



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

Paramhansa Yogananda's Journey to Self-Knowledge in
Autobiography of a Yogi

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of their knowledge system, Indian society has always emphasized spirituality as an important issue to discuss. Spirituality has been an important source of inspiration for philosophy, religion, psychology, and ethics throughout history. Spirituality has also affected Indian writers who have written in English, notably active novelists during the nationalist era. This study investigates Paramhansa Yogananda's journey to self-knowledge in his book "The Path of the Warrior *Autobiography of a Yogi*". This study not only demonstrates that the ego plays an important role in Indian spiritual practices, but it also demonstrates that writing, specifically writing about one's life, may be considered a spiritual activity. In the field of humanities study, the spiritual reading of texts is a relatively new endeavour; as a result, this dissertation provides some unique techniques and validations. In addition, being spiritual is not inherently anti-rational, even though its deductions and conclusions may be more reasonable than traditional ones. The investigation leaves room for fortuitous discoveries and discoveries that illuminate previously unknown connections.

Key Words: Spirituality, Self-Knowledge, Rationality, Autobiography, Indian Knowledge System.

Introduction:

People worldwide have long been drawn to India by its reputation as a spiritual centre. Since the 19th century, the world has become increasingly capitalistic and materialist, which has led to an increase in the intensity of the search for spirituality to provide a counterbalance to material culture. The Western world began to regard the traditional Indian way of life as an example to follow, contributing to the expansion of spiritualism. For many centuries, India has been home to a diverse range of civilizations and religions, many of which have managed to thrive alongside one another. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, and Sikhism are just a few of the religions that have contributed importantly to the Indian form of spiritualism. Throughout Indian civilization, several spiritual gurus and yogis have disseminated teachings on topics including peace, self-awareness, fraternity, and coexistence at various times. Under the protection of India's many religions, traditional spiritual practices such as Yoga and Ayurveda have been vital to the country's spiritual tradition's development and continued existence. The concepts of compassion, caring, and good living have inspired the establishment of several ashrams and other types of spiritual centres throughout India in recent decades. Respect for all life forms, including humans, animals, trees, and other invertebrates and vertebrates, is essential to Indian spirituality. In addition to this, it shows reverence for rocks, air, soil,



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and fire. In this sense, eco-spirituality has always been consistent with the Indian spirituality practised for centuries. According to the beliefs that underpin Indian spirituality, the all-powerful deity who created the human race did so with the explicit intention that we would treat one another with kindness and consideration. This mission's message has been disseminated worldwide by a significant number of Indian spiritual leaders and gurus, who have all played an essential part.

The term religious or spiritual Many people think of spiritual activity as being similar to the action of Atmajnana or breathing. This similarity may imply that spirit was originally connected to respiration. Some Western philosophers who are familiar with Indian thinking have suggested that spiritualism, Neoplatonism, and pantheism all connect to one another.

Paramahansa Yogananda- An Indian Yogi:

Through his organization, the Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, the Indian Yogi known as Paramahansa Yogananda, also known as Mukund Lal Ghosh, was crucial in introducing millions of people, both Indians and Westerners, to the practices of meditation and Kriya Yoga. His well-known book on the spiritual path, titled *Autobiography of a Yogi*, was first released in 1946. The list of the one hundred finest spiritual books written in the 20th century that HarperCollins Publishers compiled included this work among its entries. It is well-known that this book has had a profound impact on the lives of a large number of people and that it has been frequently republished. Mukund Lal, who was brought into the world in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, to a family of devoted Hindus, has had a lifelong fascination with Hindu religious figures ever since he was a youngster. Meeting his Guru, Swami Yuktेश्वर Giri, when he was seventeen years old was a defining moment in his life and led to profound personal growth. After completing his intermediate exams, he graduated from Serampore College with a degree comparable to that of a Bachelor of Arts. Later, he established a school for boys in Dihika, West Bengal, where he integrated contemporary educational practices, yoga instruction, and spiritual principles into the curriculum.

