

Great Spiritual Masters and Teachers

Written by Devon Love

Sections on **Babaji, How To Pick (Or Not Pick) A Spiritual Teacher, and Conclusion**

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Introduction

Throughout time, many spiritual masters have offered teachings in service to humanity. Many who have been inclined toward self-realization have, through a wide variety of different paths, reached this goal and gone on to teach others. This process remains a mystery to most, and yet many people at some point in their lives begin to question who they are and seek out teachings to help them answer this question. There are multitudes of different ways that spiritual information is passed on and shared with others. In this course we will explore the many different categories of spiritual masters and teachers throughout recorded history.

Review Of Literature (*Exam questions are not drawn from the Review Of Literature section.*)

Tao Te Ching (1963) translated by D.C. Lau from Lao Tsu's original words is a translation of the Chinese classic. The Tao Te Ching rings clearly through the ages as a Great Pearl of timeless Wisdom. All serious metaphysicians should study this work, and meditate on its teachings. Like all great spiritual texts, the *Tao Te Ching*, when deeply contemplated, reveals the true nature of the universe.

Peace Is Every Step: The Path Of Mindfulness In Everyday Life (1991) by Thich Nhat Hahn is a wonderful book. Thich Nhat Hahn is a Zen Buddhist monk whose teachings come straight from the heart. Those who have discovered his work have likely been transformed by it. His words are filled with compassion, humility, and purity. In *Peace Is Every Step*, Te (teacher) as his students refer to him, teaches of awakening to the joy of now, the loving presence of life. He speaks of finding joy and peace wherever one is, in looking at flowers, at the blue sky, or into the eyes of a child. Thich Nhat Hahn's teachings apply to everyone, and this simple book is an excellent introduction to his work.

The Miracle Of Mindfulness (1975) by Thich Nhat Hahn is another beautiful gem arising from the consciousness of Te, this is a Zen masterpiece, reminding us in simple, economical, and flowing words of the wisdom of being present to life. Using anecdotes from his life, Te tells us to wake up and consciously experience each moment as the precious gift that it is. From washing dishes to drinking a cup of tea, he encourages us to be fully present, awake, and aware, to be fully in our bodies, and experiencing the actual physical sensations of breathing and movement in these acts, this being the key to fully realizing ourselves.

The Heart Of Buddha's Teachings: Transforming, Suffering Into Peace, Joy, And Liberation (1998), by Thich Naht Hahn, presents the teachings of Buddha in a simple and lovely way. His understanding and interpretation of these teachings is flawless. He speaks of his own relationship with suffering, and how he merged with Buddha through this. He goes to the heart of Buddha's teachings on suffering and non-suffering, misery and happiness, and how these each exist only with the presence of the other. From chapter 1: *Buddha was not a god. He was a human being like you and me, and he suffered just as we do. If we go to the Buddha with our hearts open, he will look at us, his eyes filled with compassion, and say, "Because there is suffering in your heart, it is possible for you to enter my heart." ...If you have experienced hunger, you know that having food is a miracle. If you have suffered from the cold, you know the preciousness of warmth. When you have suffered, you know how to appreciate the elements of paradise that are present. If you dwell only in your suffering, you will miss paradise. Don't ignore your suffering, but don't forget to enjoy the wonders of life, for your sake and for the benefit of many beings.*

The Art Of Happiness: A Handbook For Living (1998) by His Holiness the Dalai Lama with Howard C. Cutler M.D. is a collaboration between H.H. the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, and Dr. Cutler, a psychiatrist. These two people broke the barriers between spirituality and psychology in order to help people realize happiness. The perspective in the book alternates between the understanding of a Western psychiatrist, and the understanding of a Tibetan spiritual leader, through a conversation in which each attempts to understand the other. The outcome is a rich dialogue of great importance, which explores questions such as... "Is happiness truly possible?" and... "How is it that we find happiness?" If you are seeking happiness, this book is recommended.

Ethics For The New Millennium (1999) by His Holiness The Dalai Lama is a book dedicated toward the task of right living. An excerpt from chapter 1 reads as follows: *We have, in my view, created a society in which people find it harder and harder to show one another basic affection. In place of the sense of community and belonging, which we find*

such a reassuring feature of less wealthy (and generally rural) societies, we find a high a degree of loneliness and alienation. Despite the fact that millions live in close proximity to one another, it seems that many people, especially among the old, have no one to talk to but their pets. Modern industrial society often strikes me as being like a huge self-propelled machine. Instead of human beings in charge, each individual is a tiny, insignificant component with no choice but to move when the machine moves. Around this observation, H. H. the Dalai Lama offers a cure for what ails us. This is an excellent book, and a great follow-up to *The Art Of Happiness*.

Rumi as translated by Coleman Barks in *The Essential Rumi* (2001) is an exquisite translation to read. Here we find the poetry of Rumi, and if you have not experienced his work, there is nothing to do but drink from the fountain:

The Many Wines

God has given us a dark wine so potent that, drinking it, we leave the two worlds.

God has put into the form of hashish a power to deliver the taster from self-consciousness.

God has made sleep so that it erases every thought.

God made Manjun love Layla so much that just her dog would cause confusion in him.

There are thousands of wines that can take over our minds.

Don't think all ecstasies are the same!

Jesus was lost in his love for God. His donkey was drunk with barley.

Drink from the presence of saints, not from those other jars.

*Every object, every being, is a jar full of joy—from *The Essential Rumi**

Guru For The Aquarian Age: The Life And Teachings Of Guru Nanak (1996) by Steve Gilbar and Partnatma Singh talks about a particular guru named Nanak. From the introduction by Yogi Bajan: *Guru Nanak served humanity by openly teaching this technique of awareness in order to bring men out from the pit of hell into which they had been dragged by the blind, ritualistic, self-centered, spiritual egoists of that dark age. He gave men freedom of the spirit and took away the domination of these "middlemen." Humanity had committed the error time and time again of worshipping the man rather than the truth he represents. Guru Nanak taught that it is God who prevails through demand and the man—however great he may be—is only the channel, the instrument for the flow of Divine Wisdom. Men are meant to praise God, and to teach others to do so, not to become objects of worship themselves. Thus, Guru Nanak reestablished righteousness and the path to glory in his own time. He made mankind understand the basic law of life: "Nanak nam Chardi kala, tere bhane sarbat ka bhala," keep up and wish good to all.*

Isis Unveiled: Secrets Of The Ancient Wisdom Traditions, Madame Blavatsky's First Work, A New Abridgment For Today (1997) by Helena P. Blavatsky, abridged by Michael Gomes is a classic. Helena Blavatsky was a spiritual adventurer and metaphysician who founded the Theosophical Society, "A world organization dedicated to fellowship among all peoples and encouragement of the study of religion, philosophy, and science." In this voluminous book, Blavatsky endeavors to reveal the truth underlying the ancient mystery teachings found in many cultures. Though the original is difficult to read, the abridged edition is much more accessible. If one is serious about metaphysics, theosophy, Egyptology, and mystery school teachings, this is a must read.

Hildegard Von Bingen's Mystical Visions: Translated From Scivias (1995) translated by Bruce Hozeski is all about Hildegard Von Bingen, an eleventh century mystical visionary who had begun to have visions and speak prophecy by the age of 15. She was a writer and an accomplished musician, and everything she wrote and composed seemed divinely inspired. This book is a translation from her work entitled *Scivias*, which means *Know The Path*. It is a collection of her visions and the prophecy brought forth in them. There are 26 visions, and Hozeski breaks each one up into sections and discusses and interprets the rich symbolism contained within. This is a profound look into the visions of a great mystic.

