

**Paramahansa Yogananda Birthday  
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.

# Paramahansa Yogananda Birthday

## Reading

### Volume I

Although we venerate this day, Master never looked upon it as a cause for celebration. It was many years after Master's arrival in America before the first celebration of his birthday was held in this country. Sri Daya Mata explains why: Master was so great and so humble: Even though elaborate ceremonies honoring the guru's birth are very much a part of the devotional traditions of India, it never occurred to Paramahansaji to expect from his followers these formal outer tributes. He had no wish to be extolled in any way; he wouldn't even disclose to us the date of his birth! It was only by accident that one of the disciples at Mt. Washington discovered that information. Some time after Guruji's return from his 1935-36 India trip, a letter from India was opened by Sailasuta Mata in which there was mention of the observance of Master's birthday at Ranchi on January 5<sup>th</sup>. She showed the letter to Master, but he was so shy about his birthday being celebrated that even then he told her not to say anything about it to anyone. "Besides," he countered, "how do you know they have the right day? Maybe they've got it wrong!" It wasn't until the visit of Master's youngest brother Bishnu in 1939 that we confirmed the January 5<sup>th</sup> birth date. (*Self-Realization* Winter 1993 P. 11)

In the *Autobiography of a Yogi* Master says little of his own birth, other than when and where it occurred. His younger brother Sananda Lal Ghosh gives us a better picture in his book *Mejda*, a biography of Master. Sananda relates the circumstances surrounding his older brother's birth as follows. He refers to master as Mejda, which means second son, and was the name commonly used within the family:

A room on the second floor of our home in Gorakhpur served as a lying-in room. It was here that Mejda's birth took place. Mejda was named Mukunda, a name by which the child Krishna is known.

Those present at the time of Mejda's birth said mother was having severe labor pains. She fervently cried out to her guru, Lahiri Mahasaya. Suddenly a celestial light filled the room, and from the concentrated rays in the center emerged the form of Lahiri Mahasaya. Mother's pain vanished instantly. The divine light continued to illumine the room till Mejda was born. (*Mejda P. 17*)

It was not long before the babe Mukunda met Lahiri Mahasaya. Master's mother relates the following story in a message to her son, which is recorded in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*:

"I carried you to the home of my guru in Banaras. Almost hidden behind a throng of disciples, I could barely see Lahiri Mahasaya as he sat in deep meditation.

"While I patted you, I was praying that the great guru take notice and bestow a blessing. As my silent devotional demand grew in intensity, he opened his eyes and beckoned me to approach. The others made a way for me; I bowed at the sacred feet. Lahiri Mahasaya seated you on his lap, placing his hand on your forehead by way of spiritually baptizing you.

“ ‘Little mother, thy son will be a yogi. As a spiritual engine, he will carry many souls to God’s kingdom.’” (P. 17)

This was Guruji’s purpose throughout life — to draw people to God. Daya Mata noted this when she said:

Master had a tremendous spiritual magnetism. For those who were receptive, merely to be in his presence was to feel the presence of God. He had made of himself a clear channel for the Divine, without any obstruction of personal desire or egotistical ambition for the adulation of a following. He had but one wish: to draw souls to his beloved God.

As Master told us again and again, that is the only purpose of a true guru — not to draw you to his personality, but to show you the way to God. Gurudeva used to say to us. “The way you can give me the greatest happiness is by being drunk with the love of God. I want to see you all so intoxicated with that love that day will pass into night and night into day, and still you will be inwardly singing joyously to my Divine Mother.” (*Self-Realization* Fall, 1993 p. 17)

Master wrote a prayer, which eloquently states his goal to lead others to God, to be that great spiritual engine prophesized by Lahiri Mahasaya. This is the prayer of Master, entitled *Prayers of a Master for His Disciples*. While excerpts from this prayer are read, look with attention at the picture of Paramahansaji as though you yourself are addressing the poem/prayer to our guru.

Father...As Thou has given me the will, strength,

And power

To bring other souls back to Thy grace —

Those who have wandered,

Brothers and sisters straying on the pathway

Of incarnations —

May Thy greatest blessing be  
That they remain constantly with Thee,  
In wakeful hours and in time of sleep and dreams;  
With Thee ever through eternity,  
And feeling Thy presence even in this dream

Of incarnations. (PP. 1,3)