Voluntary League Appeal

Winter 2017/2018

“To the world God speaks only through His enlightened devotees. Therefore, the wisest of all actions is to tune in with the will of the guru who is sent to you by the Lord as a response to your soul’s desire. He is not a guru who is self-proclaimed as such; he is a guru who is asked by God to bring others back to Him. When there is a little spiritual desire, the Lord sends books and teachers to further inspire you; and when your desire is stronger, he sends a real guru.”

—Paramahansa Yogananda

Dear Friend,

Many years ago, when Paramahansa Yogananda established the Voluntary League Appeal, he envisioned a worldwide group of devoted friends who would assist in this divine work entrusted to him by God and the line of Self-Realization Fellowship Gurus. The Voluntary League Appeal continues to this day with the purpose of keeping you abreast of important developments and providing a way to actively support Paramahansaji’s Aims and Ideals and the Self-Realization Fellowship work that he began.

In the enclosed Appeal we would like to share with you news of the progress that has been made on some of the projects your generous support has recently helped bring to fruition — such as the renovation and retrofit of the Gyanamata Ashram at the SRF International Headquarters, and the Golden Lotus Archway at the SRF Lake Shrine — as well as mention current ways in which your support is vitally needed.

We also want to give you an update on the progress of the purchase and installation of the new press and bindery equipment for the Publications Center that was the focus of our last Voluntary League Appeal (Summer 2017). This equipment is vitally needed to print the new expanded edition of the SRF Lessons — a coming milestone in the history of Paramahansaji’s mission to disseminate Kriya Yoga to the world. Although your generous response to our last Appeal has helped tremendously, we are still in need of a significant amount of additional donations in order to reach our goal for this important project.

A story from our Guru’s early years in America illustrates just how important donations from our members and friends have been ever since the inception of his work. Paramahansaji recalled:

In the early days of the Mt. Washington Center, a mortgage payment was due; but we had no money in the bank. I prayed very deeply, telling the Lord: “The welfare of the organization is in Thy hands.” The Divine Mother appeared before me. She said in English:

“I am your stocks and bonds; I am your security.”

A few days later I received in the mail a large donation for the Center.

Today the Voluntary League Appeal provides a similar opportunity to be instruments of the Divine in supporting the most pressing needs of the Guru’s work. Your continued generosity...
enables us to increasingly serve Paramahansaji’s worldwide family and spread his life-transforming teachings around the globe.

Your assistance is essential for:

• Preserving, for the benefit of hundreds of thousands of annual visitors, the places where our Guru lived and communed with God

• Disseminating Paramahansaji’s soul-awakening teachings through the SRF Lessons and other publications

• Supporting the SRF monastic order that Guruji founded to serve his spiritual family for generations to come

• Meeting the needs of many other aspects of our Guru’s ongoing divine mission

For the kindness and generosity with which you assist the Self-Realization Fellowship work — through your prayers and through your financial assistance — we deeply thank you. We treasure all that you give from the love and caring of your souls to help bring Paramahansaji’s message to present and future generations of truth-seekers everywhere.

In divine friendship,

Mother Center

SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP
Mother Center
Help Still Needed to Fund New Printing and Bindery Equipment

In our previous VL Appeal we shared our plan to upgrade our printing and bindery equipment; and how our current decades-old machines are worn out, with replacement parts almost impossible to find. As Brother Chidananda announced at the 2017 SRF World Convocation, the new expanded edition of the SRF Lessons are planned for release in 2018. The new digital equipment will be necessary to make this possible—and will also improve our capacity to produce many of SRF’s other publications—bringing the SRF printing operation into the 21st century. Thanks to your very generous donations over the past two months, we have received over half of the $4.5 million that is needed.

Since we last wrote to you, monks and employees at SRF’s Publication Center have been busy with extensive preparatory work. Plans are underway to upgrade the infrastructure of our current printing facility so it can accommodate the modern digital equipment, such as installing additional cooling units, upgrading the electrical network, and reviewing a system to minimize dust in the sensitive printing environments. Part of the process included in-person research at various manufacturers in Europe and the United States to test equipment that could suit SRF’s current and future needs. We are now confident we have found solutions that will be productive and efficient.

The replacing of SRF’s printing and bindery equipment is a tremendously important project needed for the furthering of Paramahansaji’s ongoing spiritual mission. As soon as the financial means are in place, we will begin to materialize this upgrade. Please give what you can for this noble endeavor.

Visit www.yogananda-srf.org/appeal for a slideshow of the current and proposed equipment.

Proposed new equipment:

- Black and white printer to produce the text for the various books and booklets
- Digital color press for the new Lessons, book covers, magazines, and all other color work
- Automated inserter for Lessons and other mailings
- Automated assembly line that will cut, fold, collate, assemble, and stitch together the printed sheets into booklets, magazines, Lessons, etc.
- Book binder to create paperback editions of the SRF publications
Renovation of Golden Lotus Archway at Lake Shrine Completed

Thanks to your support, we recently finished work on the Golden Lotus Archway — the iconic symbol of the SRF Lake Shrine since its dedication by Paramahansa Yogananda in 1950. The renovation this year included repairing and waterproofing the structure, repainting the large lotuses (see photo, top right), replacing the stucco and tiles (see photo, bottom right), protecting the structure from termite infestations, and other necessary preservation work.

