

Wisdom and Prayers Paramahansa Yogananda

For me, reading *The Autobiography of a Yogi* changed my life. It answered all of my questions about spirituality and God. And I know I am not alone in this! Paramahansa Yogananda is widely hailed as the father of Yoga in the West. *Autobiography of a Yogi* has inspired millions of people around the world through its timeless message and its clarity. Weaving together religious traditions of the East and the West, Yogananda has opened the door to spirituality while offering the yogic tradition to all. He founded the Self-Realization fellowship in 1920 and this society carries on his humanitarian and spiritual work today.

I offer you some of my favorite verses and prayers of Paramahansa Yogananda.

— Naader

Soul Qualities that Make Man God-like:

"Fearlessness is mentioned first because it is the impregnable rock on which the house of spiritual life must be erected. Fearlessness means faith in God: faith in His protection, His justice, His wisdom, His mercy, His love, His omnipresence....

To be fit for Self-realization, man must be fearless."

"Purity of heart means transparency to truth. One's consciousness should be free from the distortions of attachment and repulsion to sense objects. Likes and dislikes for externals taint the heart with gross vibrations. The heart or chitta should not be influenced by the pairs of opposites; only thus may it enter the divine bliss of meditation. Jesus says: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." - Matthew 5:8

"Steadfastness in seeking wisdom and in practicing yoga is essential for reaching liberation. In his daily life the devotee should apply the guru-given or scriptural wisdom and should immerse himself in the peace born of the regular practice of yoga techniques. Wisdom guards the devotee, by right reason and perception, from falling into the pits of ignorance and sense pleasures."

"Almsgiving or charity is meritorious. It expands the consciousness. Unselfishness and generosity link the soul of the open-handed giver to the presence of God within all other souls....

To bestow money on poor persons who will use it to injure themselves by buying liquor instead of bread gives encouragement to sin. Similarly, pearls of wisdom should not be cast before mentally rebellious and unappreciative men. But the discriminative devotee who wisely shares his wealth, knowledge, and spiritual treasures to the benefit of those who are needy, worthy, and receptive fits himself for liberation."

"Self-restraint is the power to control the senses when they are excited by the pleasant sensations of sight, hearing, smell, taste, or touch. A devotee who is master of his senses is ready for liberation. He who succumbs to temptations will remain entangled in sense objects, far removed from soul knowledge. Every indulgence in any form of sense-lures reinforces the desire for that experience. Repetition leads to the formation of nearly unshakable bad habits."

"Religious Rites (yajnas) are enjoined by the Vedas and other great scriptures. A devotee, according to his state of development, may perform the symbolic physical rite of pouring clarified butter into fire, or the mental rite of burning wrong desires in the flames of wisdom, or the yogi's spiritual rite of consuming human restlessness in the fire of soul ecstasy."

In the ultimate, the whole of one's life should be a yajna, with every thought and act purified by a devout heart and offered as oblation to God."

"Right study of the Scriptures leads to emancipation.... Wisdom thoughts are faithful guides and protectors when they become one's constant companions.... Redemption does not come from what one knows intellectually, but from what one becomes as a result of that knowledge. There must be a rational connection between one's learning and oneself, so that a truth become such an integral part of the being that it cannot be dislodged by contrary temptations or doubts."

"Self-discipline includes celibacy, restraint of appetite, and various methods of training the body to withstand cold, heat, and other discomforts without the usual mental agitation. If practiced with discrimination and right resolve, these mortifications help the devotee to attune his body and mind to spiritual vibrations."

"Straightforwardness is a quality of honorable men. It denotes sincerity. The eyes that see God are honest and artless. He who is free from deceit may gaze on the Utter Innocence."

"Non-Injury is extolled in the Hindu scriptures. One of the Ten Commandments in the Bible is: "Thou shalt not kill." (Exodus 20:13)

"During a visit to the ashram of Mahatma Gandhi in 1936, I asked the prophet of nonviolence for his definition of ahimsa (nonviolence). He replied, "The avoidance of harm to any living creature in thought or deed." A man of nonviolence neither willfully gives nor wishes harm to any. He is a paradigm of the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (Matthew 7:12)

"Truth is the foundation stone of the universe....

