Voluntary League Appeal
Spring 2018

Dear Friend,

We would like to share with you the wonderful news that, as a result of the loving generosity of many SRF members and friends like you, we are moving steadily nearer to the release of a greatly expanded and enhanced edition of the Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons. The outpouring of financial assistance and prayer by so many has deeply inspired us in our efforts to accomplish this major milestone in Paramahansa Yogananda’s mission.

One significant step forward was taken with the recent purchase of new digital printing equipment to replace our antiquated offset printing system. The new equipment is vital not only to the printing and distribution of the upcoming new edition of the Lessons but also for numerous other books and publications in the decades ahead. Our enclosed newsletter offers more about this exciting initiative, including the remodeling that is needed at our printing facility in order to install the new equipment.

In this appeal you’ll also read about another essential aspect of disseminating Paramahansa’s teachings: translation of his writings. As more and more people around the globe are turning to the works of Paramahansa Yogananda for spiritual guidance and instruction, we continue to expand our collection of translated editions to help meet this growing interest. One recent notable achievement was the publication of the fiftieth translation of Autobiography of a Yogi, and more are soon to come.

Another facet of Self-Realization Fellowship’s stewardship of Paramahansa Yogananda’s legacy made possible by your help consists of maintaining the beautiful meditation gardens he established at the SRF Mother Center, the Lake Shrine, and Encinitas Ashram Center. Our newsletter gives some insights into the important role of these meditation gardens, whose tranquil beauty—blessed by the presence of Paramahansa—provides thousands each year with the opportunity to experience soul peace.

Your contribution to our Voluntary League Appeal will help further all these activities plus the numerous other daily expenses of our Guru’s international spiritual society. 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 whose lives are guided by Paramahansa Yogananda’s teachings. May God and the SRF Gurus bless you for your personal interest in this divine work.

In divine friendship,

The Mother Center
Release of New Edition of the SRF
Lessons on Schedule

Due to a tremendous outpouring of support in the past several months, the anticipated release of the new edition of the Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons in 2018 is looking more and more attainable. This assistance has allowed us to purchase the major new equipment needed to print the Lessons (and many other publications), including a new five-color printer; a black and white printing press; and folding, stitching, and trimming machines.

To accommodate the new equipment, we must make a number of modifications to the SRF Publications Center, where our Guru’s teachings are printed for worldwide distribution. The work that needs to be done is significant:

- Upgrade the electrical system and the compressed-air input system
- Install new air-conditioning units to manage the increased heat load generated by the new machines and keep them at optimum temperatures during the hot Los Angeles summers
- Install a large vacuum system to remove paper trimmings, allowing the bindery equipment to run without interruptions

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• Upgrade the smoke alarm protection system
• Add new equipment for safely moving the heavy rolls of paper that will be used with the new printer
• Install humidifiers to prevent static electricity buildup on the paper, which could cause paper jams

Your continued generosity will enable us to accomplish these essential improvements and meet other expenses related to bringing out the new edition of the Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons.

SRF Meditation Gardens: Spiritual Oases in a Busy World

To devotees and admirers of Paramahansa Yogananda, the meditation gardens our Guru established are sacred shrines that always beckon. To even the casual visitor, they are sanctuaries offering a respite from the clamorous demands of the outside world.

The power of these outdoor sanctuaries to inspire and uplift is reflected in the following letter from a visitor to the SRF Lake Shrine:

“While at the Lake Shrine, I had a wonderful meditation at the Windmill Chapel and then a beautiful walk around the lake. Everything is so breathtaking and so well kept. When you meet someone on your walk, smiles are exchanged. It is as though you both have an inner secret that contains the joy exuding from this paradise. If this only could exist beyond this sanctuary!”

Here are some of the ways in which your gift will assist SRF in the upkeep of these sacred places:

The SRF Mother Center: A Peaceful Oasis in the Midst of Los Angeles

Commanding an impressive view of downtown Los Angeles and yet seemingly a world away, the meditation gardens of the SRF Mother Center (our international headquarters) are a veritable oasis of peace in a bustling metropolis. The monks who tend the gardens, aided by dedicated lay member volunteers and employees, are ever busy with the many tasks involved in maintaining their beauty: preserving the trees dating from Paramahansaji’s lifetime and caring for the health of the wide variety of other trees and plants; installing and maintaining efficient irrigation systems; cultivating flowering and ornamental plants; seasonal trimming and pruning; maintaining walkways; weeding, sweeping, and other basic cleaning.

One special nook is the “Temple of Leaves,” given this name many decades ago by Paramahansa Yogananda. He was fond of meditating here, in the natural enclosure formed by the pendulous branches and long, lacy leaves of a large California pepper tree. He also held public lectures and classes in this shaded sanctuary, and today a plaque here preserves Paramahansaji’s wishes for those who visit: “I want you to come to meditate in the Temple of Leaves. Come here to meditate and to feel God. I shower the blessings of the Great Ones upon you.”

