

Contents

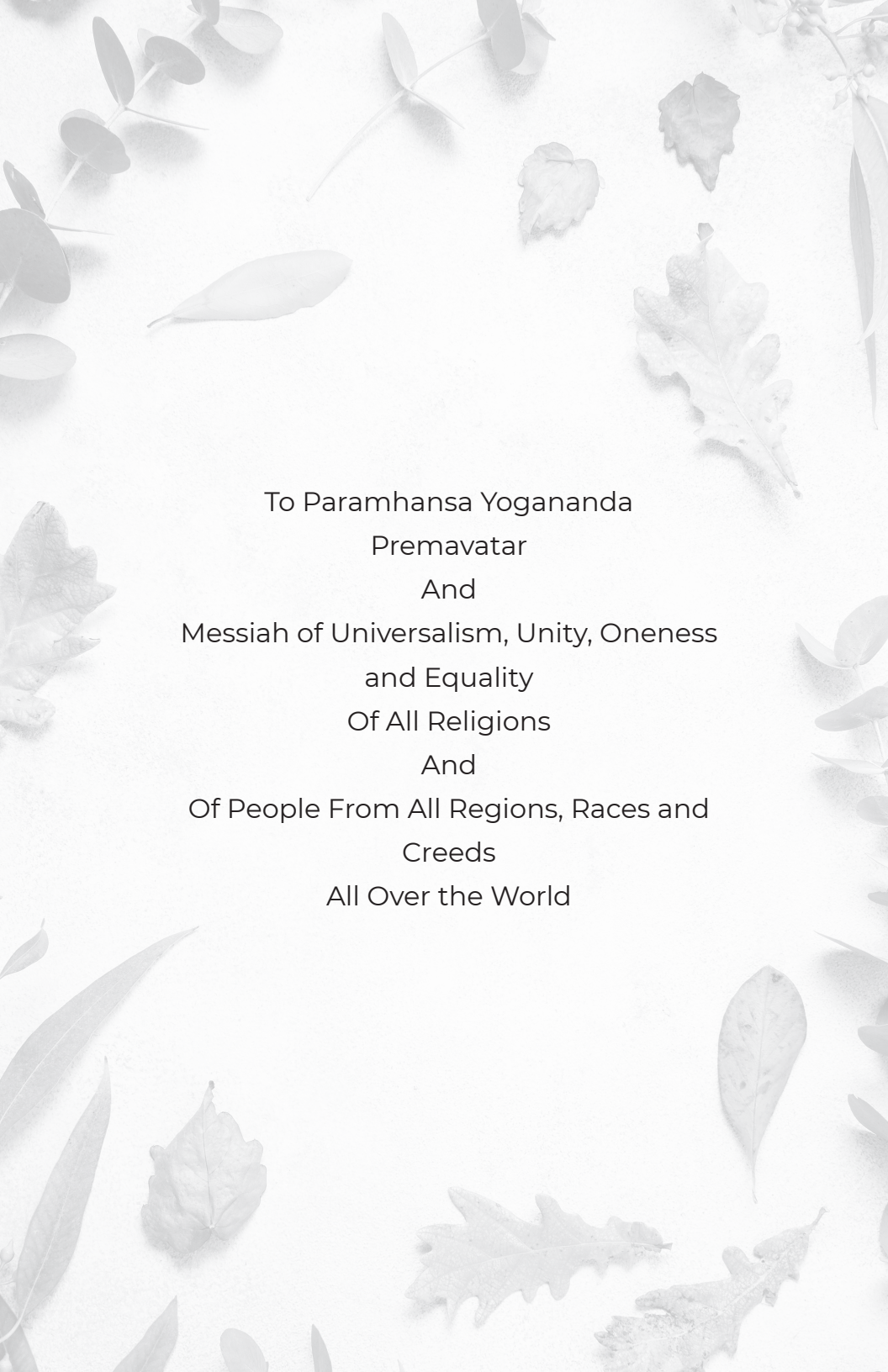
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>A Tribute to Paramhansa Yogananda</i>	<i>xiii</i>

PART-I

Mysteries and Miracles	1
A Compassionate Yogi From Boyhood	13
The Young Yogi's Quest	22
Mukunda Meets His Master	34
A Graduate and a Monk	50
The Airplane Route to God	54
Yogananda and Tagore	60
The Law of Miracles	65
The Christlike Life of Lahiri Mahasaya	73
Christ of Modern India	88
Yogananda Goes to America	99
Yogananda Returns to India	109
The Death and Resurrection of Sri Yukteswar	115
The Mahatma and the Yogi	132
Return to the West	148