In 1920, Swami Yogananda travelled to the United States to attend an International Congress of Religious Liberals held in Boston. He did so in his capacity as India's ambassador to the Congress. In the same year, he established The Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF), an organization with the mission of spreading yoga, both as a practice and as a philosophy. He also did a lot of travelling with his talks and teachings, which resulted in his gathering many disciples. In addition to that, he established a fellowship at the International



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Centre for Self-Realization in Los Angeles. In 1935, Swami Yogananda embarked on a journey back to India to assist his Guru, Yukteshwar Giri, establish Yogoda Satsanga. During this tour, he met with Mahatma Gandhi and instructed Mahatma Gandhi in practising Kriya Yoga. During this time, he was granted the monastic title of Paramahansa, which translates to "the supreme swan" and denotes the highest level of accomplishment.

In 1936, Yogananda relocated back to the United States, where he continued his career as a lecturer and author. Most of his life was spent in solitary confinement at the desert Ashram he maintained in California. During this time, He focused mostly on his writing and gave fewer talks than before. His fall occurred on March 7, 1952, after he had given a speech at a banquet planned for an Indian Ambassador to the United States. The official cause of death was heart failure; nevertheless, his disciples claimed he had reached the Mahasamadhi. The Autobiography of a Yogi was first published in 1946 and is a life narrative by Paramahansa Yogananda. After that, it was translated into forty-five different languages.

Autobiography of a Yogi - His Journey to Self-Knowledge:

This book provides an account of Yogananda's spiritual search, his interactions with spiritual leaders, and the experiences of spiritual illuminations that he experienced throughout his life. The book is titled Autobiography of a Yogi. These narratives reflect his interactions with spiritual leaders and intellectuals such as Therese Newmann, Anand Mai Maa, Vishuddhanand Paramahansa, Gandhiji, Rabindranath Tagore, Luther Burbank, Jagdish Chandra Bose, and C.V. Raman. In addition, these narratives describe Therese Newmann. The Autobiography of a Yogi has motivated many individuals, including George Harrison, Pandit Ravi Shankar, and Steve Jobs, among others.

There are 49 chapters in it, and they cover everything from his early beginnings up until 1951, including information about people and locations along the way. A common spiritual theme ties together all life events described in it. It is about spiritual life in the very first phrase of the autobiography, and it establishes the tone for the verities and the accompanying disciple (AY 03).

A body in and of itself, the loss of which terminates his identity. However, if the prophets of previous millennia spoke the truth, a man's basic nature is that of a soul. AY 04) was born on January 5, 1893, in the city of Gorakhpur, located in northeastern India, close to the Himalayas. It was there that I spent the first eight years of my life. There were four males and four girls in our group of eight youngsters. I, AY 04).



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Yogananda strongly emphasizes his parents' harmonious relationship's role in his overall growth. He believes a harmonious relationship between parents is essential to spiritual growth. A flawless parental harmony served as the still point at the centre of the whirling chaos that was eight-year-old AY 04).

The author of the autobiography tells how he was initiated into extremely Mahabharata and the Ramayana fitting tales to fulfil the necessities of discipline in the first chapter of the autobiography (found on these pages AY 04).

Charity is another important lesson that Yogananda acquires from his parents. As a kid, he was affected by his father's renunciation practices and non-materialistic approach to pursuing happiness. He uses the example of his father, who did not want his social work to be influenced by his financial situation. Hence he did not want his father to have shares in a bank.

The author also explores the spiritual heritage that his father had acquired as a disciple of Lahiri Mahashaya. This portion of the discussion may be found in the second paragraph. In addition to that, he discusses the fact that his father was a Kriya Yoga practitioner. The writer used to find inspiration in the image taken by Lahiri Mahasaya. Hence the photographer might be considered an influence on the writer as well. He claims that the sage's mystic presence affected his life and that Yogananda had miraculously recovered when he became sick as a youngster. He was able to recover from cholera, which had the potential to take his life, by focusing on how a light emanating from the image cured his nausea and other symptoms of sickness.

