

A Beginning Journey

in Meditation

By Derrick "Asaf" Gooch

Bangkok, Thailand

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Dedicated to my master
Paramhansa Yogananda,
who has always guided me within the silence.
May the blessings from meditation be
felt by all seekers and bring more peace
and happiness in your life.

PREFACE by
Swami Harinanda
Author of
The Portal

I began my Yogic studies at the early age of nine after being influenced by Ramana Maharshi, and when one looks back on one's life it is quite apparent that numerous people along the way go into making one's pathway up the mountain terribly easy.

Derrick (Asaf) and I have a common teacher in Paramhansa Yogananda, and understandably I can see the influence of that great Yogi manifesting through him in his poetic and Bhaktian writings on this, the most important aspect of Yoga – meditation.

As we unfold our consciousness to that of the “sleeper is awake” we may take different courses or paths up the mountain of self realization, and yet underlying everyone's quest is an indomitable Will to unite with the Paramatman, the higher SELF, or God..

This union does not come about by being a Sunday Yogi – nor by mediocrity in your sadhanas. To experience all pervading Bliss one must devote one's lifetime to Yoga. Yoga is a way of living, and soon by remaining a functional human being, the fulcrum of balance begins to favor Yoga over ego-centric desires.

Derrick's book gives one man's journey into realizing, through his love for God, expressed in daily life and in meditation, that his aspirations are being realized.

I found the book to be charming, warm and heartfelt with devotional love for his Yogic lineage. As it is an inspiration guide to awaken your desire to meditate, I think you will find it a wonderful read also.

Swami Harinanda.

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Introduction

A Beginning Journey in Meditation intends to give awareness to people who, throughout life, are questioning the intent or reason why one should begin meditation. Many people may have already started meditation, but find that they are experiencing "a mind full of monkeys" every time they sit to begin meditation. The expression, "Mind Full of Monkeys," means your thoughts keep running and you cannot sit still long enough to quiet your mind. My hope is that through my personal stories and awareness, and by learning scientific techniques to quiet your mind, you can relate to this information and get motivated to begin your own spiritual journey.

There are as many resources available to us as there are thoughts on the subject of meditation. Everywhere we look, we catch glimpses of spiritual topics informing us how we can obtain Enlightenment, Nirvana, Inner Peace, and Psychic Abilities, find our Spirit Guides, and even uncover the "true" meaning of life. This wish list becomes the desire for abundance that can start the path of meditation, but in the end, will leave us disillusioned. These desires become our distractions, which are meaningless and interfere with the benefits of real meditation that need to unfold naturally, from a "non-desire" attitude. What happens when you pry open a magnificent red rose that Mother Nature has not decided to open yet? You begin to destroy the petals, and no matter how gentle you are, the flower petals begin to tear and drop off. This is an example of how

we can begin to open spiritually-through patience, inner guidance, and "non-desire" meditation.

This process can become very frustrating to many beginners. There are so many books that exclaim, "Just meditate, and remain in nothingness." The choices become so complex that we are "bogged down" in one philosophy, technique, or religious belief. Doubt and skepticism begin to assault our minds, and we ask ourselves, "What is nothingness, and how do I remain in it when I don't even know what nothingness is, and I have a million thoughts going on within my mind?"

Let us get underway by questioning the layers that are confusing and begin by stripping them away, as if we were peeling an onion. Onions have many layers that you can peel before you reach the core of the onion. Just as you are a spiritual being, so meditation works to peel back the unruly layers within your consciousness. We begin to associate with these layers as fear, pain, and suffering. And we will "peel" them away, just as you would the layers of an onion.

From the time we were babies and inside our mother's womb, silence was not actually practiced. (At least, this is true of the Western culture). People enjoy talking to their unborn babies or turning on music--theoretically, to relax the unborn baby. When a young child happens to be a quiet child, many adults mistake the quietude as a flaw in the development of the child, and they become

fearful that they have a non-communicative child. They may say, "I hope my child grows out of this stage." As we begin to contemplate and remember how we were raised, we begin to recognize how we started life overlooking the Silence and recognizing only the sense-pleasures. This becomes evident in our adult years, when we first try to meditate and our minds become uncontrollably distracted. Every person who attempts to meditate can relate to this. Westerners have a saying for it: "Silence is deafening." For anyone who does not understand this saying, it means that silence can make one go crazy, because the senses are used to being in control.

Living in Thailand has given me an opportunity to observe a different culture of people from my own. In the Thai culture, the people are still able to remain "within themselves". This, in fact, benefits them with their spiritual efforts. In this culture, meditation has always played a major role in its "make-up". Recently, the urban areas of Thailand are becoming as modern and busy as any other major city around the world, and this has had a great influence on the younger generation, giving them less time in the day to practice meditation.