In *Tales of Hasidim: Book One, The Early Masters* (1991) by Martin Buber, translated by Olga Marx, the author tells the stories of the early leaders of this religion. The brilliant Jewish philosopher and scholar/practitioner of the Hasidic faith, comments on the philosophy of Hasidic Judaism. His writing on The Baal Shem Tov were used in the research for this course. Martin Buber's body of work has been profoundly influential in its focus on the value of human relationships and conscious interaction with life. His philosophical views are beautifully expressed in the now classic *I And Thou* (1970). If you are interested in learning more about Hasidism or human relationships, these works are invaluable to your studies.

Why The Baal Shem Tov Laughed: 52 Stories About Our Great Chasidic Rabbis (1993) by Sterna Citron is an informative piece of literature on Hasidic Judaism. From the back cover: *In the year 5487, a brilliant source of light illuminated the dark skies of European Jewry. Yisroel Baal Shem Tov breathed life and joy into a population oppressed by a*

hostile environment and depressed by disillusionment... “These Hasidic stories are not only heartwarming and encouraging but also a source of our own character building. While reaching the goals of the saintly individuals may be unrealistic, the principles they established and manifested in their lives should serve as guidelines for us. Even the fact that we cannot achieve their greatness should not deter us from at least trying to emulate them.”—from Dr. Abraham J. Twerski

A Simple Path (1995) by Mother Theresa and compiled by Lucinda Vardey chronicles the works of Mother Theresa, her unflinching dedication to serving those in need, and the formation of her powerful and compassionate organization, The Missionaries Of Charity. The story of Mother Theresa and her works is an inspiration to all. This is highly recommended reading. From the back cover: “There is something else to remember—that this kind of love begins at home. We cannot give to the outside what we don’t have on the inside. This is very important. If I can’t see God’s love in my brother and sister then how can I see that love in somebody else? How can I give it to somebody else? Everybody has got some good. Some hide it, some neglect it, but it is there.” —Mother Theresa

The Philosophy Of Freedom: The Basis For A Modern World Conception (1916) was translated by Michael Wilson and is an early work of philosophy by Rudolph Steiner. Steiner was a 19th-century philosopher, spiritualist and clairvoyant who created a spiritual-philosophical cosmology that he called anthroposophy. He was a student of mystery teachings, and was involved for years with the Theosophical society, as well as the Rosicrucians. The *Philosophy Of Freedom* was his defining work outlining his cosmological view. From the back cover: *Are we free, whether we know it or not? Or is our sense of freedom merely an illusion? Rudolph Steiner tackles this age-old problem in a new way. He says that by taking account of our own activity of thinking, we can know the reasons for our actions. And if these reasons are taken from our world of the ideals, then our actions are free, because we alone determine them. But this freedom cannot be settled for us by philosophical argument. It is not simply granted to us. If we want to become free, we have to strive by our own inner activity to overcome our unconscious urges and habits of thought. In order to do this we must reach a point of view that recognizes no limits to knowledge, sees through all illusions, and opens the door to an experience of the reality of the spiritual world. Then we can achieve the highest level of evolution. We can recognize ourselves as free spirit.* —Michael Wilson

Gurdjieff: The Key Concepts (2003) by Sophia Wellbeloved is a thorough investigation of Gurdjieff’s legacy of work. From the back cover: “Sophia Wellbeloved has provided here a tool for delving beneath Gurdjieff’s veil of words, for both a specialized and general public... this is a work that honors Gurdjieff’s gift to the moral and spiritual welfare of mankind.” —Paul Beekman Taylor. “This unique book offers clear definitions of Gurdjieff’s teaching terms, placing him within the political, geographical, and cultural context of his time. Selected entries look at diverse aspects of his work.”

Teachings Of The Hindu Mystic (2001) by Andrew Harvey is a compilation of writings from the Hindu mystical tradition. Andrew Harvey is a world-renowned author, lecturer, and teacher of the world’s spiritual traditions. He has spent many years studying Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. Included are works from the Bhagavad-Gita, the Upanishads, teachings from Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharishi, as well as devotional poetry from Mirabai, Ramprasad, and others. This is a great introduction to Hindu mystic teachings, with its beautiful way of expression through lyrical verse.

Brother Francis: An Anthology Of Writings By And About St. Francis Of Assisi (1975) by Lawrence Cunningham tells us how St. Francis of Assisi was an “ecologist, naturalist, anti-materialist, feminist, mystic, poet, philosopher and, above all, Christian. He presents the stories of the life of this simple, loving man, and his compassionate teachings in an engaging and easy to read book.

Teresa Of Avila: The Progress Of A Soul (1999) by Kathleen Medwick is the beautiful and engaging story of Teresa of Avila, from her youth to her life of dedication to God and to spiritual awakening, to her leaving home and becoming a Carmelite nun. We learn of her long illness, her visions, and her writings, particularly her treatise on *Ascent of the Soul*. She was a fascinating woman, and this is a good read.

The Gospel Of Sri Ramakrishna (1989), translated by Swami Nikhilananda, contains the wise words of Ramakrishna, translated by Swami Nikhilananda. This gentle and clear prose speaks to many of the questions we might have about the myriad of relationships that we encounter living as humans. Ramakrishna talks on such subjects as; *God With And Without Form, The Disciplines Of Tantra, Purification Of The Mind, The Many Names Of One God, Worship Of The Divine Mother, A Life Of Worldliness, and True Renunciation*. Ramakrishna does not come across as teaching a mystery or revealing the unknown. He speaks to us as if he is simply sharing his heart. This is a good introduction to Ramakrishna’s teachings.

Seven Arrows (1972) by Hyemeyhosts Storm contain the teachings of an American Indian teacher. From *The Circle, Seven Arrows: Dear Reader: If you and I were sitting in a circle of people on the prairie, and if I were then to*

place a painting drum or an eagle feather in the middle of this circle, each of us would perceive these objects differently. Our vision of them would vary according to our individual positions in the circle, each of which would be unique... So begins Hyemeyohsts Storm's teaching of the ways of the Great Plains people, the Brotherhood Of The Shield, an orderly and peaceful society existing for hundreds of years before European settlers came to North America. This teaching, through story within story, tells of the great unifying teachings of the Seven Arrows, the Medicine Wheel, the Vision Quest, and the Sundance. This book is a doorway into this very deep and sacred way, telling of the metaphorical aspects of the stories, giving us a key to the oral traditions steeped in wisdom, which made these people and their culture one of the most peaceful, compassionate, and successful societies in recorded history. These teachings are timeless, and apply here and now. They are for all people, and can be understood on many levels. This book is highly recommended to all.

Peace Pilgrim: Her Life And Work In Her Own Words (1992) by Peace Pilgrim is about the woman who set off on a long trek through many cities to connect with people all over the country, talking about peace, compassion, God, and love. She wrote this book, telling us how, from her childhood, her entire life prepared her for her Pilgrimage. She talks about her *Four Preparations, Four Purifications, and Four Relinquishments*. She talks about her experiences during her 28 years of walking the length and breadth of the United States, and why she gave her life to sharing her message of peace. Peace Pilgrim speaks with authority, and no-nonsense integrity, as well as great compassion and wisdom.

You Are That: Satsang With Gangaji, V.2 (1996) by Gangaji is in question and answer format. Gangaji sits in satsang with devotees and answers questions. Yet it would appear that they are all the same question, the same answer. From the back cover: "Stillness reveals presence of being. You are that presence of being. Receive your Self. Drink your Self. Be Nourished by your Self. Begin your exploration of That. I do not mean explore your thoughts. You have explored your thoughts, and they have taken you as far as they can take you. I do not mean explore your emotions, your feelings, your sensations, or your circumstances. Explore your Self. That which is before, during, and after all objects of awareness. THAT!"

The Golden Guru: The Strange Journey Of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (1987) by James S. Gordon takes the perspective of fascination with the phenomenon of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. Having gained insight and benefit from Rajneesh's teachings, especially his Dynamic Meditation practice, the author spent time with the Guru and his followers in Oregon when things were going awry and controversy surrounded them. If you've always wondered what happened with this very popular spiritual teacher, and what all the controversy was about, you would enjoy this book.