PART-II

Impact and Influence	170
Yogananda, An Avatar	180
Yogananda and His Opponents	186
The Egoless Guru	197
Miracles and Healings by Yogananda	208
Religion of Universalism and Oneness	222
Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda & Yogananda	234
The Krishna-Christ Connection	241
Understanding the Real Christ	269
Was Yogananda too Critical of Christianity?	282
God, God Everywhere	292
The Two Kingdoms	313
Kingdoms of Brotherhood	321
Yogananda's Love for America	330
The Mother of all Mahasamadhis	347
The Yogi Who Conquered Death	365
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>381</i>



To Paramhansa Yogananda
Premavatar
And
Messiah of Universalism, Unity, Oneness
and Equality
Of All Religions
And
Of People From All Regions, Races and
Creeds
All Over the World

Mysteries and Miracles

Born Mukunda Lal Ghosh on 5 January 1893, in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, Paramhansa Yogananda's epic *Autobiography of a Yogi* is extraordinary not only for its spiritual teachings but for the mysteries and incredible miracles that abound in the 500-odd pages of the book. Though terming the autobiography a spiritual thriller would be tantamount to watering down its invaluable teachings, the events narrated in the autobiography make for fascinating, edge-of-the-seat reading.

In the very first chapter, titled, *My Parents and Early Life*, Yogananda describes a miracle, giving readers an indication of the fascinating events to unfold in the book.

Ravaged by Asiatic cholera, Yogananda's life was ebbing away. Doctors had given up hope.

While he lay in bed, too feeble to even move his hands, his mother Gyana Prabha Ghosh, pleaded with him to look up on the wall above at a picture of Lahiri Mahasaya, his parents' guru, considered a *yogavatara*, who had revived Kriya Yoga, an ancient meditation technique existing since the times

of the Bhagavad Gita, empowering man to achieve an ever-increasing identity with Cosmic Consciousness.

The eight-year-old Yogananda (then the child Mukunda) gazed at the photograph and saw a 'blinding light, enveloping his body and the entire room.' His debilitating nausea and other uncontrolled symptoms of Asiatic cholera vanished.

Mukunda was miraculously healed. He felt his strength returning to him instantly—'strong enough to bend over and touch Mother's feet,' thanking her for saving his life through her guru.

Pressing her head repeatedly against Lahiri Mahasaya's little picture, his mother prayed: 'O Omnipresent Master, I thank thee that thy light hath healed my son!' Yogananda realized that she too had witnessed the luminous blaze through which he had 'instantly recovered from a usually fatal disease.'

Mystery and a brush with the supernatural is also evident in the autobiography's second chapter, *My Mother's Death and the Mystic Amulet*. Barely eleven years old, Mukunda had an ominous vision of his dying mother, while he lay in bed near his father. While he and his father Bhagabati Charan Ghosh were in their home in Bareilly in Northern India, his mother was in Calcutta supervising his elder brother Ananta's wedding preparations.

At midnight, Mukunda saw the 'wraithlike form' of his mother, beseeching him to awaken his father and board the 4 am train to Calcutta if they would like to see her. 'Father, Father! Mother is dying!' the terror-stricken boy, Mukunda wailed, instantly rousing from sleep his father, who dismissed the warning as a hallucination. Her death turned out to be true, leaving Mukunda in a world 'suddenly barren to the bone.'

His endearing words, 'her solacing black eyes had been my

surest refuge in the trifling tragedies of childhood,' showed that Mukunda, indeed, had loved his mother as his 'dearest friend.'

Mukunda was inconsolable for years after. It was Divine Mother's healing words from the heavens above that brought him solace. He heard Her say: 'It is I who have watched over thee, life after life, in the tenderness of many mothers! See in My gaze the two black eyes, the lost beautiful eyes, thou seekest!' Beautiful words that Mukunda may have imagined were uttered by Divine Mother.

His mother's death had brought Mukunda closer to God. He felt the love of God descending on him with 'avalanchic force' and he began to visualise himself wearing the orange robe of a monk. He even made an attempt to flee to the Himalayas and join the monks there, but his elder brother Ananta gave chase and nipped his dream in the bud.

However, the void left in the family after his mother's death could never be filled. His father never remarried, though he lived for another forty years after his wife's death. He took on the onerous role of both father and mother, growing very tender towards his children, seeking solace in God and in the daily practice of Kriya Yoga, taught to him by his guru Lahiri Mahasaya.

