

**19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Hindu Mystics and Gurus**  
and two Englishmen  
Compiled by Jon Mundy, Ph.D.



1836–1886 **Ramakrishna** taught the Vedanta system of non-dualism. He had several profound mystical experiences as a young boy. Describing at one point how watching white cranes flying again the background of an evening sky threw him into an ecstasy. He

sought to also experience the Truth of Christianity and Islam and concluded that the goal of all religion is the embodiment of the divine. His primary disciple was Vivekananda.

*Mystics in every religion speak  
the same tongue and teach the same truth.*  
Indian, Swami Vivekananda

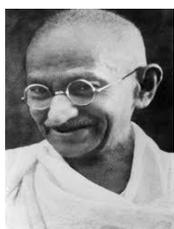
1862-1902, **Swami Vivekananda** (India) the main disciple of Ramakrishna is one of the major figures in the history of Hindu Reform movements, an influential teacher of Vedanta and yoga. He is the first known Indian sage to bring Hinduism to the West. At the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, in 1893, he opened his speech with this line, "Sisters and Brothers of America." The audience clapped for two minutes, and the speech catapulted him to fame with lectures all over the US. A street in downtown Chicago is named Swami Vivekananda Way.



1861–1941 **Rabindranath Tagore** was a Bengali poet and literary figure influenced by the mysticism of the Vedic sages, the Upanishads, and the Bhakti-Sufi mystic Kabir. In 1913, he became the first "non-Westerner" to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. In 1915, English author Evelyn Underhill wrote an introduction to his "100 Poems." He writes "Once we dreamt that we were strangers. We wake up to find that we were dear to each other."

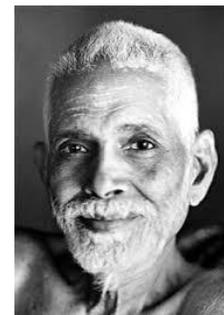


1869–1948 **Mahatma Gandhi**, "the father of India," remained a Hindu his entire life. Influenced by Leo Tolstoy's (1828–1910, Russia) *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* and

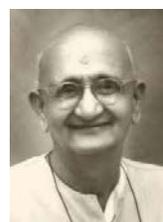


John Ruskin's, *Unto This Last*, he is well known for his nonviolent resistance. He practiced simplicity, vegetarianism, celibacy, and *aparigraha*, or non-possession. He was an exemplary mystic.

1879–1950 **Ramana Maharshi** is perhaps one of the most influential of the Hindu spiritual teachers. He taught self-enquiry. In 1896, at the age of 16, he had a "death-experience" where he became aware of a "current" or "force" which he recognized as his true "I" or "self. He is often regarded as a primary teacher of Advaita Vedanta. When a student would come to him and ask a question, he would respond with, "Who wants to know?"



1882–1950 **Sri Aurobindo** was a Hindu nationalist, scholar, yogi, guru, poet, mystic, and philosopher and nationalist. He joined the Indian movement for independence from British rule and was for a while one of its most influential leaders. He became a spiritual reformer, introducing his visions on human progress and spiritual evolution. He developed a spiritual path he called Integral Yoga. *A Life Divine* is not world denial; it includes active participation in life.

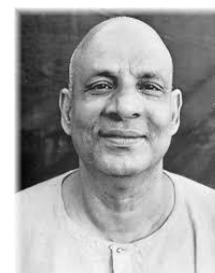


1884–1963, **Swami Ramdas** was an Indian saint, philosopher, philanthropist, pilgrim. He became a wandering ascetic at a young age. In 1922 he met *Ramana Maharshi*. As a result, he went into his first retreat, living for 21 days in solitude in a cave in Arunachala.

Upon leaving this cave he began claiming that, "All was Ram, nothing but Ram."