Part One

God-Realized: Avatara, Messiah, Buddha, and the Immortals

Throughout time there have been stories of gods living as humans. Many cultures have created mythology. Most religions are born from the life stories and teachings of humans who are considered incarnations of a living God. A common idea in these stories is that God incarnates as a human to encourage, through teaching and by example, the spiritual evolution of humanity. We will look at several examples from different cultures, but with very similar stories and teachings.

Related Definitions

Avatara: In English, Avatara means an embodiment, or physical manifestation of the Divine. The Sanskrit word and original meaning is a shade different, translated as "the descent of God," or simply "incarnation." The word incarnation does not reflect the Western concept of "becoming flesh." In the case of God, there is no distinction between the physical body and the energy behind it.

Buddha: From the Sanskrit root Buddha, which means both "to wake up," and "to know." So, then, Buddha means Awakened One, or Enlightened One.

Bodhisattva: A Bodhisattva is an Awakened One who chooses to continue living on the earth to guide all beings toward enlightenment.

Messiah: Messiah is a Hebrew word signifying "the coming savior". The Greek translation is Christ, The Anointed One.

Immortal: One who is outside the dimension of time, does not age, and can live on earth indefinitely

AVATARS FROM INDIA

Lord Krishna

The legend of Krishna began over 3000 years ago. It is said that he appeared with his brother, Balarama. Krishna was an Avatara, an incarnation of Vishnu, one of the three faces of God in Hindu mythology. These three faces are Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), and Shiva (the destroyer). Shiva manifested in order to bring aid to the "demigods" as they prayed for assistance. The Supreme Lord Shiva manifests at certain times to re-establish the teachings of the Vedas. In the Bhagavad-gita, Lord Krishna promises, "Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice... and a predominant rise of irreligion at that time I descend Myself, to deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to re-establish the principles of religion, I myself appear millennium after millennium." It is said that Krishna spent 125 years in incarnation before disappearing again, a time which marked the current age of destruction, known as Kali.

Krishna is Shiva's manifestation as the God of Love, and love is the force that sustains and preserves. It is through devotion that he is known. The Bhagavad-Gita is a classical Hindu text, a beautiful poem, which is contained in the Mahabharata, an epic account of a great battle. The Bhagavad-Gita describes a conversation between Lord Krishna and Prince Arjuna, his close friend and devoted servant. The conversation takes place on the battlefield, when Arjuna questions Krishna on the deepest concerns of his heart and spirit.

There is much debate on whether or not these events actually took place. Many believe although veiled in antiquity, the events recorded truly happened. Others interpret these stories as metaphoric mythology. Whatever the truth, the teachings of Krishna are timeless, and do not depend on whether or not they can be proved historically.

The following are excerpts from the Bhagavad-Gita, as translated by Eknath Easwaran (1985):

From Chapter 4, entitled "Wisdom In Action"

Sri Krishna: I told this eternal secret to Visivat. Visivat taught Manu, and Manu taught Ikshvaku.

Thus, Arjuna, eminent sages received knowledge of yoga in a continuous tradition. But through time the practice of yoga was lost in the world. The secret of these teachings is profound. I have explained them to you today because you are my friend and devotee.

Arjuna: You were born much after Visivat; he lived very long ago. Why do you say that you taught this yoga in the beginning?

Sri Krishna: You and I have passed through many births, Arjuna. You have forgotten, but I remember them all. My true being is unborn and changeless. I am the Lord who dwells in every creature. Through the power of my own Maya, I manifest myself in a finite form.

Whenever dharma declines and the purpose of life is forgotten, I manifest myself on earth. I am born in every age to protect the good, to destroy the evil, and to re-establish dharma.

He who knows me as his own divine self breaks through the belief that he is the body and is not reborn as a separate creature. Such a One, Arjuna, is united with me. Delivered from selfish attachments, fear, and anger, filled with me, surrendering themselves to me, purified in the fire of my being, many have reached the state of unity in me.

As men approach me, so I receive them. All paths, Arjuna, lead to me. Those desiring success in their actions worship the gods; through action in the world of mortals, their desires are quickly fulfilled.

From Chapter 13, entitled "The Field And The Knower"

Sri Krishna: I will tell you of the wisdom that leads to immortality: the beginningless Brahman, which can be called neither being nor nonbeing.

It dwells in all, in every hand and foot and head, in every mouth and eye and ear in the universe. Without senses itself, it shines through the functioning of the senses. Completely independent, it supports all things. Beyond the gunas, it enjoys their play.

It is both near and far, both within and without every creature; it moves and is unmoving. In its subtlety it is beyond comprehension. It is indivisible, yet appears divided in separate creatures. Know it to be the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer.

I have revealed to you the nature of the Field and the meaning and object of true knowledge. Those who are devoted to me, knowing these things, are united with me.

These are a few of the many rich verses contained in the Bhagavad-Gita. It is a spiritual text well worth reading, and filled with truths revealed.

The practice of offering one's life in devotion to Krishna is very much alive in the Hare Krishna faith. In 1956, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada formed the International Society For Krishna Consciousness. The goal of the society is to bring the teachings of Krishna to as many people as possible. They believe that only through devotion to Krishna can truth be realized. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada states in *Civilization And Transcendence* (1990):

“People do not know what real progress is. The Vedic civilization is not interested in the false progress of economic development. For instance, sometimes people boast, ‘we have gone from the hut to the skyscraper.’ They think this is progress. But in the Vedic civilization, one thinks about how much he is advanced in self-realization. He may live in a hut and become very advanced in self-realization. But if he wastes his time turning his hut into a skyscraper, then his whole life is wasted. Modern so-called civilization is simply a dog's race. The dog is running on four legs, and modern people are running on four wheels. The learned, astute person will use this life to gain what he has missed in countless prior lives—namely, realization of self and realization of God.

“When asked by a Krishna devotee, ‘How can people follow *sanatana-dharma* on a practical, daily basis?’

Sri Prabhupada answers “How are we doing it? Is it not practical? Krishna requests, ‘Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me, and offer your obeisances to Me.’ Where is the impracticality? Where is the difficulty?’ And Krishna promises... ‘If you do this, you'll come to me. Without any doubt you'll come to me.’ Why don't you do that?”

Krishna's teachings are of self-realization through devotion. This is an example of Bahkti (Devotion) Yoga. It is based on the understanding that complete and total devotion leads to losing one's self in God, and therefore realizing oneself *as* God.

There are obvious connections between the teachings of Krishna and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Some have even questioned whether the origins of the teachings of these two great spiritual leaders are the same. The messages are very similar.

Buddha, The Enlightened

Buddha was born Siddhartha Gautama in approximately 557 B.C. in northern India. His father was a King from the Sakya lineage. His upbringing was exceedingly luxurious and his family was very wealthy. He was physically beautiful and handsome, of pure descent on both sides of his family. At 16 he married a Princess named Yasodhara, and they had a child they named Rahula.

He was a man who had everything; youth, excellent health, superior intelligence, physical beauty, wealth, stature, love, and family. Yet in his 20's he found great discontent, as told in the story of *The Four Passing Sights*. The story states that when Siddhartha was born his father summoned fortunetellers to find out what the future held for his son. All agreed that this was no usual child. It was seen that there were two paths that he could take, to remain in the world, and unify India, becoming her greatest king, or to become a renunciate, and be not a king, but a great spiritual redeemer.

It was told that with the witnessing of The Four Sights, the Prince would renounce his worldly status and seek nirvana. At the age of 29, when Yasodhara was with child, Siddhartha went out to see the beautiful parks surrounding the palace grounds. On this outing, Siddhartha observed an old man hobbling down the street. He asked his attendant, Chandaka, why this man appeared disabled and wrinkled. Chandaka explained that this man had seen many years. Then Siddhartha inquired whether all men attain this condition as the years pass, and Chandaka revealed to him that this was so. Siddhartha then understood that he, too, would become as this one. He returned to the palace with this new understanding. On subsequent days he saw a man who was very ill, and he also saw a corpse. He questioned Chandaka similarly about these sights, and became more and more disturbed.