According to the author, he could recognize his spiritual leanings and fascination with gurus even as a little boy. He also recalls the words of Lahiri Mahasaya to an image, which has a lect the all-encompassing AY by expressing that he experienced a life-altering spiritual vision which leads him to a profound reverie. He says that the photograph has a lect the all-encompassing AY.

The narrator describes how he was inducted into different religious and spiritual systems. He recalls how his early life was inspired by a Goddess when his family moved to Lahore, where he had built up a little shrine on the balcony of their apartment. He says that the Goddess taught him how to be brave. His devotion to Kali begins at this moment, and he recalls the pull of divinity that he used to sense very early on in his life when on the balcony, which has now become the sacred location. His fascination with the Himalayas and his yearning for spirituality are two sides of the same coin.



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Swami Yogananda believes that G cannot be opposed in any way. He uses a poetic phrase to demonstrate how love for God may be found even in discourses. He observes that listening to the talk was similar to listening to his private thoughts and feelings. To illustrate the power of spiritual speech, he employs the metaphor of an avalanche.

Swami additionally asserts that the spirituality and yogic force that he possesses are traits that were passed down to him from his father. After his relationship with me came to an end with your mother (AY 17), he recalls that his father refused any assistance from a female following the breakup. When he vows that he will not have any intercourse with any other lady for the rest of his life, his eyes go distant with an everlasting dedication.

The endeavour to find God. Young Mukunda obtains the amulet and the word from the great ones to serve as the guiding principles of his talisman. He is expected to get it around the time he will be prepared to renounce all (AY 18).

Swami Yogananda connects his desire to see the world and his deep interest in spirituality. He recalls that he would travel even when he was a little lad, which indicates his desire to gain experience and relates to AY 21).

Swami Pranabananda, from whom he learns how to enjoy retirement to its fullest potential. As a reward for many years of intense meditation, Pranabananda offers a fresh interpretation of the phrase "pension of fathomless peace." I no longer have any desire for money. All of my limited material requirements are met in abundance. You will have an understanding of the relevance at a later time (AY 22).

Another holy man Yogananda had the opportunity to converse with is Kedarnath Babu. He explains to Yogi why he would never go to a place such as Calcutta and abandon the sacred city of Banaras. He says he will not leave Banaras for a job or a pension; both things are unimportant to him. He makes it seem like a yogi has no desire for material things by suggesting I accept a job at the Calcutta office of the railway company he works for. How delightful it must be to anticipate receiving at least one of Swami Pranabananda's pensions! But that will not happen; I will not be leaving Banaras. Unfortunately, there are not yet two bodies found. (AY, 27).



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Yogananda says that he has had a fascination with the Himalayas ever since he was a child. During one of his excursions in the Himalayas, the holy man explains why leather goods are inappropriate for a journey of this nature. Because leather goods are the byproduct of the slaughter of animals, he acquires the environmentally and animal-friendly message that he should avoid using any item made of leather.

His father instilled a love of religion and philosophy by providing him with philosophical and religious teachings, which fueled his child's spiritual aspirations.

When Yogananda is in the same room as another teacher named Kebalananda, he senses the presence of divinity. He describes how such a sensation suddenly comes over him, combined with the yearning to meditate at the feet of his Guru and a scent similar to lotus blossoms. He also describes how the flowering of inner calm occurs during this time.

Terms about Kriya. When I am no longer physically there in the body to instruct you on yoga key, its effectiveness will not be diminished in any way. This method cannot be limited, filed away, and ignored like theoretical impulses may be. Never stop progressing toward your freedom goal through the practice of Kriya (whose Sanskrit pronunciation is AY 38).

In addition, Kebalananda used a fruitful metaphor taken from agriculture to talk about faith. This metaphor combines dedication with the function of the Guru, with the student representing the soil after it has been tilled.

After some time has passed, Yogananda comes into contact with swami Vishuddhananda, who is also referred to as a Perfume Saint. He understands the meaning of adoration from the holy man in terms of prana, also known as breathing. He mentions him, and the visible guy, who seems to be possessed of none, is frequently perplexing! On the other hand, inventiveness is comparable to the labyrinth. Investigating one's consciousness will quickly reveal the similarity of all human minds. AY, 43).