It is not merely enough to tell the truth; one's words should also be sweet, healing, and beneficial to others."

"Absence of wrath is the quickest way to peace of mind. Anger is caused by the obstruction of one's desires. A desireless man has no anger....

For the sake of self-preservation, if for no higher reason, most persons try to learn prudence and control of anger."

"Renunciation is the wise path trod by the devotee who willingly gives up the lesser for the greater....

Anyone aspiring to Self-realization - whether he be a monastic or a householder - must act and live for the Lord, without being emotionally involved in His drama of creation."

"Peace is a divine quality. A true yogi, one united to "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," (Philippians 4:7) is like a lovely rose, spreading around him the fragrance of tranquility and harmony."

"Absence of fault-finding and calumny hastens one's spiritual evolution by freeing the mind from concentration on the weaknesses of others to focus wholly on the full-time job of bettering oneself.

A critical person rarely perfects his own life."

"Compassion toward all beings is necessary for divine realization, for God Himself is overflowing with this quality. Provided a man tries by self-discipline to remove the mountainous load of his past errors, God comes to the rescue."

"Noncovetousness, absence of greed is possessed by one who has mastered his senses and hence harbors no desires for gross pleasures and material objects. Absence of greed and envy are characteristic of true devotees, those whose minds are absorbed in inner joys. In comparison, the world has nothing to offer."

"Gentleness is characterized by spiritual patience. God is ever gentle with His erring children and, unoffended, remains quiet when they revile or ignore Him. All men who are in divine attunement are kind and forbearing. A gentle person attracts friends on earth and also, more importantly, attracts the Lord, the Friend of All Friends. A spiritually patient man does not feel ill will toward anyone, even the most evil."

"Modesty is the power to feel shame at any wrongdoing and to be willing to correct oneself.

The ability to feel shame is an ennobling quality because eventually it leads the truth-seeker to realize fully the humiliation of being karmically forced to take birth again and again in a physical body."

"Absence of restlessness enables one to avoid physical and mental roamings and useless activities.

Restlessness is absent in God's nature; the devotee should learn to abhor mental and moral fickleness."

"Radiance of character come from the cosmic fire of God's supreme consciousness, the flame of awareness, within man and other sentient creatures.

"Divine radiance in the devotee is further characterized by a natural unfoldment of spiritual magnetism, an unassumed vibratory aura of goodness, and a quiet outer expression of deep inner joy."

"Patience, or fortitude, enables the devotee to bear misfortunes and insults with equilibrium.

Endless patience ultimately gives the sage the power to comprehend God."

"Cleanness of body and purity of mind is respect for the indwelling Taintless Spirit. It has been said that cleanliness is next to godliness."

"Non-hatred should be practiced by everyone. One who is aware of the Divine in all creation cannot detest any man or feel any sense of disdainful superiority."

"Lack of conceit signifies absence of excessive pride. A self-admiring person is apt to refrain from further effort."

These twenty-six qualities are all divine attributes of God; they constitute man's spiritual wealth. A God seeker should strive to obtain all of them.

Cosmic Salutation. (Inspired by the Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu Bible)

O Spirit, I bow to Thee, in front of me, behind me, on the left, and on the right. I bow to Thee above and beneath. I bow to Thee all around me. I bow to Thee, within and without me. I bow to Thee everywhere, for Thou art omnipresent.

We demand as Thy Children

Thou art our Father. We are made in Thine own image. We are sons of God. We neither ask nor pray like beggars, but demand as Thy children, wisdom, salvation, health, happiness, eternal joy. Naughty or good, we are Thy children. Help us to find Thy will in us. Teach us to use independently the human will (since Thou gavest that to us to use freely), in tune with Thy wisdom-guided will.

Demand for Recharging Body-Battery

O Spirit, teach us to heal the body by re-charging it with Thy cosmic energy, to heal the mind by concentration and smiles, and the soul by meditation-born intuition.