Siddhartha saw the body's inevitable movement toward disease, weakness, and death, and that the physical plane held no real fulfillment. Finally the fourth sight appeared, which was a monk, in the traditional saffron colored robe, who appeared before him with a shining countenance, radiating peace and joy. He asked Chandaka why this one appeared to be free of the inherent suffering of physical life. Chandaka replied that this one had relinquished attachment to the things of the world, sought only Nirvana, and walked around begging for his sustenance. Siddhartha saw that this one, in giving up all worldly things, had found something that could

not be gained through worldly acquisition. Siddhartha returned to the palace knowing that he too would follow this path, with the understanding that he would succeed.

It so followed that Siddhartha gave up his Princehood and went out into the world, becoming an ascetic, donning the saffron robe and taking up the begging bowl. He sought the wisest yogis and entered into the study of Hindu spiritual thought. He studied yoga until he felt he had learned all that could serve him. Next he joined a group of ascetics, and began a fast that lasted until his body became weakened and was near starvation. On entering this state, Siddhartha saw this as only another physical manifestation. He gave up his fast, and began to develop the idea of the middle way, between the extremes of renunciation and indulgence. In this way the body is given precisely what it needs for optimal expression, no more and no less. At this point Siddhartha began to follow his own inner teachings. One evening, near Gaya in Northeast India, he sat down beneath a fig tree, now commonly known as the Bodhi (enlightenment) Tree. It is also named the immovable spot, for it was at this point that Siddhartha realized his proximity to truth. He sat with the vow not to rise until his mind was fully awake.

In *The Religions Of Man* (1970) by Huston Smith, the story of Buddha's awakening is told thus:

"The records offer as the first event of the night a temptation scene reminiscent of Jesus' [experience] on the eve of his ministry. The evil one, realizing that his [Siddhartha] success was imminent, rushed to the spot to disrupt his concentrations. He attacked first in the form of desire, parading three voluptuous goddesses with their tempting retinues. When the Buddha-to-be remained unmoved, the temptor switched to the guise of Death. His powerful hosts assailed the aspirant with hurricanes, torrential rains, showers of flaming rocks that splashed boiling mud, and finally, a great darkness. But the missiles became blossom petals as they entered the field of the yogi's concentration. When in final desperation, Mara challenged his right to be doing what he was, Buddha touched the earth with his right fingertip, whereupon the earth responded, thundering, 'I bear you witness' with a hundred, a thousand, and a hundred thousand roars. Mara's Army fled in full retreat and the gods of heaven descended in rapture to wait upon the victor with garlands and perfumes.

"Thereafter, while the Bodhi tree rained red blossoms on that full-mooned May night, Guatama's (Siddhartha) meditation deepened through watch after watch until, as the Morning star glittered in the transparent skies of the East, his mind pierced at last the bubble of the universe and shattered it to naught only, wonder of wonders, to find it miraculously restored with the effulgence of true being. The great awakening had arrived. Guatama's being was transformed, and he emerged the Buddha. The event was of cosmic import. All created things filled the morning air with their rejoicing and the earth quaked to six ways with wonder. Ten thousand galaxies shuddered in awe as lotuses loomed on every tree, turning the entire universe into a bouquet of flowers sent whirling through the air. The lives of this vast experience kept the Buddha routed on the spot for seven entire days. On the eighth day he tried to rise but was again lost in Bliss. For a total of 49 days he was deep in rapture, after which his glorious glance opened again onto the world."

Buddha then embarked on a ministry which spanned 45 years and embraced all whose lives it touched, as well as those beyond its reach. He taught of the middle way, consisting of the four noble truths, described in *The World's Religions* (1991) by Huston Smith:

"The **First Noble Truth** is...*dukkha*...[and] names the pain that to some degree colors all finite existence. The word's constructive implications come to light when we discover that it was used in Pali to refer to wheels whose axles were off center, or bones that had slipped from their sockets... The exact meaning of the First Noble Truth is this: life (in the condition it has gotten itself into) is dislocated. Something has gone wrong. It is out of joint. As its pivot is not true, friction (interpersonal conflict) is excessive, movement (creativity) is blocked, and it hurts.

"For the rift to be healed, we need to know its cause, and the **Second Noble Truth** identifies it. The cause of life's dislocation is *tanha*...[and] consists of all those inclinations that tend to continue or increase separateness, the separate existence of the subject of desire; in fact all forms of selfishness, the essence of which is desire for self at the expense, if necessary, of all other forms of life... our duty to our fellows is to understand them as extensions, other aspects, of ourselves fellow facets of the same Reality.

"The **Third Noble Truth** follows logically from the second. If the cause of life's dislocation is selfish craving, its cure lies in the overcoming of such craving. If we could be released from the narrow limits of self-interest into the vast expanse of universal life we would be relieved of our torment. The **Fourth Noble Truths** prescribe how the cure can be accomplished. The overcoming of *tanha*, the way out of our captivity, is through the Eightfold Path."

Huston Smith describes Buddha's approach as that of a doctor, who studies and identifies the symptom, (First Noble Truth), looks deeper to find the root cause (Second Noble Truth), and finally, seeks to find a cure

(Third Noble Truth), through a practical prescription (Fourth Noble Truth), culminating in The Eightfold Path to enlightenment. This prescription includes a comprehensive approach to “**right living**,” the 8 steps of the path being: **1) right views, 2) right intention, 3) right speech, 4) right conduct, 5) right livelihood, 6) right effort, 7) right mindfulness, and 8) right concentration.**

From Buddha

The thought manifests the word. The word manifests as the deed. The deed develops into the habit. And the habit hardens into character. So watch the thought and its ways with care. Let it spring from love, born out of concern for all beings.

As an irrigator guides water to his fields, as an archer aims an arrow, as a carpenter carves wood, the wise shape their lives. All we are is the result of what we have thought.

Babaji (203 A.D. to present?)

There is no date for the death of Babaji, for it is believed that he never died. Mahavatar Babaji is a Christ-like saint who is considered to be immortal. He was born on November 30th in 203 A.D. in Paranagipettai, a small coastal town in India. His parents were Nambudri Brahmins from the Malabar coast on the western side of south India. His father was a priest in the Shiva temple in Pranagipettai. Babaji was given the name “Nagaraj,” which means “serpent king.” This refers to kundalini. Kundalini is an energy that rises from the base of the spine, bringing with it a very high state of consciousness in human beings.

At 5 years old, Babaji was kidnapped and sold into slavery in Calcutta. His master, however, soon gave him his freedom, and he joined a band of wandering monks, learning about the sacred religious and philosophical literature of India. After a while, he wanted to find a teacher, and sought a master named Agastyar.

He did not get to be with the master right away. First he met a disciple of Agastyar, named Boganathar, who taught him meditation, the philosophy of the Siddhas, and cognitive absorption called “sarvihelpa samadhi.” When he became 15 years old, Boganathar sent him to legendary Agastyar. Babaji traveled to Courtrallam, in Tamil Nadu, and after practicing speacialized yogic techniques for 48 days, Agastyar finally revealed himself and initiated him into Kriya Kundalini Pranayama, a powerful breathing technique. He then directed the boy, still named Nagaraj, to go to the Himalayas and practice all that he had learned in order to become a “siddha.”

Over the next 18 months, Nagaraj lived in a cave by himself, practicing what he learned. He surrendered his ego to the divine, and he became filled with the divine. He was no longer subject to the human conditions of the body, like illnesses and death. He dedicated himself to the task of helping humanity find enlightenment.