Meditation is not a religion. It will not interfere with any search for truths inherent in one's own personal religion. We can retain any faith or conviction while at the same time cultivating the Silence within. Some people experience conflict with their religious beliefs and traditions, thinking that one must separate religion from meditation. In reality, meditation becomes a process or technique that enhances one's religious beliefs. Truly, meditation can increase the comprehension of any religion that one follows. When one has achieved a calm

mind without any disturbances, one can understand by intuitive means that meditation has no true conflict with one's own religious beliefs.

Intuition is the clearest way to perceive Truth, as the Lord Buddha confirmed by sitting in silence. His mind became unquestionably tranquil and only then did his intuition flow freely to perceive the clear pathway to enlightenment. Let me attempt to provide you with an illustration about achieving calmness. Imagine in your mind's eye a pond, and make this pond very calm without any ripples on the surface. You should see unmoving water before you. It has become so calm that you can see your whole body's reflection in the water beneath you. Now, imagine that you pick up a small rock and toss it into the pond. What do you foresee happening next? Rings start to appear, along with a distortion in your reflection. Now you stare into the pond and you cannot see your reflection any longer. We can compare this pond with your mind and your state of consciousness. When troubles begin to arise, the ripples that we saw in the pond are like the disquietude in your mind...images are distorted, and you cannot see clearly because of the distractions that are constantly moving and disturbing your mental consciousness.

Additionally, your desires and their partners, the five senses, influence your mind. These five senses are sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. They could be called the "five-sense telephone," ringing and causing much stimuli and restlessness within the mind and body.

You must be able to remove the energy from your "five-sense telephone" just as you turn off or turn down the ringer on your home telephone. You might think this is impossible, but this happens every night when you go to bed and begin to sleep. When you sleep, your heart rate, pulse, and breathing begin to slow down and the energy withdraws from the outer senses and retreats into the spine and brain. Your subconscious is in control of the major organs and keeps all the vital operations going. This removes the awareness of the senses...one might say, the "assault," by the senses, but this only happens in the state of unconsciousness. Eventually, in your meditation practices, you will learn to withdraw from the senses by using a meditation technique such as the one we will be discussing later. This practice begins to increase your will power and the ability to control the energy within your own subtle channels, and will begin to withdraw the energy from the "five-sense telephone."

All the great masters such as Lord Buddha were centered on calmness and were skilled at calming their minds, and subsequently, wisdom flowed. In the nadir of silence, flows wisdom, and ever-increasing and everlasting bliss. The individual with a calm mind and strengthened will power can frequently accomplish great things. Meditation is the church of all religions and not predestined just for a select few. There can be numerous paths to a single destination, although some paths are faster and possibly better suited for a particular consciousness than others.

We all have at least one thing in common. That one attribute is the desire for happiness. Some call it Love or Bliss; but there are many words we can use

to describe this one emotion, although for easy understanding let's stick with the word, "happiness." We are constantly in the pursuit of happiness all our lives. Sorrowfully, countless people will never uncover the true happiness within their current life because they are following the crowd of people teaching them to look for happiness externally. Society has educated us that the result of success will be happiness. We are conditioned to find the right spouse and start a family, to need a car or house. The list goes on and on and these things are expected to make us happy. Therefore, we make every effort to achieve these goals and we find that one day we wake up and we still are not totally fulfilled from within. We are very happy with our family and job, but something inside us appears to be omitted from our life, and we begin to reflect on what that possibly could be. We begin to feel this inner void more often, typically as a whisper deep within. "Why am I dissatisfied?" we ask. This is a technique our soul uses to provoke us to realize that there is something much greater to be obtained within ourselves--greater than any physical attainment or human desire obtained externally.

The most important concept that I have learned is to realize that this world is like a movie. My master *Paramhansa Yogananda* has taught this many times—this world can be perceived as a gargantuan motion picture playing on the consciousness of our minds. There are shadows and lights, which make up physical substance. Our senses perceive these substances as reality, but in truth, they are only illusions. Physical objects are very impermanent. Nevertheless, the movie is so proficient that we are caught up within it and become attached. As a result, we suffer. We neglect to notice the illusory nature of our lives, because the movie seems to be so authentic, and our senses

demonstrate to us the reality of our delusions (the perception of pain is one good example). Subsequently, one day we are exposed to the Law of *Impermanence* and, for example, we lose someone very dear to us. After such a major event, we start to ask the big questions of life. Why are we here? Why were we brought here to suffer? Is this all there is to life? These are important questions to begin to ask your inner self. For only our inner selves can help us actually to realize these truths. Books and philosophic discussions will increase our knowledge, but only the Silence can give us the real experience and realization of these truths. Let us say, for example, that you sell coffee for a living, and all day you smell coffee and talk about coffee to your customers. If you do not ever taste the coffee how can you ever answer with certainty how coffee really tastes? The true lesson in this is “how does coffee taste.” If you have not actually tasted the coffee that you sell to your customers, how would you begin to explain it to someone wanting to buy the coffee? The only way to experience this is to taste the coffee with your own palate and then have a clear perception of the coffee, not just an idea. The truth is the same about what is missing in your life. The truth is obtained only from an inner realization.