Spiritual Interpretation of the Lord's Prayer

O Heavenly Father, Mother, Friend, Beloved God, may the halo of Thy presence spread over all minds. May the kingdom of matter-worship be changed into worship of Thee. Because we cannot truly love anything without Thee, may we learn to love Thee first and above all. May the heavenly kingdom of bliss which is in Thy Spirit, manifest itself in all its divine qualities on earth, and may all lands be made free from limitations, imperfections, and miseries. Let Thy kingdom which is within, manifest itself without.

Father, leave us not in the pit of temptations, wherein we fell through our misuse of Thy gift of reason. When we are freer and better—if it be Thy wish

to test us, to see if we love Thee more than temptation—then, Father, make Thyself more tempting than temptation. Father, if it be Thy desire to test us, help us that our wills grow b to meet Thy tests.

Give us our daily bread: food, health, and prosperity for the body, efficiency for the mind, and above all, Thy wisdom and Thy love for our souls. Teach us to deliver ourselves, with Thy help, from the meshes of ignorance woven by our own carelessness.

Thou Art the best Bomb-Shelter

When clouds of devastating war drop rain of fire and death, I will not forget that Thou, O God, art my best Bomb-Shelter. In life and death, in disease, famine, pestilence and poverty, I cling to Thee, who alone can show me that in all dualities of life's experiences I can remain unharmed. Thou wilt ever protect me, making me realize I am immortal, untouched by the changing conditions of childhood, youth, age, and of world upheavals.

Universal prayer of the Cosmic Temple

With a myriad of living thoughts of devotion, I have built for Thee a temple of awakened silence. I have brought the multi-colored lamps of wisdom from all good faiths. They all shine with the luster of Thy one truth.

The commingled incense of human cravings for Thee soars in spirals from the vase of our hearts. Thy sacred presence is glistening on altars everywhere.

All prayers of all temples, tabernacles, churches, and mosques are chanting to Thee in the one universal language of deep love. The orchestra of our feelings plays in tune with the chorus of all soul-songs, the cry of all tears, the bursting shout of all joys, and the anthem of all prayers.

In this wall-less cosmic temple of our souls, we worship Thee, our one Father. Be pleased to reveal Thyself thus, always. *Amen, Aum, Amin.*

Worshipping the Cosmic Idol

O Infinite Spirit, I shall worship Thee as finite, today. O Cosmic Silence, I shall hear Thine unheard voice through the murmur of brooks, the song of nightingales, the sound of blown conch-shells, the beat of oceans, and the hum of vibrations.

India-wise, in the cosmic temple of my mind, in ceremony I shall worship Thee, my Idol of Finitude. I shall behold in reverence Thy face, glowing red with vital power in the sun, and bestowing soothing moonbeam-glances to dispel my gloom.

I shall no more call Thee unseen, for during my worship I shall look straight through Thine infinite, starry eyes into Thy mystic heart. With Thy breath of the heaving wind I shall mix my borrowed breath. My wordless chants of yearning for Thee will sing in cadence with my heart-throbs. I shall feel Thy heart beating in all hearts. I shall watch Thy working hands in the law of gravitation and in all other cosmic forces. In the sound of the feet of all living creatures I shall hear Thy footsteps.

In my worship, I shall behold Thy vast, skiey body, adorned with the dark, twinkling veil of night, or the pale light of dawn, or the grey twilight. O, my Cosmic Idol, garlanded with the stringed beads of the milky way, diademed with the rainbow, wearing diamonds of glittering planets, I bow to Thee.

The pores of the sky perspire with Thy life, and Thy blood runs through Thy veins of rivers, streams, streamlets and the blood-cells of men. No more as unseen shall I worship Thee, but as my seen, Cosmic-bodied Idol.

The temple-bells of nature's harmony, the drumbeats of sea-roars, the myriad candles of minds and chants of all churches, devotion-flowers from the garden of souls, and the incense of loves—are all assembled by me for Thy worship, O visible Idol of my soul.

With opened eyes and the eye of my mind, I shall behold Thee, my living Idol-of-Nature God, and worship Thee with vocal or mental chants, with a bouquet of devotion, activity, and wisdom, with the language of love, heart-whispers, tearless tears of meditation, and silent sobs of intuition.