Since then, Babaji has inspired many teachers, gurus and the greatest of saints in the fulfillment of their task of helping humanity. He maintains the appearance of a youth of about 16 years of age, and many consider him a living Buddha today. He has an uncanny ability to appear whenever he wishes to those on a spiritual path, especially to spiritual teachers who are doing service for humanity.

Babaji taught yogic techniques called “kriya yoga” to Lahiri Mahasaya in 1861 who in turn initiated many others, including Parmahansa Yogananda’s teacher, Sri Yukteswar. After Yogananda had been with Yukteswar for 10 years, Babaji appeared to him and told him to take the Kriya teachings to the West, and Yogananda fulfilled this between 1920 and 1952. These kriya techniques, many of which are left out or changed by those claiming to teach kriya yoga techniques, numbered 144 Kriyas. Babaji’s versions of kriya yoga are the correct ones, with the original intents for their use.

Marshall Govindan says about Babaji on his website (www.babaji.ca), “When we know ultimately who we are, we will know who Babaji is... Babaji does not identify with a limited human personality, or series of life events, or even his divinely transformed body.” Babaji is not dead, as some might say, for he promised that he would remain on the physical plane until humanity is no longer suffering. Self Realization Fellowship and other organizations declare that he is inaccessible and treat him as a long dead saint, while others find that he is still quite alive and is not subject to the laws of the physical plane. He is, technically, the sole guru of the Kriya Yoga tradition.

Some people believe that Babaji was reborn in a small village called Herakhan. He was discovered to have special siddhis (spiritual powers) and was promoted by Leonard Orr and Sondra Ray (founders of the rebirthing movement), as Babaji. However, this boy never claimed to be Babaji and did not practice Kriya Yoga, nor did he live a life of purity. He only gave in to the idea because so many people kept pressing him, asking, “Are you sure you aren’t Babaji? You must be Babaji,” to which he finally replied in exasperation, “If you say I am Babaji, I must be Babaji.” He was poisoned and died in 1983.

Even today, there is another who claims to be the living Babaji, but while some stand by this, others denounce it. His picture, and the previously discussed reincarnation of Babaji from Herakhan, are found on the altars of some people. This has created confusion about Babaji and what he looks like. Babaji's true image, most traditionally, portrays him in his original form as a young, vital man with long black hair.

From Babaji (www.selfpowermentacademy.com.)

All of the following are excerpts from various renditions of Babaji's teachings, for Babaji himself never wrote anything. People who studied Kriya Yoga later put his teachings in writing.

Discipline of the body and mind is a foundation to all of Babaji's teachings. We should learn to become spiritual beings. This means learning how to dedicate all acts of our lives—while walking, eating, working, sleeping—to the Divine. This is only possible by controlling our physical attachments and the restlessness of our minds.

Worship is the foremost practice, which Babaji stresses. It is the simplest way for man to develop feelings of faith and devotion for the divine. Prayer and chanting of the holy name of the Lord are preliminary methods of concentration of the mind.

Work (karma yoga) is the second teaching of Shree Babaji. Work is a powerful way of purification of the body and mind and is a way to conquer selfishness and laziness. "Laziness," He says, "is our main enemy in the world today." Also, He said that "work is worship" when offered to God.

"God is Truth," Babaji says. Truth is supreme and nothing in the universe is more important than Truth. Truth can be achieved by constant control of the mind and all unnecessary and wrong thoughts. Truth is in the mind. By one-pointed concentration on the name of the Lord, one will finally be led to that state of silence and emptiness beyond which God can be realized. One should be able to bring the mind to a state of complete peace and stillness.

AVATAR FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

Jesus of Nazareth

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Matthew 7:7-8

Very little is clearly known about the life of Jesus. The most basic biographical information is agreed-upon by scholars, yet even this information is contested by some. The history of great spiritual leaders is often distorted and used by those in power for political gain. For the purpose of this course, we will embrace the assumption that Jesus was born in Palestine during the reign of Herod the Great. The information on the actual year of birth varies. According to *The World's Religions* (1991) by Huston Smith, he was born around 4 B.C., meaning he was born before Christ! B.C. means Before Christ. Huston tells us that our reckoning is off by several years as to the beginning of calendar time in relationship to Christ's birth.

Jesus grew up in or around Nazareth, and it is likely he was raised the same as any other Jewish boy in this era. His mother was Mary, and his father was probably Joseph. Most Christians believe that Jesus had no mortal father. They believe Mary was visited by the Holy Spirit and made pregnant with the son of God through what is called the Immaculate Conception. The idea of the Immaculate Conception can be found in other stories, such as that of Buddha, Krishna, Osiris, and other God-men in various religious cultures.

It is believed by some, though there is little record of his early years, he traveled widely and was a student of Eastern Indian religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism. The earliest reference to his spiritual coming of age is his connection to John The Baptist. John The Baptist was a wandering mystic who lived in the wilderness along the Jordan River. He proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, and baptized people in the Jordan River in order to prepare them for this Messiah. He baptized Jesus, feeling honored that the Messiah himself came to him to be baptized. After his baptism, Jesus retreated into the desert to seek God. Records say that he spent 40 days fasting in the desert, then emerged and began to teach. At the time of his teachings, his followers believed him to be the long awaited Messiah who would lead his people into righteousness.

As he began his teaching, disciples and seekers of wisdom gathered around him. These people understood that Jesus was a Great Teacher. Many recorded his teachings and their personal experiences with him. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes only four works, from disciples Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In actuality, there were many more records of his teachings, including those found in recent times, the Gospel of Thomas, and that of Mary Magdalene herself.

In *The Mystic Christ* (2003), Ethan Walker III tells us that Jesus practiced Gnosticism, which is a spiritual path of experiencing God directly within one's own self. At his web site at (www.devipress.com) Walker tells us that Jesus taught advaita, or non-duality, and the path of devotion. Walker says of these teachings, "We are all

brothers and sisters bound like pearls on the same string of light bulbs connected by one wire and illumined by the same electricity the same 'one living' Supreme Being. There is absolutely no one who is excluded. Love is another name for this unity. This is the true core and the central issue of the life and teachings of Jesus. The goal of our human existence is to experience this directly in the depths of our own being."

Gnosticism as a philosophy refers to a related body of teachings that stress the acquisition of "gnosis," or inner knowledge. The knowledge sought is not strictly intellectual, but mystical; not merely a detached knowledge of or about something, but a knowing by acquaintance or participation. This gnosis is the inner and esoteric mystical knowledge of ultimate reality. It discloses the spark of divinity within, thought to be obscured by ignorance, convention, and mere exoteric religiosity. (www.equip.org/free/DG040-1.htm)

In public Jesus gave a straightforward and simple message that all people could understand. He spoke in parables, or stories, as was common at that time. Parables could be understood on different levels and had esoteric teachings embedded in them. In private, to his disciples and those who were more advanced in spiritual understanding, he gave deeper teachings, more directly consistent with Gnosticism.

In 325 AD, at the council of Nicaea, the Roman Emperor Constantine made an effort to shape Christianity. He wanted Christianity to be the state religion, and also serve as a tool to further his power. It was at the council of Nicaea that the Nicene Creed, better known as the Apostles Creed, was adopted. Constantine made Jesus' *public* teachings the official doctrine of Orthodox Christianity, while his *private* or Gnostic teachings were outlawed as heresy. The books of Arius and other Gnostics were burned, and the teachings were lost to mainstream Christianity for many centuries.

Then, in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, a peasant digging in the sand unearthed a container housing 52 texts, including the Gospel of Thomas. In these are revealed what many scholars believe to be the hidden teachings of Jesus. In a talk given by Elaine Pagels at (www.radiofreemaine.com), Pagels says, "What is interesting about the Gnostic Gospels is that they do not deny what is said about Jesus in other Gospels, but rather testify that they contain secret teachings of Jesus that their authors believed needed to be preserved."