*"Just as a flower gives out its fragrance to whomsoever approaches our uses it, so love from within us radiates towards everybody and manifests as spontaneous service."* Swami Ramdas

1887-1963, **Sivananda** was a proponent of Yoga and Vedanta. He studied medicine and served for several years as a physician and he founder of the Divine Life Society in 1936. He authored 200 books on Yoga, Vedanta, and founded the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh. His disciples included Swami Chinmayananda, Satchidananda (1914-2002) and Vishnudevananda. The Sivananda Ashram in NYC is named after him.



1895–1986 **Jiddu Krishnamurti** is in a class by himself. Born in India he spent most of his life in the United States. He would not accept disciples, as he said, *“People use the guru as a crutch.”* Refusing to play the role of a guru, he urged his listeners to be a light unto themselves. His primary teaching is the pursuit of freedom from the ego. In 1929



Krishnamurti disbanded *The Order of the Star of the East* founded to support him. For the next sixty years he traveled the world, speaking about self-knowledge. George Bernard Shaw said Krishnamurti was the most beautiful human being he ever saw. Krishnamurti and Aldous Huxley were friends and

Huxley wrote the foreword to Krishnamurti book *The First and Last Freedom*. He was also friends with and influenced the works of Joseph Campbell. He was considered a great teacher by Ramana Maharshi, Anandamayi Ma, and Osho (1931-1990, India). A spiritual teacher who disavowed rituals and dogma, Krishnamurti claimed that liberation is available, here—now. At age 90 he addressed the United Nations about peace, and he was awarded the 1984 UN Peace Medal.

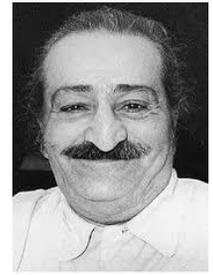
1898–1981 **Paul Brunton** was a British philosopher, traveler, mystic and guru, and a true "seeker" who dedicated his life to the inner search. He went to India where he spent time with Meher Baba and Ramana Maharshi. He is credited along with Madam Blavatsky, Vivekananda and Yogananda as *the man who introduced Eastern Philosophy to the Western World*. He introduced Ramana Maharshi to the West through his books, *"A Search in Secret India"* and *"The Secret Path."*



1893–1952 **Paramahansa Yogananda** was the founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1917. He taught the need for direct experience of mystical truth. *"The true basis of religion is not belief, but intuitive experience. Intuition is the soul's power of knowing God. To know what religion is all about, one must know God."* His *Autobiography of a Yogi* has been a perennial bestseller since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. See the movie "Awake."



1894–1969 **Meher Baba** was an Indian guru of Persian descent who spent long periods of fasting in seclusion. From 1925 to the end of his life, he communicated only with an alphabet board. He taught that the phenomenal world is an illusion and that the Universe is imagination, that God is what really exists, and that each soul is really God passing through imagination to realize individually His own divinity.



DON'T WORRY —  
BE HAPPY.  
MEHER BABA

1895-1986, **Wei Wu Wei**, (Terence Gray) was an Englishman and theatre producer who created the Cambridge Festival Theatre as an experimental theatre in Cambridge. He produced over 100 plays there between 1926 and 1933. Gray maintained his family's racehorses in England and Ireland and in 1957 his horse Zarathustra won the Ascot Gold Cup. He dropped out of society in 1958, went to India, studied with *Ramana Maharshi*, and wrote several inspirational books under the pseudonym of Wei Wu Wei. In Chinese Wei Wu Wei means "non-meddlesome action." He was a tremendous influence on Ramesh Balsekar.



1896–1981 **Anandamayi Ma** (Bangladesh) Sivananda described her as "the most perfect flower the Indian soil had ever produced." Paramhansa Yogananda translates *Anandamayi* as "joy permeated." This name was given to her by her devotees in the 1920s to describe what they saw as her habitual state of divine joy and bliss. She said she became completely empty with no sense of "I am." She is," she said, "nobody."