Because of the enthusiastic work of monastics, devotees, and contractors alike, the Golden Lotus Archway renovation was completed in time for the 2017 Convocation. Hundreds of pilgrims enjoyed the inspiring sight of this wall-less temple in its original glory, just as did those who were present when our Guru first unveiled it sixty-seven years ago.

However, a few last touches still remain to be completed — including the enhancement of the landscaping around the Golden Lotus Archway and the Mahatma Gandhi World Peace Memorial — making it even more welcoming and beautiful for the more than 120,000 visitors each year who come to imbibe the peace and tranquility that permeate the grounds.

Visit www.yogananda-srf.org/appeal for a slideshow of the completed renovation.

A major milestone has been reached at the SRF Lake Shrine: Through your continued generosity over the past decade, three of the Lake Shrine’s iconic structures — the Golden Lotus Archway, the Houseboat, and the Windmill Chapel — have been fully restored and now serve devotees from around the world in their pristine beauty!
Nuns’ Ashram Retrofit Complete

Five years after its inception, the retrofit of the Gyanamata Ashram at Mother Center has now been completed. Home to the majority of the SRF nuns who serve our Guru’s worldwide work, the large ashram building received many necessary improvements and safety upgrades and is now better able to withstand the force of an earthquake.

The ashram retrofit entailed eliminating weak points in the structure by adding large wooden shear panels inside the walls; incorporating stronger beams that better support the four-story building; and installing “seismic tie-downs” that keep the building from shifting during an earthquake. In addition, for greater energy efficiency, better insulation and LED lighting were installed. Also, the chapel and other areas of the monastic quarters — which date from the ashram’s construction under the guidance of Sri Daya Mata fifty years ago — were given necessary repairs and improvements.

(Top left) New stronger beams provide better support in the event of an earthquake. (Top right) Concrete pour in the Gyanamata Ashram courtyard. (Middle left) SRF monks build a new altar for the Gyanamata Ashram Chapel. (Middle right) The finished altar. (Bottom left) Large wooden shear panels help to fortify the building. (Bottom right) The retrofit is now complete thanks to your help.
Thank You Letter From the Nuns in the Gyanamata Ashram

“It gives us great joy to have this opportunity to thank each one of you who contributed so generously for the upgrades in the Gyanamata Ashram. It was a very long and involved project—and as always many challenges had to be faced—but every step of the way was so lovingly planned and perfectly executed. Now that the ashram has been restored we join as one chorus in saying how grateful we are to enjoy the many benefits our improved ashram offers us. How touched we are to feel so well cared for by you all who gave of your own resources to help us.

“First, to know that we are no longer at risk if an earthquake should occur and that our ashram is now well fortified and protected is of great comfort. And all the facilities to serve our everyday needs with their practical features are so much appreciated, enabling us to function with greater ease and efficiency.

“We remember you in our daily prayers with deepest gratitude for what you’ve done—and continue to do—to serve our beloved Master’s work, his monastic family, and his worldwide family of disciples. Jai Guru! Jai Ma!”

Your Help Is Vital

To all of you who give to this work with your love, prayers, and material assistance, we send our deepest thanks—for it is your caring and generosity that enable us to serve the many souls around the world who are guiding their lives by Paramahansa Yogananda’s teachings.

Your gifts help Self-Realization Fellowship meet the various costs that come with serving our Guru’s global family with his teachings and spirit: telephone bills, postage, inspirational offerings via our website, printing of free literature, ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the various facilities and sacred grounds that both serve our members and house our monastics, and countless other expenses that are part of making possible the many spiritual services that uplift and encourage those in need.

From Our President:
An Assurance of Our Divine Roles

All of us play a vital part in advancing this God-given mission of Paramahansa Yogananda, by initiating spiritual actions in our own lives. Our Guru said that spiritual effort produces the greatest benefit to ourselves, to others, and to the world.

Brother Chidananda, SRF president, recently offered these inspiring and encouraging words about the divine roles that we are here to enact on earth as disciples of Guruji:

Out of the millions in this world, we have all been drawn to Master’s teachings and to play a role in making it possible for other sincere souls to benefit from his life-transforming message. Each of us is needed for that endeavor. Guruji would sometimes say, “Here is my hand, with my five fingers. This finger cannot take the place of that finger, and that one cannot take the place of the next. I need all of them to do my work. Each one of you has his rightful place in my heart, and in the love of God.” In the same way, he values us all.

There is no greater role in the Self-Realization work than to be a true disciple of Gurudeva—one who follows with devotion and loyalty the sadhana he has given. If all of us seek to carry out that role to the best of our ability with humility and love, we will grow in attunement with the Guru, and gain increasing wisdom and strength to do his will. May God and Master bless us in our united resolve to please Them in every way, and to help other sincere souls discover their true divine Self.

In practicing and supporting these teachings, always remember that you are joining forces with a worldwide spiritual family in furthering this great spiritual movement. Your spiritual effort, and active assistance, helps to support and nourish the spiritual lives of many people throughout the world who hunger for Truth, and together our cumulative efforts help to uplift the world at large.