Jesus was an "ascetic rebel," a prophet, who spoke of God's coming judgment. He was an enlightened mystic, who taught that people should love one another, forgive their enemies, and seek peace. He was also a healer, who helped many through laying on of hands. He had a vision of saving humanity. At that time the Jews were under Roman rule, and oppressive corruption, greed, and discrimination were daily issues. Jesus posed a threat to Roman rule, as well as to the leaders of the Jewish faith, in many ways. This is a complex subject, and is not clearly known who was behind the crucifixion of Jesus. We do know however that he challenged the social structure around him, yet his teachings were of forgiveness. Jesus gave his life for what he believed in, not backing down from the truth. In this way he became immortal in deed, as well as in spirit.

Mysteries surrounding the life of Jesus of Nazareth

- Was Joseph the father of Jesus, as he was of his brothers and sisters? Or, as the Roman Catholic Church maintains, was Jesus born of Immaculate Conception?
- What was Jesus' childhood and young adulthood like? Did he travel in India, Egypt, and Africa? Did he study the teachings of Buddha, as well as Hindu sages? Could these teachings have influenced his own?
- What was Jesus' relationship with Mary Magdalene? Were they lovers? Did he have children? Is there a lineage of Jesus' offspring?
- Is it possible, as some argue, that Jesus actually survived the crucifixion, being brought down from the cross unconscious but not dead? That his 'resurrection' was actually a recovery, and that he moved to India and lived a long, peaceful life with Mary Magdalene and their children?
- How was Christianity created and shaped by politics in the centuries following the crucifixion? Why is there so much evidence of cover-ups and burying of information over the centuries?
- What was Jesus' true message, that seemed to threaten so many?

These and many other questions are explored in the UMS course *Christianity*. There is also a lot of information for those interested in this topic, including a plethora of web info. Do a search under Mystic Jesus or Gnostic Jesus and find a wealth of interesting information on this fascinating subject.

Jesus' Teachings

The Kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you'll realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty.

He who rules his spirit has won a greater victory than the taking of a city.

For he who has not known himself has known nothing, and he who has known himself has at the same time already achieved knowledge of the depth of the all.

Do not seek the knowledge of that which you do not know until you practice that which you know.

In conclusion, it is believed that there are several incarnations of Buddha. Many believe that The Christ lives within us. There are other stories throughout the world that tell of God taking a human form. These are four examples of many such stories. As the spiritual consciousness of humanity begins to know itself, more and more people are coming from the understanding that each of us is God manifest, that we are all "Little Buddhas," that The Christ is our true form, and that it is only a matter of time before we all Awaken.

Part Two

Great Spiritual Teachers and Leaders

Yogis, Saints, Sages, Prophets, and other Teachers Of Wisdom

In the following section, we'll take a glimpse at spiritual teachers throughout recorded history from all over the world. This section is in no way a comprehensive list of all of the great teachers of spirituality throughout time, but highlights many of the most well-known and influential Wise Ones who spoke to humanity and influenced spirituality. You'll learn biographical information and sample the offerings of each of these spiritual teachers.

A word of advice; if you should desire to explore the ancient and honored tradition of devotional worship, or the Guru-devotee relationship, you should carefully research the teachings of the Guru, speak to other devotees if possible, and search your heart and listen to your own inner wisdom above all, before deciding on such a path.

If you ever feel, in a teacher–student relationship, as if you are being asked outright or in more subtle ways to give up your free will for any reason, this should be a big red flag. Free will is the absolute right of all humans, and spiritual teachings should point to truth and support, nurture, and inspire self-awakening and right relationship. The ethics of spiritual teaching are explored more thoroughly in the Masters Degree Curriculum at UMS.

ASIA

Lao Tzu (dates unknown, estimated by scholars that he lived between 300 and 600 BC)

The biography of Lao Tzu is difficult to trace, and several people questioned whether or not one actual person or many were responsible for the teachings recorded in the Tao Te Ching. It is not clearly known who Lao Tzu actually was. He is, however, thought to have been a Great Sage who recorded the Tao Te Ching, one of China's most studied and oldest manuscripts of ancient wisdom. Some scholars believe that the Tao Te Ching may be an anthology of wisdom compiled from ancient teachings of many different Chinese sages. In this course, we will treat Lao Tzu as if he existed, and look at some of those stories surrounding his life, as well as presenting some of the teachings of the Tao Te Ching

The name Lao Tzu is thought to be a title rather than a proper name, and denotes "the old son," "the old man," "the old philosopher," or "old master." One of the accounts of the life of Lao Tzu claimed that he lived to be over 160 years old, and thus earned the title. Another, more dramatic and seemingly mythological story tells that Lao Tzu's mother carried him in her womb for 62 years, and thus he was born with white hair, and appeared as an old man, hence his name. Some accounts recorded his actual name as Lao Tan, or Li Er. A work by Ssu-ma Ch'ien, recorded around 90 B.C., tells us that sometime in the sixth century B.C. Lao Tzu was born, and was appointed Keeper of the Imperial Archives by the Emperor of Zhou, in Luoyang, now the Honan Province. He studied intensively in the Royal library, growing in wisdom and insight.

Lao Tzu became known as a sage, and soon Confucius heard of this wise man, and came to visit him. At the time, Confucius placed great importance on performing rituals and rites, and honoring ancestors. He asked Lao Tzu to comment on these practices. It is said that Lao Tzu told him, *"The bones of the people you are talking about have long since been turned to dust! Only their word lingers on. If a man's time comes, he will be successful; if not he*

will not be successful. A successful merchant hides his wealth and a noble person of character will feign foolishness. Therefore you should give up your proud airs, your desires, vanity and extravagant claims! They are useless to you."

Later, Confucius tells his students, *"Birds can fly, fish can swim, animals can run, so they can all be snared or trapped. But Lao Tzu is like a flying dragon, un-trappable."*

Ssu-ma Ch'ien next records that Lao Tzu, unsettled with the cultural decline of the state, decides to travel into the western mountains. At the gate of the outer entrance to the state, the keeper of the gate, recognizing him, asks Lao Tzu to allow his teachings to be recorded. At this time it is said that he stayed with the gatekeeper for two days, during which time he recorded the Tao Te Ching. After this, it is said that he was not seen or heard from again.

Lao Tzu's status was to change and transform through the centuries of Chinese history. He was thought of as an inspiration for political philosophy. Eventually he was thought to be immortal, even deified as Lord Haung-Lao, Lord Lao, and later, Li Hung, The Perfect Lord. He was believed to maintain harmony and to be intimately connected with the Tao, the way of the cosmos.

Dr. Chalmers, who translated the Tao Te Ching, did not try to translate the word Tao. He says, "No English word is its exact equivalent. Three terms suggest themselves *the way, reason, and the word*; but they are all liable to objection. If we were guided by etymology, *the way* would come nearest to the original, and in one or two passages the idea of *a way* seems to be in the term; but this is too materialistic to serve the purpose of the translation." In subsequent translations, the Tao is translated as "the way." For the sake of this study, the Tao Te Ching could be called "The Way Of Virtue," yet this is a simplistic translation, communicating only a shadow of the true meaning of the Tao. The Tao seems, as a mere word, to symbolize that which existed before language, and cannot be named, for when the naming occurs, the Tao becomes manifest, and no longer in its pure, undifferentiated form. The symbol of Yin/Yang, with its white part and black part representing the manifest world of opposites, represents that which is beyond separation and contains all opposites. The Yin/Yang symbol can be meditated on to understand the Tao.

