness to health.
- I will lead myself from death to immortality.
- I will lead myself from selfishness to benevolence.
- I will lead myself from discord to harmony.
- I will lead myself from earthly happiness to everlasting, ever new joy in God.

### "A Living Message of Truth"

[On June 10, 1934, Paramahansa Yogananda announced the inauguration of the Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons. Excerpts from his words on that occasion are presented here.\*]

This afternoon I hope you will give me your undivided and absolute attention, that you may understand the spiritual value of this occasion and respond spiritually, from your souls. I want to bring to you a living message of truth, so that you realize the necessity of knowing God *now*. Let this be your day of awakening!

Day and night for fourteen years<sup>†</sup> I have been thinking how to give to the students a continuous flood of that spiritual awakening which will assure they can never fall asleep again. Students in all parts of the country have asked, "Why don't you give more classes?" So I have planned to send weekly lessons to them. We have been working day and night to get them started.

Now I have done my part; it is up to you to do yours. If you will study these *Lessons* for at least half an hour every day, you will soon realize a new goal of happiness, inner awakening, and Self-realization that will forever shed light upon you so that you may live according to the highest standards of existence. You will feel God; you will see Him smiling in the stars and the blossoms; you will see Him templed within every human being and in every good thought and every love that you have.

My only purpose is to awaken God within you. As far as you want to go along the spiritual path, I can show you; and if you practice the techniques in these *Lessons* you will never feel stagnation in your progress.

So let this occasion be the awakening of a new life. Sleep no more! Awaken yourself and realize the powers of the Spirit. If you pore through these pages that come every week, you shall realize they are potent with the light of Self-realization.

By your own Self-realization you will be able to see the light of God in all true spiritual teachings; and, most important, you shall behold that light in the greatest way: in yourself. And wherever you go, that inner light of your own awakening shall silently radiate to establish the temple of God in the hearts of others. Whoever will come in contact with you will feel changed. You won't have to talk, for

---

\* The complete talk, titled "Man's Highest Achievement," will be published in Volume IV of Paramahansaji's *Collected Talks and Essays*.

† Paramahansaji founded his work in the United States in 1920. This talk was given in 1934. (*Editor's Note*)

they shall feel your love and purity.

Using these studies, and meditating regularly, you shall find such happiness, such answers to your problems! Don't be satisfied with words. Have actual experience of truth. Have Self-realization! Keep this living message in your breast. Do not listen half-heartedly and then forget. God cannot redeem you unless you make the effort to redeem yourself first. You must bring His consciousness into your own consciousness.

When you have understood by your own Self-realization the spiritual message given here, you will also realize that within these pages is the best that India has to offer. Theoretical theological teachings will seem as kindergarten studies to you, because in these *Lessons* you are receiving the highest truths of India's scriptures and the Bible, which have been hidden from the masses for centuries. Self-Realization Fellowship brings you the universal technique of salvation, the royal highway to the Infinite.

### Prayer

Heavenly Father, may Thy love shine forever on the sanctuary of my devotion, and may I be able to awaken Thy love in all hearts.

Heavenly Father, charge my body with Thy vitality, rid me of all weaknesses, charge my mind with Thy spiritual power, charge my soul with Thine immortality.

I shall sleep no more. I shall sleep no more. Through Self-realization within me, through the Masters and Guru, I shall find the emancipation which leads to Thee.

*Aum, Amen. Aum, Amen.*

# Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons

## ❖ Basic Series ❖

### List of Titles

<i>Introduction</i>	Highest Achievements Through Self-Realization
<i>Preface</i>	A Message of Welcome From Self-Realization Fellowship
<i>Lesson 1</i>	The Way to Self-realization
<i>Lesson 2</i>	Yoga: The Universal Science of Knowing God
<i>Lesson 3</i>	Meditation: How to Know God
<i>Lesson 4</i>	The Hong-Sau Technique: Yoga Science of Concentration
<i>Lesson 5</i>	Communing With God Through Prayer
<i>Lesson 6</i>	The Art of Energization (Parts 1 and 2)
<i>Lesson 7</i>	The Art of Relaxation: Doorway to Inner Silence
<i>Lesson 8</i>	Meditation on God as Aum
<i>Lesson 9</i>	God and His Universe: The Spiritual Genesis of Cosmic Creation
<i>Lesson 10</i>	The Cycles of Life and Death
<i>Lesson 11</i>	The Spinal Highway to the Infinite
<i>Lesson 12</i>	The Spiritual Eye
<i>Lesson 13</i>	Divine Laws of Health and Healing
<i>Lesson 14</i>	Preventive and Curative Techniques for Good Health
<i>Lesson 15</i>	The Art of Balanced Spiritual Living
<i>Lesson 16</i>	The Guru-Disciple Relationship
<i>Lesson 17</i>	Kriya Yoga Technique of God-Realization: Introduction
<i>Lesson 18</i>	The Self-Realization Way of Life

Copyright © 2019 Self-Realization Fellowship. All rights reserved.

*Note: This introduction, "Highest Achievements Through Self-Realization," may be freely shared with anyone interested, as long as it is kept in its original form with the SRF address and contact information intact.*

To receive information about enrolling for the *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons*, use the contact information below.

**Self-Realization Fellowship**  
3880 San Rafael Avenue  
Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.  
(323) 225-2471  
[www.yogananda.org](http://www.yogananda.org)



*The Spiritual Legacy of  
Paramahansa Yogananda*

