

Paramahansa Yogananda Mahasamadhi

Commemorative Service Reading

Volume I

Commemorative Service Readings

Please use the reading from the volume appropriate for the year in which you are reading. The volume number of the commemorative service readings must match the volume number of the Sunday service readings.

There are two colors of font — black and blue. Black indicates a section created by the reader as an introduction, transition, or summary. These may be altered to suit your reading style. Blue indicates material taken from an SRF sources, such as Autobiography of a Yogi, Mejda, Self-Realization Magazine, etc. These are not to be changed. If you find an error, please notify the chairperson of the readers' committee for correction.

At the end of quoted material there is usually the source and page number from which the material is taken. This is for your information only and is not to be read.

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Reading

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The passing of our Guru is described in the booklet *In Memoriam*. It reads as follows:

On March 7, 1952, the incarnation of Paramahansa Yogananda came to a perfect close. A life without blemish ended in Mahasamadhi (a yogi's final conscious exit from the body). Death took place at 9:30 p.m., a few moments after Paramahansaji had uttered the final words in a speech at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. Unstintingly he gave of himself to the very end, to the last breath of his life.

Born a Kshatriya (a member of the second Hindu caste, originally that of kings and warriors), Yoganandaji died as he had lived: a divine warrior against the chief foe of man — ignorance.

Paramahansaji's last days were literally and symbolically bound up with the visit to Los Angeles of the Ambassador of India at that time, Mr. Binay Ranjan Sen. The great guru could not go to India, so India — in the person of her highest foreign representative — came to the guru.

The last photograph of Yoganandaji, taken a few minutes before his death, shows the Ambassador's wife pronaming to him as he rose from his seat to go to the speaker's stand. By that last beautiful gesture, an Indian woman symbolized the respect of her nation for the man who,

more than any other son of India, made the perennial wisdom of the rishis known and loved in the West.

A letter from the Mortuary Director of Forest Lawn Memorial-Park testifies that Yoganandaji's body remained "in a phenomenal state of immutability." For weeks after the Master's passing, his unchanged face shone with the divine luster of incorruptibility. This miracle appears to have taken place through the grace of the Heavenly Father, that men might know the goodness of Yoganandaji's mission on earth. The beautiful phenomena attending Paramahansaji's death have aroused world interest in the soul-revealing possibilities of yoga.

Yoganandaji came to America to fulfill a specific mission, that of spreading in the West a knowledge of yoga techniques by which man can enter into conscious communion with his Creator. Paramahansaji was the last in a line of four gurus who were divinely inspired — directly commanded by God — to teach openly to the modern world the secret yogic science of self-liberation that was the glory of ancient India.

"....After my passing, " Paramahansaji said, "the SRF teachings will be the guru." By these words and in many other ways he indicated that the practical interest in yoga which he had initiated in the West would continue to grow after his death. Like all other men of God, Master did not emphasize the importance of his own personality but rather the necessity of one's own struggle to achieve the life beautiful.

" 'Divine union,' Lahiri Mahasaya proclaimed, 'is possible through self-effort, and is not dependent on theological beliefs or on the arbitrary will of a Cosmic Dictator.' Through use of the Kriya key, persons who cannot bring themselves to believe in the divinity of any man will behold at last the full divinity of their own selves."

During his last three years Paramahansaji withdrew more and more from public life in order to devote himself fully to literary work: editing and revision of his earlier books and the completion of new writings. Shortly before his death he said to a disciple: "My life work is done."

Great devotees of God, the Hindu scriptures tell us, are given forewarning of the time of their departure from this earth. A true yogi, unlike the unenlightened man, is never rudely surprised by Death. Yoganandaji had been aware of the general plan of his life ever since his youthful years with his omniscient guru, Sri Yukteswar. Master well knew his life would not be a long one. "I shall not live to be old," he told a disciple in 1924. (PP. 9-11)

Master wrote a poem entitled "I Offer Thee a Garland of Devotion." While I read this poem as a prayer, look with attention at the picture of Paramahansaji as though you yourself are addressing these words to our Guru.

Let the flowers of my devotion
Blossom in the garden of my heart,
With the dawn of Thy coming.
Let me weave a garland of them,
And place it at Thy feet. (*Whispers from Eternity*
P. 119)