The journey you are to begin is intended to become a bridge to open your mind to the possibility that waiting behind your anxiety is an ever-new ocean of bliss. Meditation can be demonstrated as a scientific key, which will unlock the door to your consciousness. Therefore, by using your own free will, you may confirm or deny this reality. If you acquire anything from this book, please keep in mind that meditation is for all and the truths can be remembered at any time, for they have been eternally recorded within the *Akashic Records* in the *Ether*.

Chapter 1: In the Beginning

Thinking back to when I was about five years old, I told my mom that I wanted to go to church. My memories are somewhat vague about my church awareness. Some years later, I asked my mom why she never took us to church on a regular basis. Her response was, "I took you and Chad to church and then gave both of you your own preference as to whether you wanted to continue or not." After going a few times, I think we both decided to take Mom's option and end the trips to church. My mom also let me know that she baptized my brother Chad when he was a newborn, but that she had never baptized me. She gave me an explanation for that, years later. She said, "I wanted you to decide for yourself which religion would be the most appropriate for you. I just did not aspire to make that decision for you." She went on to say, "When I was young girl, my parents by no means gave me the preference to select a religion. It was just assumed what faith I would adhere to. I started to undergo different thoughts when you were born about letting you make up your own mind."

I think part of the reason my mom gave us the decision on whether or not to go to church was because of her own individual experiences when she was younger. My mom went to an all-girl's Catholic school. This was from the time she was very young until she was out of school. Even though her family was not very stringent in Catholicism, it ran in the family, so they decided it was best for all four girls. When my mom and I would talk about the subject of her school or religion it appeared as though she would relate to both of them collectively as

one experience, which of course it was for her. Soon I began to understand why. Her recollections of school were attached to her religion, and her religion was attached to her school. Catholic nuns were her teachers and did not leave a good impression with her about religion. This made sense, and I could understand why she decided to give both her children a free-will resolution on their own beliefs. I have always felt intense love for my mother and we have always been very close. To this day, I feel very blessed, for her to have listened to her inner guidance and let me render my own decision.

When I first went to church, I recall that my dad did not attend with us. I never really understood my dad and his individual beliefs. He was and has always been a very private person when it came to his spiritual beliefs. Even when I was younger, I would ask him many questions about spiritual subjects and he would dodge the topic, and then change the subject. As far as I understood, he never experienced any religion growing up. I believe now that the stronger influence in my spiritual development came from within, but my mom helped me to respond to this inner guidance by letting me make my own individual choice. My dad did not stand in the way of this initiative since he himself never experienced a religious philosophy. All through the years, my dad would provide us any physical necessity that we required, but really we desired the one attribute he could not give us, which was his companionship. He was very closed off emotionally, which I found very difficult to identify with, as I, myself, felt such intense emotions, and I always desired to express them. I have always been a very spiritual person, even though I did not know precisely what that meant at the time. There was never any uncertainty in my mind that God

was a reality. Additionally, He always existed in my heart as well. As a result, I found it hard to identify with the fact that my dad could not communicate his emotions. One day I kept pressing my dad to tell me his spiritual viewpoints and he finally told me, "I don't believe in God." I was taken aback, to say the least, but not entirely surprised. A portion of me always knew he did not believe in God, although I guess I was in denial of it. I then said, "So when you die you believe that you will just terminate existing, be buried, and then decompose in the earth never to be re-born?" He said, "Yes, that's pretty much what I imagine happens." That day I decided to let the dialogue end, but I felt a real ache for the loneliness that he must have felt all his life. Since that day, I decided not to bring up that exact subject again, although I always made sure that subjects were brought up that dealt with spirituality. I suppose my dad may wonder why I believe so much in spiritual matters when he never did, even though he was the other parent that helped raise me. If he were correct and there is no God, what then motivated millions of other people throughout the world to believe? Because of this thought, I determined that this belief must be realized from within, given that the external world of my dad has never changed his "non-beliefs".