Swami Vishuddhananda is well known for his philosophy on prana, which refers to the vital force that stimulates one's senses. The yoga practice that depends on such small sub-atomic energies and the rearranging of their vibrating structures is something that Yogananda talks about in this chapter. He claims that yoga may hypnotically induce sensations inside the body.



Another holy man that Yogananda encounters is the Tiger Swami, who elucidates the significance of the symbolic The attack of a royal Bengal has reduced a great number of men, despite their enormous strength, to a state of absolute helplessness on more than one occasion. As a result, the tiger has convinced a man with a relatively powerful physique and an extremely strong will to turn the tables on the tiger and compel it to a conviction that it is defenceless like a pussycat. How many times have I been guilty of doing just that? (AY 51)

Yogananda also gains an understanding of the complex relationship that exists between the body and the mind. This knowledge is essential to the process of freeing the body from the material and emotional constraints that bind it:

The mind is responsible for actually building and maintaining the body. The pressure of instincts from previous lifetimes causes a person's talents or deficiencies to gradually trickle into their conscious awareness. They exhibit themselves as habits, which materialize as a body that is either attractive or unwanted. The mind is the source of outward infirmity, but the habit-bound body works against the mind, creating a vicious cycle. When a master submits to being directed by a servant, the latter ascends to the position of an autocrat. Similarly, when the intellect submits to the dictation of the body, it becomes enslaved. (AY 52)

Swami Yogananda receives instruction from the Tiger Swami on the hidden aspects of the human mind that may be uncovered through yoga. He recalls that this essential message of Atma-Jnana would instruct you on how to tame the wild monsters of ignorance that stalk the jungles of the mind of a human being. You are (AY 58).

Due to another significant lesson from Bhaduri Mahasaya, Swami Yogananda comes to comprehend the significance of the management of breath concerning the awakening of higher consciousness. Citing Bhaduri Mahasaya, he describes how one might access their oversoul, also known as their atma. The Bhastrika Pranayama, which creates a sensation in the chamber similar to a storm and brings the yogis to a state of superconsciousness, is one of the techniques used. According to the author, Mahashaya can produce lucid dreams of the storm and the lasting tranquillity that follows it.



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Yogananda also elucidates the practice that allows yogis to resist the natural order of gravity and remain suspended in the air. Because he attributes this capacity to intensive kriya yoga practice, he possesses a power that may bestow it upon yogis.

Yogananda picks up some tips on how to beat old age from Bhaduri Mahasaya, including that the latter can still take lotus pose despite being in his seventies and showing no signs of senility.

Additionally, Bhaduri Mahasaya teaches Yogananda the fundamentals of the faith that they both share. He emphasizes the spiritual dimension of believing, making it very obvious that troubled believers are content with their exterior security even while the wounds of their thoughts are still visible on their foreheads. According to the master, the creator would look after true followers in need.

On the way to spiritual enlightenment, it is vital to understand the meaning of the term "anubhava," which translates to "experience." Yogananda believes his eagerness to achieve anubhava has transformed him into a pilgrim. He also receives guidance from Bhaduri Mahasaya, who tells him to travel to the United States to spread Indian spirituality to noble-hearted people from other countries.

Yogananda is another person who believes in the transformative power of poetry. During the course of a discussion about the relative merits of poetry and science, J.C. Bose enlightens him on how scientists use poetry. The latter informs him that the poet and the scientist are both engaged in a search for the truth and that the only difference between them is their techniques; the goal is the same.

Conclusion:

Thus, Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi* becomes a true record of the spiritual life that the writer led when it was written. It also details the situations in which he experienced glimpses of God when he was with his Guru and while doing Kriya Yoga. These experiences occurred while he was with his Guru. It also denotes the moments of spiritual self-awakening, also known as Atma-Jnana, which occur during the most concentrated periods of meditation and yoga.



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