Fourteen months after his mother's passing, Mukunda learned that she had left him a mysterious message, through his elder brother Ananta, who handed him a small box and the message, 'Let these words be my final blessing, my beloved son Mukunda!'

She said that she knew about his 'destined path' when he was merely an infant in her arms. When she visited her guru Lahiri Mahasaya in his home in Benares (now Varanasi), he had seated him on his lap, and placing his hand on his

forehead by way of spiritually baptising him, had said, ‘Little mother, thy son will be a yogi. As a spiritual engine, he will carry many souls to God’s kingdom.’

His mother said, ‘My heart leaped with joy to find my secret prayer granted by the omniscient guru. Shortly before your birth, he had told me you would follow his path.’

Later a strange sage from Punjab came visiting their home, asking to see the mother of Mukunda. The sage said: ‘You are to be the custodian of a certain silver amulet. I will not give it to you today; to demonstrate the truth in my words, the talisman shall materialize in your hands tomorrow as you meditate. On your deathbed, you must instruct your eldest son Ananta to keep the amulet for one year and then to hand it over to your second son. Mukunda will understand the meaning of the talisman from the great ones. He should receive it about the time he is ready to renounce all worldly hopes and start his vital search for God. When he has retained the amulet for some years, and when it has served its purpose, it shall vanish. Even if kept in the most secret spot, it shall return whence it came.’

The next evening, as his mother sat with folded hands in meditation, a silver amulet materialized between her palms, just as the sadhu had promised. It made itself known by its cold, smooth touch. ‘I have jealously guarded it for more than two years, and now leave it in Ananta’s keeping,’ his mother wrote in the message.

‘Do not grieve for me, as I shall have been ushered by my great guru into the arms of the Infinite. Farewell, my child; the Cosmic Mother will protect you,’ added his mother.

A blaze of illumination came over Mukunda as he held the amulet, as many dormant memories were awakened.

The talisman, round and anciently quaint, was covered with Sanskrit characters.

‘I understood that it came from teachers of past lives, who were invisibly guiding my steps. A further significance there was, indeed; but one does not reveal fully the heart of an amulet,’ said Mukunda.

How the talisman finally vanished amidst ‘deeply unhappy’ circumstances of his life; and how its loss led him to a guru, Mukunda didn’t reveal in the chapter.

However, the chapter’s concluding paragraph tantalizes the reader with the unfolding of more mysteries and miracles in the book. As Yogananda says, ‘... the small boy, thwarted in his attempts to reach the Himalayas, daily travelled far on the wings of his amulet.’

It is important to understand that miracles and mysteries in the autobiography may just be Yogananda’s way of attracting the attention of readers, and having done so, initiating them into deeper, universal truths to guide them on the higher path of cosmic consciousness.

Philip Goldberg, in his book, *The Life of Yogananda: The Story of the Yogi Who Became the First Modern Guru* (Hay House, Inc., Carlsbad, CA, 2018) had a journalism student count the number of miracles in *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Goldberg said that the student counted 132 miraculous occurrences of one kind or another, and calculated they take up to 44 percent of the book.

Yogananda points out that ‘ostentatious display of unusual powers are decried by masters.’ He cautions in his autobiography that performance of miracles may seem spectacular but are ‘spiritually useless.’ He adds, ‘Having little purpose beyond entertainment, they are digressions from a serious search for God.’

However, miracles for a higher purpose such as service of mankind or genuine healing of the sick, the terminally ill, even of the blind or bringing back to life a person from the dead where necessary or justified, are not to be decried.

In fact, Lahiri Mahasaya, Yogananda's guru Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri and Yogananda himself perform a number of miracles, all for a good cause, never in the least vacuous or ostentatious.

Indeed, for the advanced and true yogi, a miracle or metaphysical mystery is part of his ordinary, daily life, for such is the nature of yogic power, as is evident in the third chapter, titled, *The Saint with Two Bodies*.

Budding into a zestful twelve-year-old, Mukunda was assigned by his father Bhagabati, the task of meeting in Benares the sage Swami Pranabananda to help track down a friend, Kedar Nath Babu, for whom his father had a proposal, but had lost contact with. Mukunda met the clean-shaven, wrinkle-free, stout swami on the second floor at his residence, seated in a yogi's ubiquitous lotus posture, a beatific smile playing about his lips.