Jumping many years ahead, my dad and I still do not see eye to eye but I have begun to comprehend his belief and his illusions--some of which we all grapple with. Even though he is my father, and not the reverse, it is possible that during this lifetime, I am supposed to help him with his faith, and he to help cement my own for the future. Changes are starting to happen within my dad, and when I look into his eyes today, it seems that he is at least contemplating

spiritual concepts much further as he grows older. I thank Silence and Divine Guidance for helping me to better understand my father and identify with his love. The best way to guide anyone is to lead by example, transform one's own consciousness and others will catch sight of that and will hopefully set in motion the energy to change themselves.

Thinking back to a very important time in my life, I was in upper middle school, at approximately grade nine, on the first day of football practice. I was getting dressed in the locker room. On the left side of me, I heard a voice say, "Do you remember me?" I looked over in the direction where this young man was standing, and I noticed he was about six feet two inches. He was a great deal taller than I, at only about five feet ten inches. I began to explore my mind trying to recall who this person was. I couldn't remember, so I told him so. He then said, "Remember, I used to get babysat in the neighborhood by your house?" I told him, "I have no knowledge of who you are." With a smile he said, "I am Jim, the guy you used to call, 'shorty'! You always were so large but I was always small back then." I finally remembered him and that was the opening of a solid friendship that lasted throughout my high school years.

Jim and his mom really appreciated church and were very religious people with great fundamental beliefs. This had an effect on my spiritual foundation and allowed me to explore whether church was indeed the place to find the answers for questions that I carried deep within me since my early childhood. Church experiences also helped me to begin exploring my spirituality with others, but that spirituality certainly never left the shores of my inner consciousness.

Additional years would elapse before the idea would come that my spirituality was pulling me into different directions. How or why, I did not know, but change was evident by the inner feelings, which were guiding me to learn more. During this time, I was beginning to lose interest in church, as it was not satisfying the longing inside me. I began to realize that I would not find what I was looking for in a church. The discussions in church were so mind-numbing that most people's minds were more on lunch than on the discourse from the preacher. Discussions with reference to the Bible were held in the church and in people's homes, but no techniques were shared on how truly to realize the Truths of the scriptures which were the underpinnings of the church. I began to think, "How can anyone know the truth about God if they still feel suffering?"

I recall the day when a deep spiritual seed was planted for my future inner journey and I decided to be baptized into the church. For those that do not know what baptizing is, I will attempt to explain. Baptism, in the Christian religion, is a ceremony that theoretically clears your sins away. Christians believe that if you accept the Lord Jesus as your lord and savior, then your sins are cleansed. Baptism is completed in water and in front of the people attending worship. The priest leads you into the water, says a few words, and then dips you into the water, symbolizing the purification of your soul. I maintain very fond recollections of the priest before the actual baptism took place. Before the ceremony, the priest talks with you and explains your new responsibilities. I felt a powerful desire to complete this baptism, which was entirely my choice, and in fact, my parents did not become aware that I had made this choice until afterwards.

During the conversation with the preacher, while accepting that Jesus Christ was my Lord and Savior, immediately I had a strong revelation. It was as if a seed was planted within my soul and I started to cry. I cried for about 20 minutes with such pleasure and peace. It seemed to suggest that in this lifetime I would again be searching for God, as I believe I have done during numerous incarnations. This pursuit was not to be just a habitual way, as when just accepting the given dogma. A dogma is accepting a belief without searching deeper within for the actual truth or realization. By the powerful yearning inside, I felt that I required much more!

Because of this, soon I was seldom going to church any longer. Nobody around me really understood what I was going through. I kept this part of my life deep within and did not express it to anyone during that time. I do not even think I really understood it myself. Just as a seed begins to develop under the soil, so do the changes occur that are not always immediately seen within us. It takes water to grow that seed out from the ground, and the "water" around me was only just starting to flow.

For the next several years, I was just a spiritual "nomadic", not actually knowing which direction to go. The conventional duties of life started to creep into my life, and the average desires for success and happiness were overtaking a large amount of my mind and time.

As the inner pull started to develop deeper within me I also noticed that the Internet was starting to be prevalent and I decided to be connected to the

World Wide Web. This started to transform my days and channel my interests again in a spiritual direction. The Internet enabled me to stay at home and to associate with and be drawn to others who had the same kinds of interests--to gain knowledge and uncover more on the spiritual elements of life. During this period, spirituality was becoming a subject of high interest and popularity in the West, with books and television talk shows examining every aspect of the topic. People were searching for spiritual concepts, besides their own religious beliefs. The subject of Spirituality has continued to occupy many people's minds, and interest in it has continued to grow, along with an increasing interest in such matters as Eastern healing techniques, and stress-reducing physical activities such as Yoga and Tai Chi. It is very common today to hear people talking about Yoga, Buddhism, or meditation. Nevertheless, in the west, when I first searched for others to discuss these things, it was difficult to find people with matching interests. I really took pleasure in using the Internet to facilitate discussions with others that had the same interests. Besides this, on the Internet, one did not have to be physically present to engage in dialogue. Additionally, one could speak to many people all over the world--people with far more experience than I could find in my locale.