(Left) Paramahansa Yogananda in meditation in the Temple of Leaves, 1932. (Above) Today visitors still seek out this verdant spot for meditation.
Echoes of Kashmir at the SRF Lake Shrine

In Autobiography of a Yogi, Paramahansa Yogananda named Kashmir as one of the most beautiful places in the world. The placid lake and houseboat at the SRF Lake Shrine in Pacific Palisades (near Los Angeles) is reminiscent of those breathtaking environs with its lovely Kashmir poplars, deodar cedars, cypresses, and colorful flowers on the grounds surrounding the lake.

The outstanding beauty of the Lake Shrine gardens attracts more than 100,000 people each year, of which an estimated thirty percent are first-time visitors. These gardens are often their introduction to Paramahansa Yogananda and Self-Realization Fellowship, and thus another way in which Guruji’s message of divine communion reaches truth-seekers. Many of these first-time visitors return, becoming students of our Guru’s path of Kriya Yoga.

Recently, a new stone bridge at the SRF Lake Shrine replaced an aging wood bridge and was constructed by monks working with stone masons—yet another example of ongoing efforts to enhance the gardens. (See photo above)

A Jewel by the Pacific: The Encinitas Ashram Center Gardens

The cliff-side meditation gardens of the SRF Encinitas Ashram Center enchant the visitor in countless ways: glorious flowers in a rainbow of colors, koi fish idling about in ponds, the soothing roar of the waves along the beach below, the vast ocean vistas. Here on these grounds Paramahansa spent many hours in deep meditation, permeating them with spiritual vibrations that silently call one to contemplation, inner reflection, and meditation.

As at all SRF locations, special care is given to trees that have an association with Paramahansa’s life, in honor of the love he expressed for all living things and the great interest he took in beautifying the grounds of the ashram centers he founded. One such tree was a grapefruit tree given to him by his close disciple Rajarsi Janakananda (who later served as Paramahansa’s spiritual successor and president of SRF/YSS). The tree (see photo left) was located near the entrance of the Encinitas meditation gardens and reached the end of its lifespan last year. But thanks to the efforts of SRF monks, a genetically identical offspring that had been propagated earlier was planted in the same spot (see photo right) — one of many ways SRF endeavors to carefully preserve the legacy of Paramahansa’s life for the inspiration of future generations.

Translating Paramahansa’s Teachings

Many have attested that reading the words of Paramahansa Yogananda for the first time brought about a profound change in their lives. For some, it was a new understanding of the true meaning of life; for others it was the assurance that their long search for a spiritual path had ended. And for still others it was the realization that they had found their guru.

Working to make these same experiences possible for millions of non-English speaking readers worldwide are the 200 translators, monastics, and other staff (many of whom are lay-member volunteers) who support SRF’s Translations Department. Much has been accomplished during the past three decades: In 1991, SRF offered fifty publications in thirteen languages. Today more than 300 books are available in over 50 languages. In the past year alone, more than 20 new publications were released in languages other than English.

One of SRF’s goals has been to make Autobiography of a Yogi available to as many readers as possible. With the recent release of the Armenian edition, the book Paramahansa Yogananda termed his “ambassador” can now be read in fifty languages.
With continued assistance from members and friends like you, SRF will be able to bring out several new translations annually, thus helping many to receive for the first time, in the familiar medium of their own language, the soul-awakening thoughts of Paramahansa Yogananda.

*Right* The numerous editions of *Autobiography of a Yogi* published by Self-Realization Fellowship are displayed by some of the team of monastics, lay members, and employees who help translate, publish, and distribute worldwide the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda.

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**From Our President: Contributing to the Guru’s Work Through Our Individual Efforts**

Speaking on the value of self-expansion through service and meditation, our president, Brother Chidananda, recently said:

“It has been especially moving to receive your offers to aid the progress of Guruji’s mission in whatever ways you can. Many of you serve so selflessly at our temples, centers, and meditation groups, working together to create and maintain these havens of God-peace amidst the tumult and uncertainties of these troubled times. Know that by your efforts to meditate with increased zeal and devotion, to apply the divine truths our Guru taught, and to pray for all who are in need, you are truly doing his work in this world. The strength of his society lies in each one of you who, by living with God in your heart, helps to spread His harmonizing influence wherever you go....

“As we work together to fully manifest the hope-filled vision of spiritual understanding and harmony that this great work is destined to bring on earth, my prayer is that the flame of love for God ever burn brightly within you, so that your life will silently radiate God’s joyous presence. Thus you will help draw to Him other sincere souls who are ready to respond to Gurudeva’s message: ‘Awake! Following His ever-calling voice, let us go Home together.’”

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For all you do to further the spiritual mission of Paramahansa Yogananda — whether through your financial support, prayers, or efforts to follow the spiritual path he brought to the world — receive our deepest appreciation and gratitude.

Your contribution to the Voluntary League Appeal will not only support the important efforts described in this newsletter, but also many other operational and administrative expenses that come with serving our Guru’s global family: printing of free literature, keeping our website up-to-date, telephone bills, postage, ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the various facilities and grounds, and countless other activities that make it possible for us to uplift and encourage those who are sincerely seeking inspiration and direction in the SRF teachings.