

Paramahansa Yogananda Mahasamadhi

Commemorative Service Reading

Volume III

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.

Paramahansa Yogananda Mahasamadhi

Reading

Volume III

In her book *Finding the Joy Within You*, Sri Daya Mata writes of the passing of her guru, Paramahansa Yogananda as follows:

“Near the end of Gurudeva's life, he was preparing to receive the Indian ambassador, Dr. Binay R. Sen (who was to come the following morning to visit Guruji at our Self-Realization headquarters). Guruji called the disciples into the ashram kitchen and said, "Today we will prepare curries and Indian sweetmeats for the ambassador." We cooked all day long, and Guruji was in a state of great joy.

Late that evening, he called me to him and said, "Come, let us take a walk." The ashram is a large three-story building. As we walked down the third-floor hall, he paused in front of a picture of his guru, Swami Sri Yukteswarji. He gazed at that picture for a long time — eyes unblinking. And then very quietly he turned to me and said: "Do you realize that it is just a matter of hours and I will be gone from this earth?" Tears flooded my eyes. Intuitively, I knew that what he said was to come to pass. A short time earlier, when he spoke to me of leaving his body, I had cried to him, "Master, you are the diamond in the ring of our hearts, and of your society. How can we carry on, without you?" With such sweet love and compassion, his eyes like soft pools of divine bliss, he answered:

"When I am gone, only love can take my place. Be so drunk with the love of God that you will know nothing but God; and give that love to all."

On the final day, he was to speak at a banquet for the ambassador in downtown Los Angeles. We who served him arose in the early dawn and went to his door to see if we could do anything for him. As we entered, he sitting very quietly in the chair in which he frequently meditated and was often in ecstasy. When he didn't want us to talk, he would put his finger to his lips, meaning, "I am in silence." The moment he did that, I saw the withdrawal of his soul, that he was gradually severing each of the hidden ties that bind the soul to the body. Sorrow filled my heart, and yet strength too, because I knew that no matter what happened, through my devotion to him, my Guru would never leave my heart....

There was a large audience, which included city, state, and Government of India officials. I was sitting some distance from the speakers' table, but my mind and gaze never left the blessed Guru's face. Finally the time came for him to speak. Gurudeva was the last to do so before Ambassador Sen was to address the gathering. As Guruji rose from his chair, my heart skipped a beat and I thought, "Oh, this is that moment!"

When he began speaking, with such love for God, the whole audience was like one person; no one stirred. They were transfixed by the tremendous force of love that he was pouring from his heart upon all of them. Many lives were changed that night – including some who later entered the ashram as monastics and many others who became members of the society — because of that divine experience. His last words were of the India he loved so much: "Where Ganges, woods,

Himalayan caves, and men dream of God — I am hallowed; my body touched that sod."

As he uttered these words, he lifted his eyes to the *Kutastha* center and his body slumped to the floor. In an instant — our feet seemed not to touch the ground — two of us disciples were by his side. Thinking that he might have gone into *Samadhi*, we softly chanted *Aum* in his right ear. (Over the years he had told us that when he went into ecstasy, if after some time his consciousness did not return we could bring him out of that state by chanting "*Aum*" in his right ear.) As I was chanting, a miraculous experience took place. I do not know how to describe it to you, but as I knelt over my blessed Guru, I could see that his soul was leaving the body; and then a tremendous force entered my being. I say "tremendous" because it was an overwhelming blissful force of love, peace, and understanding. I remember thinking, "What is this?" My consciousness was lifted up in such a way that I could feel no sorrow. I could shed no tears; and it has been so from that day to this, because I know beyond any doubt that he is truly with me." (*Finding the Joy Within You*, PP. 254-7)

For those of us who did not have the sacred experience of Daya Mata, the question remains: Is Master truly with us in the same way?

Daya Mata has addressed this question. She says:

Let me assure you that there are no barriers between you and Master except those you put up in your own mind. Think of the example of St. Francis of Assisi. There could have been no greater disciple of Jesus than he, yet he was born twelve centuries after Christ. Master told us: Many true ones will come after I am gone. I know who they are, and they will know me.

Each of you, if you could but grasp it, has the blessed opportunity to reach the highest state of consciousness in this life. You *can* do it, and Guru is there silently to guide and help you. But you must do your part. Your part is regular meditation; and it is also to perform joyously all your duties — and to practice humility and cheerfulness and giving love in return for unkindness. Follow these precepts, and cultivate an inner companionship with that divine teacher to whom the Lord has drawn you; and you will know and feel the same sweet strength, the encouragement and guidance, the boundless love, that we felt flowing from the blessed Guru when he was incarnate here on earth.

Countless generations of disciples, inspired and uplifted by his life, will strive to walk faithfully in his guiding footsteps. These words of his will ring as truly then as they did on that day I heard him utter them: “To those who think me near, I will be near.”

Master promised that he will be with us always. This is beautifully express in his poem "When I Am Only a Dream." As a portion of this poem is read look with attention at the picture of Paramahansaji as though you yourself are addressing these thoughts to our guru:

...When you are able no longer to talk with me,
Read my *Whispers from Eternity*;
Eternally through it I will talk to you.
Unknown I will walk by your side
And guard you with invisible arms.
And as soon as you know my Beloved
And hear his voice in silence,
You will know me again more tangibly than you knew me
On this earth plane.

And yet when I am only a dream to you
I will come to remind you that you too are naught
But a dream of my Heavenly Beloved,
And when you know you are a dream, as I know now,
We will be ever awake in Him. (*In memoriam* P. 62)