I started to gain knowledge in many subjects about meditation, Chakras, spiritual centers, spirit guides and people claiming to converse with the dead. At this stage, I was not judging, to establish if anything were true or false. I just wanted to learn further about these topics. It felt as if the seed that had been planted many years before was starting to develop and sought to grow. I began reading whatever publications I could get my hands on in spiritual topics. In one

month, I read almost 20 books on countless different spiritual subjects. Well-read I became. Nevertheless, soon I understood that experiencing reality was the universal law to gaining wisdom, not just reading about it. Reading would never get me any closer to realizing and experiencing the truths within.

Everything I was reading had at least one recommendation in common, the necessity for meditation. Every one of the explorations of spirituality came down to the subject of meditation. So therefore, I began researching meditation and chatting to others on the Internet. Each person I talked to had a different way to start or special tools that particular person would use during meditation. I tried various different ways, but I just was not "catching hold" with any one method. Several books would provide visualization directions to increase calmness. I would think, "I must be doing something wrong because the visualization techniques never seem entirely to work." The books would claim all different kinds of experiences, which I would try, but subsequently, I still could not find anything to happen as expected. I kept practicing numerous methods, and buying and reading more books. Because of some of my readings, I learned that I could pray for help. If my appeal were heartfelt enough then God would send me an individual to help me and maybe teach me something that was appropriate for me to learn. I thought, "Hey I tried everything else why not this?" Then I began to pray and pray for that person to come along. Although I was still fantasizing about all the "what ifs" that spirituality could give me, I was very much determined and sincere. For a while, I was exceedingly caught up in fortune tellers and psychic abilities. It is of no consequence if one believes in fortune tellers, or psychic advisors; however it can really hold you back from your own

progress spiritually if you do, as you begin to depend on this manner of guidance—which does not come from within. Whether you go to fortune tellers or read horoscopes, please gaze within the Silence before altering your direction. Psychic powers are only the by-product of pure silence within. Nevertheless do not desire them. Once you encounter the Silence, then all else seems insignificant in comparison.

Looking back throughout this period it felt as if there were actually no particular direction that really caught my attention in most of the books that I had read. The many books that I read never taught how problematic desires could become. Given that I live with the belief that everything happens for a reason, perhaps learning many different subjects was predestined for my foundation for later years. Learning about many ways in spirituality helped me to understand what is the right path is for me.

It was not until later that I recognized fully that desires kept the spiritual occurrences absent. The Ego and the Soul would cancel one another out and there would be no steps forward. I started to become aware of why improvement was not being made. I imagined being a building. This building symbolized myself and the way that I went about building the knowledge base within that I had created with a defective foundation. If I really sought after the truth I would have to re-establish a new foundation. Almost certainly, the most treacherous habit I was creating was letting my consciousness run amok with different desires for spiritual attainment. Instead, I ought to be committed faithfully to letting the desires diminish in the silence of meditation.

I find myself many years later, after that first trip to church with my mother, now being drawn to eastern style beliefs and experiencing wonderful daily meditations. Looking back on the past has really made me understand where I am now. We can begin to examine our own personal preference in religious beliefs and ask, "Are they produced from a culturally influenced situation or a personal direction we have chosen previous to this incarnation?" Meaning, do our parents, family, and friends have an effect on what we believe about spiritual ideas? Or else, does our personal path guide us to our own internal truths that have come with us before reincarnating into this lifetime? My preference would be to defer this to the reader to decide by looking at your own path and see how it's being shaped. I hope the consequence of sharing my own path will clearly help you ascertain your own. It is alright to examine this idea within yourself; it will help to guide you on your own path of inner growth. Looking at this also "starts the ball rolling" to open your consciousness to new guidance and awareness around and within you.

My hope is that by giving you some personal history of my upbringing and my family's beliefs, it may perhaps shed some light on how I began on this path. This may give you, the reader, a deeper understanding on how your own life has been guided. Periodically, it only takes very little nudges that transform us significantly. We all have free will to listen or close our ears. No matter how hard a lesson has been everything happens for a reason, and I can say, I have never been given more than I can handle even if at the time it feels like there's a mountain on my shoulders.