To illustrate this point, here are the opening lines of the Tao Te Ching:

*The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao;
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
The named is the mother of all things.
Hence always rid yourself of desires in order to observe its secrets;
But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its manifestations.
These two are the same
But diverge in name as they issue forth.
Being the same they are called mysteries,
mystery upon mystery,
The gateway of the manifold secrets.*

Further expressions of this mystery follow, from translations of the Tao Te Ching:

*Man follows the ways of the Earth
Earth follows the ways of Heaven
Heaven follows the way of Tao
Tao follows its own nature.*

*The Tao gives birth to all beings,
nourishes them, maintains them,
cares for them, comforts them,
protects them, takes them back to itself,
creating without possessing,
acting without expecting,
guiding without interfering.
That is why the love of the Tao
is in the very nature of things.*

*If you don't realize the source,
you stumble in confusion and sorrow.
When you realize where you come from,
you naturally become tolerant, disinterested, amused,
kindhearted as a grandmother,
dignified as a king,
immersed in the wonder of the Tao,
you can deal with whatever life brings you,
and when death comes, you are ready.*

*To attain knowledge,
add things every day.
To attain wisdom,*

remove things every day.

*Knowing others is intelligence;
knowing yourself is true wisdom.
Mastering others is strength;
mastering yourself is true power.*

*A tree trunk the size of a man grows from a blade as
thin as a hair.
A tower nine stories high is built from a small heap of
Earth.
A journey of 1000 miles starts in front of your feet.*

*A good traveler has no fixed plans,
and is not intent on arriving.*

*Fill your bowl to the brim
and it will spill.
Keep sharpening your knife
and it will blunt.
Chase after money and security
and your heart will never unclench.
Care about people's approval
and you will be their prisoner.*

*Do your work, then step back.
The only path to serenity.*

*All the fish needs to do is get lost in the water.
All man needs to do is get lost in the Tao.*

*Do you have the patience to wait until your mud settles,
and the water is clear?
Can you remain unmoving until the right action arises
by itself?*

*The wise man knows without traveling.
The five colors can blind,
the five tones deafen,
the five tastes cloy.
The race, the hunt, can drive men mad
And their spoils leave them no peace.
Therefore the sensible man
Prefers the inner to the outer eye:
He has his yes, he has his no.*

*People usually fail when they are on the verge of success
So give as much care to the end as to the beginning.*

Thich Nhat Hahn (1926-present)

Thich Nhat Hahn is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk. He worked tirelessly during the Vietnam War to heal the wounds of his bleeding country, teaching engaged Buddhism, which brought together traditional meditative practices with active nonviolent civil disobedience. He supported the movement that grew out of these teachings, forming the most influential center of Buddhist studies in Vietnam, the An Quang Pagoda. He created relief organizations to help the people whose lives and villages had been destroyed by war. He was instrumental in bringing together the Buddhist community to provide aid to those who suffered, and to begin to rebuild the villages that had been bombed, looted, and burned. He instituted The School of Youth for Social Service, started a magazine for writings, commentary, and stories on peace and nonviolence, and provided support and focus for the Buddhist community during this horrific time. He also worked to urge world leaders to use nonviolence in order to realize peace. In 1966 at the age of 40, Thich Naht Hahn was exiled from his home in Vietnam for his role in undermining the war efforts of both sides, North and South Vietnam. Since then he has lived in exile at a monastery in Southern France, called Plum Village. Though he misses his home deeply, he speaks of being a citizen of the world, and also of finding home within, and with sangha, at Plum Village.

Thich Naht Hahn, or Thay (teacher) as he is affectionately called by his students, has written many books on mindfulness, peace, and engaged Buddhism. His gentle tone is apparent in his writing, which shines with beautiful simplicity and wisdom. His transmission of unconditional love and peace is felt by many who read his books, and many are inspired to come together and study his teachings in sangha (family, circle).

The following are "*Thay's 14 precepts*," found at www.om-guru.com:

"Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. All systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth."

"Do not think that the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be opened to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life, and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times."

“Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, by threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness.”

“Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Do find ways to be with those who are suffering by all means, including personal contact and visits, images, sounds. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in this world.”

“Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry. Do not take as the aim of your life fame, profit, wealth, or sensual pleasure. Live simply and share time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need.”

“Do not maintain anger or hatred. As soon as anger and hatred arise, practice the meditation on compassion in order to deeply understand the persons who have caused anger and hatred. Learn to look at other beings with the eyes of compassion.”

“Do not lose your self in dispersion and in your surroundings. Learn to practice breathing in order to be, gaining composure of body and mind, practice mindfulness, and to develop concentration and understanding.”

“Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break. Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.”

“Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause diversion and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be true. Do not criticize or condemn things you’re not sure of. Always speak truthfully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten your own safety.”

“Do not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit, or transform your community into a political party. A religious community should, however, take a clear stand against oppression and injustice, and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.”

“Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their chance to live. Select a vocation which helps realize your ideal compassion.”

“Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and to prevent war.”

“Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others but prevent others from enriching themselves from human suffering or the suffering of other beings.”

“Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on your body as only an instrument. Preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of the way. Sexual expression should not happen without love and commitment. In sexual relationships be aware of the suffering that may be caused. Preserve the happiness of others. Respect the rights and commitments of others. Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world. Meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings.”

“Do not believe that I feel that I follow each and every of these precepts perfectly. I know I fail in many ways. None of us can fully fulfill all these things. However I must work toward a goal. These are my goals. No words can replace practice, only practice can make the words true.”

“The finger pointing at the moon is not the moon.” —Thich Naht Hahn

His Holiness the Dalai Lama (1935 – present)

Lhamo Dhondup was born on July 6, 1935 in the village of Taktser, in the Amdo region of Northeastern Tibet. His parents’ names were Dekyi Tsering and Choekyong Tsering. They were simple farmers, growing crops of buckwheat, potatoes, and barley. They kept chickens for eggs, and used the milk of the *dzomos*, which is a cross between a cow and a yak.

It is said that for a time, before his birth, his father was very ill. On the day of his birth his father recovered. As a very young child, Lhamo often spoke of visiting Lhasa, the capital, which was 1,000 miles away.

The previous Dalai Lama said before his death that he would leave clues about his next birthplace. This led the search party, sent to seek out the 14th Dalai Lama, to Lhamo. When many items were set before him, he was asked to choose from them, and he immediately chose several objects belonging to the 13th Dalai Lama, including his mala, glasses, bowl, and other religious items.

Soon he traveled to Lhasa, where, at the age of 6, he began his formal religious education. He was officially made head of state at 15, and soon after was encouraged to leave Lhasa, as the Chinese Government was becoming more and more secretive about their intentions toward Tibet. The occupation soon began in earnest, and in 1956 the Dalai Lama left for India and set up residence in Dharmasala, at the foot of the Himalayas, soon to be called “Little Lhasa.” Many thousands of Tibetans followed, as violence was escalated by

the Chinese Government in its occupation of Tibet. Soon Dharmasala was established as the residence of the exiled Tibetan government, and became the political capital of the Tibetan people.

The Dalai Lama worked tirelessly to free his native land, and made many peaceful and cooperative efforts toward negotiations with China. He became internationally known, traveling and teaching all over the world. He became such a strong and compassionate voice for peace, that in 1989 he was presented with the Nobel Peace prize. He then, with the prize money, instituted the Foundation for Universal Responsibility, making many contributions toward global peace projects.

During the 1990's, The Dalai Lama wrote several best selling books, began alliances with Western scientists to study the benefits of prayer and continued traveling, teaching, and spoke about peaceful solutions to world problems. He has always called himself a simple Buddhist monk, and lives the life of one, using simple living quarters, rising at 4 am to meditate, eating simple foods, and, most notably, displaying a gentle, joyful, and humble demeanor to all. His wisdom and grace, beautiful smile, and sparkling eyes have made him a universally beloved world figure.

Quotes by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

"Whether one believes in a religion or not, and whether one believes in rebirth or not to, there isn't anyone who doesn't appreciate kindness and compassion."

"In the practice of tolerance, one's enemy is the best teacher."

"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive."

"Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them."

"This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness."