Salutation to the Great Preceptor. (Sanskrit Scriptures)

Bearing the bliss of Brahma, happiness supreme; wearing the image of wisdom; beyond the dispute of quality; free as the soaring sky; Knower of all there is to be known; Thou perennial, taintless one; Witness of all happenings; beyond all conceptions' boundaries; uncolored by good, bad and active qualities: my ever-awake Preceptor—I bow to Thee!

Thou Mother of Flames, show Thy Face, hidden beneath the veil of Cosmic Motion Pictures

O Mother of time, space, form, and relativity, Thou hast taken a finite form—the Kali-Divine, colossal, symbol-idol of all-sheltering nature. The invisible Spirit took Thy shape—a visible Mother Divine, in whom throbs the heart of all-protecting, mothering kindness.

O Mother Divine! The beauty-mark of the moon is set between Thy two dark eyebrows of twilight and night. Clouds of eternity veil Thy face. Gusts of prophetic lives often have dared to blow fitfully away Thy veil of mystery, momentarily revealing Thy face hiding from our stares of ignorance.

O Mother Divine, in the dawn of creation I beheld Thee on the track of time, roaming in the rustic attire of primitive culture, crowned with wild nature, and wearing the garland of unpolished minds and opaque, finite things.

In the noon-day of creation, I beheld Thee, wearing a garment of sunny mentalities, scorching souls with the heat of their own material fire. Thy body of activity sweated with restlessness. All Thy children felt the strain of struggle, and implored Thee to send the cooling breeze of peace.

In Thy noon-hour of fulfillment, Thou didst equally attend the forsaken slums of misery, the halls of festive prosperity, and the shrines of peaceful wisdom.

In Thine attire of mid-day mentalities, Thou didst travel through the fiestas of centuries, beholding the dream of human life and death, of the evolution and dissolution of planets, of the birth and death of civilizations, of the drama of nebulae-molding worlds—the dream of new-born planets and earthquakes and partial dissolutions. Then the dark night approached, and Thou didst wear the grim, dark veil of mourning, to put creation through the terrible but purifying ordeal of destruction's fire. The sun burst and belched fire; the cosmic earthquake broke the vase of the sky, dropping embers of stars; and all creation was a furnace of flames. Everything was fire: matter, sin, darkness, all things were cast into Thy crucible, there to become pure, luminous.

Creation came from fire: beneath the ashes of matter, the embers of creation slept; and, rocked by Thy hands, O Mother Divine, creation awoke with its body of pure flames.

Thine one hand of power wakes unseen creative force to take many-hued, fair, finite forms. Another hand holds the astral sword of

preservation, keeping all planets swinging in the rhythm of balance. Thy third hand clutches the severed head of cosmos, representing dissolution when all creation sleeps in Thee. Thy fourth hand stills the storms of delusion, bestowing the rays of salvation upon seeking devotees.

O Kali, Thou deep Mother of creative activity, wearing a garland of human minds; the rhythm of Thy wild dance of creation ceases only when Thy feet touch the transcendent breast of Thine Invisible Consort of Infinity—Shiva, in whom all creation has rest.

O Mother-Progress, the dance of Thy life I hear in the tinkling bells of little laughing, harmonious lives. On the floor of my tender thoughts, Thine inspirations softly dance in tune with the music of the spheres.

In the hall of creation, everywhere, O Kali, I hear the rhythm of Thy footsteps, dancing forcefully in the booming thunder, and softly in the song of atoms.

The Infinite sleeps beneath the shroud of magic delusion, and then, O Goddess of Forms, Thy fantastic dances of finitude begin on His bosom. Thou hast danced nearer than the throbs of my soul, and I have heard the symphony of Thy steps on the farthest horizon of my mind. Divine Mother, Thou mayest dance everywhere: but O, I pray Thee, do Thou ever play the music of Thy magic footsteps in the sacred sanctum of my soul!

O Goddess Kali, in Thy changing robes art woven the dreams of creation, preservation and destruction. Mother Divine, on the beautiful veil of Thy mind a million cinemas of cosmic dramas play. Thus dost Thou entertain and amuse Thy good children, and frighten Thy naughty ones.

Mother Divine, draw aside Thy glittering veil of cosmic motion pictures and show me Thy delusion-dispersing face of mercy.