Even before Mukunda introduced himself, the swami uncannily knew that he was Bhagabati's son. Like a clairvoyant, he also knew the purpose of his visit, as he quickly said before even being asked, 'Of course I will locate Kedar Nath Babu for you.' He then fell into a long spell of silence, without elaborating on how he would find his father's friend. As Mukunda got restless, the swami declared that Kedar Nath Babu would be at his residence in half an hour.

Soon after, Mukunda heard someone coming up the stairs and he rushed down to check who the visitor was. It was indeed Kedar Nath Babu, and he surprisingly knew that

Mukunda was his friend's son, even before the boy could disclose his identity.

Surprised at this, Mukunda was even more stunned when Kedar Nath Babu told him that the swami had met him at the Ganges, a short while ago, after he had finished bathing, and summoned him urgently to meet Bhagabati's son. Kedar Nath Babu was surprised at how the swami knew about his whereabouts at the bathing ghat on that day.

Mukunda was shocked and found this unbelievable, because the swami had not left his residence since he had come visiting. Then how was it possible that he had met Kedar Nath Babu at the bathing ghat?

Kedar Nath Babu swore that the swami had, indeed, met him at the bathing ghat; Mukunda could only conclude that the sage was present at two places at the same time.

'I thought this swami was just an ordinary man, and now I find he can materialize an extra body and work through it!' said Kedar Nath Babu. As the two entered the swami's room, Kedar Nath Babu whispered, 'Look, those are the very sandals he was wearing at the ghat. He was clad only in a loincloth, just as I see him now.'

As they continued discussing the mystery of the swami's presence at two places at the same time, the swami turned to Mukunda and remarked, 'Why are you stupefied at all this? The subtle unity of the phenomenal world is not hidden from true yogis. I instantly see and converse with my disciples in distant Calcutta. They can similarly transcend at will every obstacle of gross matter.'

'It was probably in an effort to stir spiritual ardor in my young breast that the swami had condescended to tell me of his powers of astral radio and television,' said Yogananda.

Lahiri Mahasaya was Swami Pranabananda's guru. He was also the guru of Yogananda's guru Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri. Swami Pranabananda told Mukunda, 'Lahiri Mahasaya was the greatest yogi I ever knew. He was Divinity itself in the form of flesh.'

If Swami Pranabananda, Lahiri Mahasaya's disciple could materialize an extra fleshly form at will, what miracles indeed could be barred to his master, wondered Mukunda. In fact, his father, Bhagabati had first met Lahiri Mahasaya in rather mysterious circumstances. Years before Mukunda's birth, his father's subordinate Abinash Babu had asked for a week's leave to visit his guru Lahiri Mahasaya in Benares. His father had ridiculed his plan and asked sarcastically if he was becoming a religious fanatic.

As a distraught Abinash was walking home along a wooded path in the evening, Mukunda's father came along and joined him. In a bid to wean Abinash away from his spiritual quest, Bhagabati tried to convince him instead about the advantages of striving for worldly success.

As his father and Abinash's path took them to the edge of a tranquil field, a few yards away from them, the form of Lahiri Mahasaya suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

'Bhagabati, you are too hard on your employee!' Lahiri Mahasaya said, his voice echoing in their ears. He then vanished without a trace. An astounded Bhagabati not only granted Abinash leave but also joined him and took along his wife with him to meet Lahiri Mahasaya. Both Bhagabati and his wife Gyana became disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya, who initiated them into the spiritual practice of Kriya Yoga.

Lahiri Mahasaya had made a great prophecy about Mukunda when his mother visited him while Mukunda was

still an infant in arms, but he left this world soon after. The family had his picture in an ornate frame on their altar, which was transported to the various cities that Mukunda's father was transferred to in his job as a senior railway official. As a child, on many a morning and evening, Mukunda joined his mother meditating before Lahiri Mahasaya's picture in an improvised shrine, offering flowers dipped in fragrant sandalwood paste.

Yogananda writes in his autobiography: 'With frankincense and myrrh as well as our united devotions, we honored the divinity which had found full expression in Lahiri Mahasaya. His picture had a surpassing influence over my life. As I grew, the thought of the master grew with me. In meditation I would often see his photographic image emerge from its small frame and, taking a living form, sit before me. When I attempted to touch the feet of his luminous body, it would change and again become the picture.'

As Mukunda grew up, he found Lahiri Mahasaya 'transformed in his mind from a little image, cribbed in a frame, to a living, enlightening presence.' He frequently prayed to him in 'moments of trial or confusion, finding solace.'