1897–1981 **Sri Maharaja Nisargadatta** was an Indian Guru of non-dualism. The publication in 1973 of *I Am That*, brought him worldwide recognition and followers, especially from North America and Europe. He said that *our true nature is perpetually free, peaceful awareness*. This awareness is different from the personal, individual consciousness that is related to the body. He influenced *Wei Wu Wei*, *Ramesh Balsekar* and *Jed McKenna*.





1897–2009 **Ramesh Balsekar** was a disciple of *Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj*. He was drawn to the nondualism of Advaita, particularly the teachings of *Ramana Maharshi* and *Wei Wu Wei*. He wrote more than 20 books, was president of the Bank of India, and received guests daily in his home in Mumbai until shortly before his death. According to Ramesh, *Consciousness is all there is*. Perhaps his best book is "Who Cares?!"

1897- 1961 **Bhagawan Nityananda**  
Nityananda, which means, "always in bliss. Before the age of twenty, Nityananda became a wandering yogi, spending time on yogic studies and practices in the Himalayas. In 1936, he went to the Shiva temple in the village of Ganeshpuri and asked if he could stay there. The family that looked after the temple agreed and built a hut for him. As his visitors and followers increased, the hut expanded and became an ashram. To the people around him, he was an *avadhuta*: one who is absorbed in the transcendental state. His teachings are published in the "Chidakash Gita".



1889–1964 **Jawaharlal Nehru** was the first Prime Minister of India and a central figure in Indian politics before and after independence. He emerged as the paramount leader of the Indian independence movement under the tutelage of *Mahatma Gandhi* and ruled India from its establishment as an independent nation in 1947 until his death in 1964. He thought that religious taboos were preventing India from going forward and adapting to modern conditions:



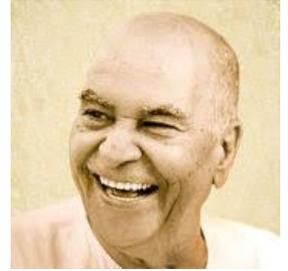
*"No country or people who are slaves to dogma and dogmatic mentality can progress, and unhappily our country and people have become extraordinarily dogmatic and little-minded."*

1908–1982 **Muktananda** was a disciple and the successor of *Bhagawan Nityananda*. He wrote several books about Kundalini Shakti, and Vedanta, including a spiritual autobiography entitled *The Play of Consciousness*. His message is, "Honor your Self, worship your Self, and see God in each other." God dwells in everyone. With the use of meditation, pranayama, mantra chanting at



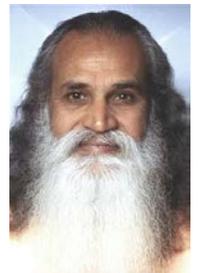
his ashram in Genishpuri, India I had my first experience of Kundalini Shakti. His spiritual autobiography is *The Play of Consciousness*.

1910-1997 **H.W.L. Poonja**, also known as "Poonjaji" or "Papaji". Although he denied being part of any formal tradition, he is considered a yogi-saint of the Advaita Vedanta and Bhakti traditions. Although he studied under *Ramana Maharshi*. Ramana Maharshi never claimed to have any disciples. When he met Ramana Maharshi in 1944, Ramana Maharshi told him.



*I cannot show you God or enable you to see God because God is not an object that can be seen. God is the subject. He is the seer. Don't concern yourself with objects that can be seen. Find out who the seer is.*

1913-2002 **Satchidananda Saraswati** was a disciple of *Sivananda* (1887-1963) a yoga adept, who gained fame in the west particularly after patriating in Woodstock Festival in Bethel, NY in 1969. He was the author of many philosophical and spiritual books including an updating of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and the *Bhagavad Gita* for modern readers. He founded Yogaville Ashram in Virginia in 1980. It includes the famous Lotus Interfaith Temple. Satchidananda lent his name to the founding of The New Seminary in New York City in 1980.