Demand for the Opening of the Spiritual Temple Doors everywhere

O Father, when I was blind I found not a door which led to Thee, but now that Thou hast opened my eyes, I find doors everywhere: through the hearts of flowers, through the voice of friendship, through sweet memories of all lovely experiences. Every gust of my prayer opens an unentered door in the vast temple of Thy presence.

Prayer at Dawn

With the opening of the earliest dawn and the lotus-buds, my soul softly opens in prayer to receive Thy light. Bathe each petal of my mind with

Thy radiant rays! I saturate myself with the perfume of Thy presence, and I wait to waft with the breeze the aroma of Thy message of love to all. Bless me, that with the spreading dawn I may spread Thy love everywhere. Bless me, that with the awakening dawn I may awaken all souls with my own and bring them to Thee.

Prayer at Noon

The sun shines high in the heavens: everything is fully awake. Awaken Thou me, likewise! Thou art invisible, yet Thine energy flows through the rays of sunshine. Fill my veins with Thine invisible rays, making me bold and tireless. As the sun shines in the busiest streets, may I behold Thy rays of protecting love in the crowded places of my life's activities. As the light shines steadily, undisturbed, on the street, whether crowded or empty, so may I hold my calmness and my strength steadily, while I move through the crowded or empty streets of life. Give me strength; and what I receive, teach me to share with others.

Prayer at Eventide

The day is done. Refreshed and sanctified with the sunshine of the day, I pass through the portals of evening, dimly adorned with faint stars, to enter into the temple of silence and worship Thee. I worship Thy Spirit of approaching calmness. What prayers shall I offer, for I have no words to offer Thee? I shall light a little fire of devotion on the altar of my soul. Will that light suffice to bring Thee into my dark temple—my dimly lighted temple, dark with my ignorance? Come! I crave, I yearn for Thee

Prayer at Night

With closed eyes, I sit in the temple of night and worship Thee. The sunlight, revealing a million alluring things, has vanished. One by one, I have closed the doors of my senses, lest the fragrance of the rose, or the song of the nightingale, distract my love from Thee. I am alone in this dark, dark temple. I have left everything, but where art Thou? Darkness is haunting; but, unafraid, I am groping, seeking, crying for Thee. Wilt Thou leave me alone? Come, show Thyself!

The door of my memory swings open. Throbbingly thrilled, my heart looks for Thee, but I find Thee not. Halt! Ye throng of a million thoughts and experiences past! Come not into my sacred temple. I close the bursting, thought-pressed door and run everywhere to find Thee. Where art Thou?

Darkness deepens, and as I sit still, in anguish of despair, I behold a little taper of concentration burning within me. I stand up, and madly rush through the dimly lighted temple—the farther I go, the deeper grows the

gloom. I clasp the empty darkness in hope of seizing Thee. Finding Thee not, I return again, and see the taper dimly burning.

I sing outwardly a loud prayer. My large teardrops, and my gusts of prayer almost extinguish the taper. I will pray no more with words nor rush or run about in the temple of Stygian darkness, nor drown the taper with my tears. I will sit still, and command my breath to make no sound. I rebuke my boisterous love for Thee. The taper of meditation burns brighter now.

O, how maddening! I cannot worship Thee with words, but only with wistful yearning. Brighter the light grows: I behold Thee now. Thou art I. I worship Thee.

As night hides everything, I will worship Thee in hidden silence. I am glad with the joy of all minds. I will use the screen of the night to hide myself from the tempting things of the day.

O Night, when I am worried, throw thy veil of silent darkness around me. Create a dark temple for me wherever I go, that I may invoke and call Him, whom I love, at any time, anywhere, everywhere.

Prayer-demand before taking food

Heavenly Father, receive this food. Make it holy. Let no impurity of greed ever defile it. The food comes from Thee. It is to build Thy temple. Spiritualize it. Spirit to Spirit goes. We are the petals of Thy manifestation, but Thou art the Flower, its life, beauty and loveliness. Permeate our souls with the fragrance of Thy presence.

