

SRF's FAQ

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What is yoga?

The word yoga means "union" of the individual consciousness or soul with the Universal Consciousness or Spirit. While yoga today has many different branches and is often practiced in its simplest physical forms, the deepest practice of yoga is aimed at uniting the individual soul with the Infinite.

What type of yoga do you teach?

Paramahansa Yogananda taught the path of *Raja Yoga*, which includes the practice of definite, scientific methods of meditation — known as Kriya Yoga — that enable one to perceive from the very beginning of one's efforts, glimpses of the ultimate goal — union of soul with Spirit. The Kriya Yoga path also embodies a complete philosophy and way of life. Through the practice of Kriya Yoga, one is able to calm the mental and physical processes so that one's consciousness, freed from limitations, can realize the bliss and omnipresence of God.

Do the SRF teachings include practice of *Hatha Yoga* postures?

While the SRF Lessons do not include instruction in the *asanas*, or postures, of *Hatha Yoga*, Paramahansa Yogananda encouraged their practice as very beneficial.

How can I learn more about Kriya Yoga and study the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda?

We suggest you read our free literature piece, *Undreamed-of Possibilities*, and, if you haven't already, Paramahansa Yogananda's spiritual classic, *Autobiography of a Yogi*. If



you are interested in studying the teachings of Sri Yogananda, you can apply for the *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons*.

What do the *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons* consist of?

The *SRF Lessons* are an in-depth home-study series which provide Paramahansa Yogananda's step-by-step instruction in his Yoga methods, including the Kriya Yoga science of meditation, as well as a whole range of subjects conveying his "How-to-Live" teachings.

How can I realize my spiritual goals when my responsibilities in the world take up so much of my time?

Paramahansa Yogananda well understood the challenges of those who have numerous and time-consuming responsibilities. He taught a path of balanced living that combines meditation and right activity. You will find that his teachings are wonderfully practical and give guidance on many topics relevant to your daily pursuits, including family and work responsibilities. Most of all, they teach how you can bring God — and the all-fulfilling joyous contact with Him — into all your activities. It is helpful to establish a schedule, setting aside a certain amount of time each day for practicing the spiritual methods of SRF. It is not only the length of time, but the sincerity and depth of effort with which you practice that will bring a sense of inner connection with God.

How do I know if I am making spiritual progress?

Spiritual development is a gradual process. The surest signs are the positive changes that take place within us: an increasing sense of well-being and security, calmness, joy, deeper understanding, release from bad habits, and a growing love and desire for God. Paramahansa Yogananda said that perseverance is the whole magic of spiritual success. Sometimes those who are making the greatest progress have few or no spiritual experiences as "evidence." In fact, it is often when we are steadfastly making spiritual effort and courageously facing life's daily challenges that we are making the greatest progress — even if we are not aware of a tangible response from God. True advancement is reflected more in our day-to-day conduct, thoughts, and actions than in visions or other experiences.

What is SRF's perspective on marriage and same-sex unions?

Self-Realization Fellowship has always welcomed persons of any gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religious background to study the SRF Lessons, become SRF members, learn all the SRF techniques of meditation, and attend our temple services in a spirit of divine friendship, harmony, and seeking God together. The marriage vows that Paramahansa Yogananda wrote are integral with his teachings on the deeper purpose of spiritual marriage. [Read more.]



May I also continue other spiritual studies and techniques while practicing those of SRF?

Paramahansa Yogananda welcomed those of every faith as students of his teachings. He explained that the results of practicing the scientific methods of yoga he taught come not from accepting a particular belief system, but from direct personal experience of God. He did caution, however, that combining spiritual techniques of different paths produces diluted results. Steadfastly following a single path and applying its prescribed methods will take you most quickly to your spiritual goal.

Students who are already following a given faith — attending church, temple, or mosque services with other family members, for example — may of course continue to participate in such forms of worship if they wish. Many persons of different religions have found great benefit, and enhancement of their own faith, by practicing the methods given in the *SRF Lessons*. (Those students who wish to dedicate themselves wholly to the SRF path may formally take this step by receiving Kriya Yoga, after fulfilling the requirements for this sacred initiation.)

Do you offer classes in meditation?

The way we recommend to learn meditation is by enrolling for the *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons*. This in-depth home-study series was compiled from the classes given by Paramahansa Yogananda during his lifetime. The *SRF Lessons* provide his detailed, step-by-step instruction in the Kriya Yoga science of meditation, as well as a whole range of subjects conveying his "How-to-Live" teachings.

In addition, Self-Realization Fellowship has more than 500 temples and centers located throughout the world where members come together for group practice of meditation and inspirational services. Most of our temples (in California, and in Phoenix, Arizona) offer a weekly Introduction to Meditation class.

Each year, SRF conducts a tour program which includes classes on meditation and "How-to-Live" classes at selected centers worldwide. We also hold an annual Convocation in Los Angeles, a comprehensive week-long program of classes and talks on the yoga meditation teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda.

When may I receive Kriya Yoga?

Paramahansa Yogananda asked that students complete the first two steps of the *SRF Lessons* (approximately one year of study), and practice regularly and correctly for at least six months the basic techniques taught during the first year which help prepare the student for the advanced method of Kriya itself. The preliminary period of study and practice also provides the opportunity to deepen your understanding of Paramahansaji's



teachings, and to determine if you want to enter into the sacred guru-disciple relationship.

Does one need to have a living guru in order to progress spiritually?

Paramahansa Yogananda explained that all true gurus are living, whether or not they are in a physical body. He said, "Their consciousness is attuned to their disciples, whether or not all are living on the same plane. One of the essential qualities and manifestations of a true guru is omnipresence." Paramahansa Yogananda himself continues to help and bless all who turn to him for spiritual guidance.

Has anyone succeeded Paramahansa Yogananda in the line of SRF Gurus?

Before his passing, Paramahansaji stated it was God's wish that he be the last in the Self-Realization Fellowship line of Gurus. "When I am gone," he said, "the teachings will be the guru; Through the teachings you will be in tune with me and the great Gurus who sent me." Therefore no later disciple will ever assume the role or title of a guru according to Paramahansa Yogananda. This divine ordinance is not unique in religious history. After the passing of Guru Nanak, the great saint who founded the Sikh religion in India, there was the usual succession of gurus. The tenth guru in the line announced he was to be the last of that line of gurus, and henceforth the teachings were to be considered the guru. Paramahansaji gave the assurance that he would continue to work through the society he founded, Self-Realization Fellowship/Yogoda Satsanga Society of India.

Who is the current head of SRF/YSS?

The current president of SRF/YSS is Sri Mrinalini Mata, one of Paramahansa Yogananda's closest disciples and who serves as his spiritual successor. "There will always be at the head of this organization men and women of realization," Paramahansaji said. "They are already known to God and the Gurus. They shall serve as my spiritual successor and representative in all spiritual and organizational matters."