Initially Mukunda felt sad that Lahiri Mahasaya had passed away, but as he began sensing his 'secret omnipresence,' he stopped grieving. The *yogavatara* had often written to his disciples who were over-zealous to see him: 'Why come to view my bones and flesh, when I am ever within range of your *kutastha* (spiritual sight)?'

While he was living, Lahiri Mahasaya was constantly present in a small front parlour of his Benares home, where he sat in the lotus posture on a backless wooden seat, surrounded by his disciples. Forever half-closed, 'peering through the inner telescopic orb into the sphere of eternal bliss,' his eyes

‘sparkled and danced with the joy of the Divine.’

He hardly ever spoke, except when a disciple needed help. Then his soothing words poured forth in a healing flash of light. But for every problem, the guru advised Kriya Yoga as the solution. He would say, ‘Continue ceaselessly on your path to liberation through Kriya, whose power lies in practice.’ His advice to his disciples was: ‘Win conviction of God’s presence through your own joyous contact in meditation.’

Lahiri Mahasaya didn’t believe in bookish interpretation of the scriptures and asked his disciples to expound them as the meaning occurred to them. ‘I will guide your thoughts, that the right interpretation be uttered,’ he told his disciples.

Mukunda’s father had appointed at his home in Calcutta, the learned and saintly pundit Swami Kebalananda, as his tutor in the scriptures and Sanskrit, after his son had made one more attempt to flee to the Himalayas. ‘Father hoped to satisfy my religious yearnings by instructions from a learned philosopher. But the tables were subtly turned: my new teacher, far from offering intellectual aridities, fanned the embers of my God-aspiration,’ Yogananda said.

Yogananda’s father hoped the swami would wean him away from his obsession with monkhood by teaching him the real meaning of the scriptures. However, his father was blissfully oblivious of the fact that Kebalananda had been a disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya for the past ten years and the most unsuitable choice for dissuading him from becoming a monk.

Yogananda found the gentle and loving Kebalananda ‘firmly established in the infinite consciousness.’ A noted authority on the ancient shastras or sacred books, his erudition had earned him the title of Shastri Mahasaya. Under the scholar, Mukunda made little progress in Sanskrit scholarship

and instead he would incessantly talk with Kebalananda on yoga and Lahiri Mahasaya.

‘Many of our happy hours together were spent in deep Kriya meditation,’ Yogananda said. Kebalananda told Yogananda that Kriya was the ‘most effective device of salvation through self-effort ever to be evolved in man’s search for the Infinite.’ Describing his ten years with Lahiri Mahasaya, Kebalananda said: ‘An indescribable peace blossomed within me at the master’s glance. I was permeated with his fragrance, as though from a lotus of infinity. The master was a living temple of God whose secret doors were open to all disciples through devotion.’

Kebalananda described ‘a Christlike miracle’ by Lahiri Mahasaya. Ramu, a disciple was blind from birth. Following persuasion by Kebalananda, Ramu approached Lahiri Mahasaya and beseeched him with the following words, ‘Master, the Illuminator of the cosmos is in you. I pray you to bring His light into my eyes.’

Lahiri Mahasaya touched Ramu’s forehead at the point between the eyebrows (the seat of the spiritual eye) and said, ‘Keep your mind concentrated there, and frequently chant the name of the prophet Rama for seven days. The splendour of the sun shall have a special dawn for you.’

Miraculously in seven days, Ramu could see for the first time in his life.

Kebalananda said, ‘It was evident in all miracles performed by Lahiri Mahasaya that he never allowed the ego-principle to consider itself a causative force. By perfection of resistless surrender, the master enabled the Prime Healing Power to flow freely through him.’

Lahiri Mahasaya spectacularly healed many others.

But more important than the miracles were the spiritual awakenings he enabled and the ‘Christlike disciples he fashioned,’ Kebalananda said.

Yogananda said he never became a Sanskrit scholar, but ‘Kebalananda taught me a diviner syntax.’

Lahiri Mahasaya continued to be an important part of Yogananda’s journey, guiding him in mysterious ways, years after his passing away.

In 1906, when Yogananda was just a little over 13 years old, he was exploring the hills of Chittagong accompanied by his younger brother Sananda Lal Ghosh. Lahiri Mahasaya appeared before the two brothers, and said that Mukunda had ‘come to earth as God’s representative.’ He prophesized, ‘One day your ideals of Yoga will inspire all mankind.’ This incident was recorded in Sananda’s book, *Mejda*. (‘Mejda’ means second eldest brother in Bengali, which was Yogananda’s mother tongue.)