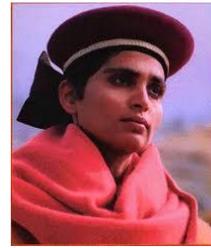
1920–2009 **Vimala Thakar's** philosophy was influenced by the spiritual teachings of *Jiddu Krishnamurti* and the nonviolent social change philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. She sought to reconcile the often-separated worlds of spirituality and social action, arguing that in fact each is indispensable to the other.



1926–2011 **Satya Sai Baba** was a guru, Vedantist, and spiritual leader, his apparent materializations of vibhuti (holy ash) and other small objects such as rings, necklaces, and watches, along with reports of miraculous healings, resurrections, clairvoyance, bilocation, and alleged omnipotence and omniscience, were a source of both fame and controversy.



1927-1993 **Vishnudevananda** a disciple of **Sivananda Saraswathi**, was the founder of the International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center and Ashram. His book *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga* (1959) established him as an authority of Hatha and Raja yoga. His centers still exist in Val Morin, Canada, New York City, and Nassau in the Bahamas. It was under his tutelage that I did my yoga teacher training in Val Morin in the summer of 1970. There I also participated in a fire walking ceremony.



**Gurumayi** 1955-Present is the current spiritual head of the Siddha Yoga path. Her teacher was Muktananda in the lineage of Nityananda. Muktananda died in 1982, after which Gurumayi and her brother became joint spiritual heads of the Siddha Yoga path. However,

Gurumayi brother left the Siddha Yoga path in 1985. According to his 1986 interview in *Hinduism Today* he left by his own choice, deciding to cease to be a Siddha Yoga Sannyasi but wishing his sister well as sole guru

**Mahamandaleshwar Swami Nityananda.** He is

Gurumayi's estranged younger brother who was first named as Muktananda's successor, served as go-guru with her from 1982 to 1985, and has since established his own ashram, **Shanti Mandir** in Walden NY where he continues to give programs and retreats.



1931-1990 **Osho or Bhagawan Shree Rajneesh**

Of the three teachers I spent time with in India, Osho was the most interesting. A former professor of philosophy, when I met him in 1971, he was giving daily lectures in Mumbai. He gave me the name *Nitham*. I still enjoy listening to his lectures on CD. I never, however, became an active disciple (sannyasin). He said the greatest values in life are awareness, love, meditation, and laughter. According to Osho, enlightenment is natural. The ego, however, is distracted from enlightenment by emotional ties to societal expectations, personal fears, and inhibitions. Since he disapproved of organized religion and the institution of priesthood, not surprisingly, he was not liked by the establishment. A great intellect, he said his main teaching was through his jokes.



1954-Present, **Mooji** (born Anthony Paul Moo-Young) is a spiritual teacher originally from Jamaica. Mooji is a disciple of **Papaji**, a devotee of the advaita and nondual master **Ramana Maharshi**. Mooji shares self-inquiry, directing his students to the non-dual Self by encouraging them to question who or what they are at the deepest level.



One exercise, written by Mooji in 2015 for a summer retreat, is to identify the natural feeling "I am" or "I exist" and staying with this for 5 to 7 minutes at a time. Another is to come to the recognition that everything (thoughts, emotions, sensations) can be perceived, and then inquiring, "Can the perceiver itself be perceived?"

1953-Present **Amma** ("Mother"), is a Hindu spiritual leader and guru who is revered as a saint by her followers. She has developed a form of darshan in which she gives hugs to her students.



*"I don't see if it is a man or a woman. I don't see anyone different from my own self. A continuous stream of love flows from me to all of creation. This is my inborn nature. The duty of a doctor is to treat patients. In the same way, my duty is to console those who are suffering."*

1957-present **"Sadhguru" Jaggi Vasudev** is a yogi, mystic teacher & author.

In 1982, at the age of 25, he had a mystical experience while meditating which led to his teaching yoga and the founding of the Isha Foundation, a non-profit organization which offers Yoga program and is involved in social outreach, education and environmental issues. His books have appeared on the NY Times best-seller list.