Prayer-Demand for recharging of Body-Battery

O Conscious, Cosmic Energy, it is Thou who dost directly support my body. Solid, liquid and gaseous foods are converted and spiritualized into energy by Thy cosmic energy—and it supports my body. Help me to learn, O Spirit, to live more and more by direct cosmic energy and less and less by food. Thine energy burns in the bulb of the senses. I recharge myself with Thine omnipresent cosmic energy.

Prayer before practicing Concentration

Teach me, O Spirit, by meditation, to stop the storm of breath, mental restlessness and sensory disturbances raging in the lake of my mind. Let the magic wand of my intuition stop the gale of passions and unnecessary desires, and in the rippleless lake of my mind let me behold

the undistorted reflection of the moon of my soul, glistening with the light of Thy presence.

Demand for Pearls of Wisdom to be obtained in the Sea of Meditation

Father Divine, teach me to dive deep in the ocean of meditation for the pearls of wisdom. Teach me to plunge headlong, armored with the diving suit of conscience, that the sharks of passions may not destroy me. If I find not the wisdom-pearls by one or two dives, teach me not to call the sea of meditation devoid of the pearls of Thy wisdom. Rather teach me to find fault with my diving. Teach me to dive again and again in meditation, deeper and deeper always, until I find Thine immortal pearls of wisdom and divine joy.

Prayer for expanding Love from self to all brethren

O Divine Mother, teach me to use the gift of Thy love in my heart to love the members of my family more than myself. Bless me, that I may love my neighbors more than my family. Expand me, so that I love my country more than my neighbors, and that I love my world and all human brethren more than my country, neighbors, family, and myself.

Lastly, teach me to love Thee more than anything else, for it is Thy love with which I love everything. Without Thee I cannot love anybody or anything

Father Divine, teach me to enter through the portals of family love, or through the love of my friends into the mansion of wider social love. Teach me, then, to pass through the doors of social love into the wider mansion of international love. Teach me to pass through the portals of international love into the endless territory of divine love, in which I may perceive all animate and inanimate objects as breathing and living by Thy love.

Teach me to tarry not at any of the fascinating, gorgeous gates of family, social or international love. Teach me to pass through all these portals, leading to smaller territories of love, until, passing through the last gate of human love, I can enter into the endless territory of divine love, in which I shall find all living, semi-living or sleeping things as my own.

A bouquet of all Loves of God

O God the Father, teach me to make a bouquet of the variously hued flowers of filial, conjugal, friendly, parental, masterly loves, and to lay it on the altar of my heart, where Thou reignest. If I cannot make a bouquet, I will pluck the rarest love that grows in the garden of my devotion and will lay that before Thee. Wilt Thou receive it?

Prayer-Demand to the Holy Vibration for Omnipresence

O Holy Vibration, boom on the shores of my consciousness. Break the limiting boundary of my consciousness in the body. Reverberate through my body, mind, soul, my surroundings, the cities, the earth, the planets, the universe, and every particle of creation. Unite my consciousness with cosmic consciousness.

Prayer-Demand for Self-Realization

O cosmic vibration, reverberate through me as the cosmic, intelligent sound, and teach me to find in Thee the presence of the reflected Christ consciousness. O Holy Vibration, lead me to intuit the Christ consciousness in Thee.

O omnipresent, cosmic sound of Amen or Aum, reverberate through me, expanding my consciousness from the body to the universe, and teach me to feel in Thee the all-permeating, perennial bliss.

Prayer-Demand for removing the Cork of Ignorance

No more shall my consciousness remain bottled in this phial of flesh, corked with ignorance. No more will I remain moving through the sea of cosmic consciousness, night and day, years, incarnations—so close, yet without contacting the sea. Through the bursting vibration of cosmic sound, and the surging of Thy holy name, I have removed the cork of ignorance, which so long separated Thee from me, though living so near. Now my consciousness within the body will meet the all-pervading consciousness without. No longer will I thoughtlessly walk in Thee, knowing and feeling Thee not. Thine image within shall meet Thine image which is everywhere. By releasing the "I-ness" in me, I know that I am Thou, and that it is Thou who art the little egos of all.

Twenty-six qualities divine attributes of God

"God is the epitome of "self-discipline," ever contained in His own Being in spite of His engagement in cosmic activities."