MIDDLE EAST

Rumi (1207-1273)

Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi was born in Afghanistan to a wealthy Persian family. His family fled the invasion of the Mongol tribes, traveling widely in the Muslim lands, and made a pilgrimage to Mecca before finally settling in Anatolia. His father was a respected theologian and professor in religious sciences. When he died in 1231, Rumi, at 24 years old, took his place. At this young age, he was already an accomplished scholar in spiritual sciences, having been instructed by his father first, and then a close friend of his father's. He was also schooled by the greatest religious minds of the time in Damascus.

Rumi had a life changing experience when he met Shamsuddin of Tabriz, a wild looking wandering dervish. He seemed to appear out of nowhere, and from the start, he and Rumi were inseparable. It is said that what Shams awoke in Rumi was direct awareness of the Beloved within, as Shams helped Rumi awaken to who he really was. Rumi moved from studying texts about The One to *seeing* The One, in fact, to realizing that in the depths of his being, *he was The One*. Shortly after this meeting, the two men went into retreat together, emerging 90 days later in full radiance. In the book *Rumi: Gazing At The Beloved*, by Richard Lang the author tells us, "The exact nature of what transpired between them has remained a mystery for the past 750 years." In his book, he claims to reveal for the first time "the actual esoteric practice that Rumi and Shams were engaged in behind the closed doors of their retreat room." Through an extensive research into the life and writings of Rumi, Richard tells of the "radical practice," that involves gazing intently into the eyes of another until the "other" becomes a mirror of one's self, and finally, all sense of separation dissolves.

Rumi gathered many disciples around him by this time, and they became jealous of his relationship with Shams. Twice they drove Shams away. The first time Rumi sent his son to bring him back, but the second time he disappeared for good, and some suspected that Rumi's disciples had killed him.

Following this experience, Rumi became a virtual river of poetry, flowing out words of love and divine realization almost constantly. His disciples recorded his words, and he became the greatest and most prolific poet of Islam. He also began to perform the dance of the whirling dervish, to the sound of the reed flute and drum. In this practice, one spins round and round, watching the world spin around yet abiding in the stillness within, eternally. He would experience this spinning movement, and yet exist as the nothingness in the center of it all. In his article at www.innertraditions.com, Richard Lang tells us:

“Rumi had become an intensely passionate poet and mystic. By good fortune he had found the Beloved, awakened to his innermost identity by the wild Shams. But more profoundly, as his poetry makes clear, it was The Beloved within which had called out to him, again and again beckoning him home. In fact, at that deepest level it was The Beloved stumbling upon its Self through him, God rediscovering his own wonderful, inexplicable being in the midst of this extraordinary, wild, unexpected, living cosmos. May each of us hear the call of the Beloved.”

Rumi's life ended in 1273, at the age of 66, yet his legacy lives on. His words are acknowledged as some of the deepest and most beautiful expressions of language ever uttered. Below are some examples of his work:

Say Yes Quickly

Forget your life. *God is great.* Get up.
You think you know what time it is. It's time to pray.
You've carved so many little figurines, too many.
Don't knock on any random door like a beggar.
Reach your long hands out to another door, beyond where
you go on the street, the street
where everyone says, “How are you?”
And no one says, “*How aren't you?*”

Tomorrow you'll see what you've broken and torn tonight,
thrashing in the dark. Inside you
there is an artist you don't know about.
He's not interested in how things look different in the
moonlight.

If you are here unfaithfully with us,
You're causing terrible damage.
If you've opened your loving to God's love,
You're helping people you don't know
and have never seen. —Rumi

Nanak (1469-1563)

Nanak was born in Talwandi, which is now Pakistan, on April 15, 1469. His parents were Mehta Kaylan and Mata Tripta. From an early age, Nanak showed signs of unusual intelligence and a devotional nature. Once when his father gave him money and sent him to carry out some business transactions he spent the money on feeding sadhus instead. When he was working at a grain store, he would often measure out extra quantities to the needy and poor.

All around him were signs of a divided culture. Divisions ran along the lines of caste, birth, vocation, color, creed, language, culture, etc. He saw much animosity, arrogance, greed, and exploitation. He was aware of the negative effects of hypocrisy and oppression of religious, social, cultural, and political realms. It was in this context that he developed his ideas, and began to speak of his vision of cultural transformation, through compassion and understanding between people. He spoke out against injustice and inequality, and he challenged religious hypocrisy and blind ritual. He undertook a voyage of four directions, traveling to the East, South, North, and West. In Haridwar he offered the water in the Western direction unlike the Brahmins who offered it to the east. In Mecca, he slept with his feet pointing towards the Kaaba. He challenged people to understand their own connection with the Divine, and to see the connection between themselves and all life. The words he spoke as he traveled were compiled into the “Guru's Sayings.”

In his travels he visited many temples, religious centers, and caves of holy men. Everywhere he went he spread the message that God was within, as well as everywhere around, and that worship of God was practiced through love and compassion. He spoke of the common roots of the Hindu and Muslim religions, and encouraged the leaders of these religions to come together and unify.

Two Kinds Of Intelligence

There are two kinds of intelligence: one acquired, as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts from books and from what the teachers says, collecting information from the traditional sciences as well as from the new sciences.

With such intelligence you rise in the world.
You get ranked ahead or behind others
in regard to your competence in retaining
information. You stroll with this intelligence
in and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more
marks on your preserving tablets.

There is another kind of tablet, one
already completed and preserved inside you.
A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness
in the center of the chest. This other intelligence
does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid,
and it doesn't move from outside to inside
through the conduits of plumbing-learning

This second knowing is a fountainhead
from within you, moving out. —Rumi

One story of Nanak tells of his time of enlightenment. Each morning he and his friend Mardana would take their sacred bath in the river. One day after plunging into the river, Nanak did not surface. After waiting for some time, it was believed that he had drowned. The villagers search for him but found no trace. After three days, Nanak appeared at the same spot where he disappeared, but he was no longer the same person he had been. He radiated divine light, and his eyes shone. He spoke to no one, remaining in a blissful state. He gave up his job and gave all his belongings to the poor. When he finally spoke, the words he said were, "There is no Hindu, no Muslim." During the three days, Nanak had been in communion with God, and God, offering him a cup of nectar said, "I am with you. Go and repeat my name, and teach others to do the same."

During his travels, Nanak was often asked whether he was Muslim or Hindu, as he would wear a combination of styles worn by both. He was asked by Sheikh Ibrahim, a Muslim Sufi holy man, which of the two religions was the true way to attain God. Guru Nanak replied, "If there is one God, then there is only His way to attain Him, not another. One must follow that way and reject the other. Worship not him who is born only to die, but Him who is eternal and is contained in the whole universe." There are many stories of Guru Nanak's travels, and his teachings and instruction to many leaders and wise men. He always spread the message of love and equality among people, the worship of God through singing of his sacred names, selfless service, and the well-being of all. He founded the Sikh religion, based on these values as the way to truly honor God.

His most devoted and favorite disciple was Lehna. One day, toward the end of his life, Nanak was walking with Lehna and his two sons. He came upon what appeared to be a corpse covered by a sheet. All of a sudden Nanak spoke out and said, "Who would eat it?" Both of his sons were surprised, and refused, thinking that their father's mind was not right. Lehna, though, agreed. As he removed the sheet, a beautiful tray of sacred delicacies was revealed. Lehna first offered the tray to Guru Nanak, and then his sons, and finally ate what they had left. After observing this, Guru Nanak told him, "Lehna, you were blessed with the sacred food because you can share it with others. If the people use the wealth bestowed on them by God for themselves alone or for treasuring it, it is like a corpse. But if they decide to share with others, it becomes sacred food. You have known the secret. You are my image." He then blessed Lehna with his hand (*ang*), and gave him a new name, Angad, saying, "You are part of my body." He placed five coins and a coconut in front of Angad, and then bowed before him. He then had another disciple anoint Angad with a saffron mark on his forehead. At this time, he gathered all his devotees together to pray, and invited Angad to occupy the seat of the guru. In this way, Guru Angad became his successor.

Seeing that his end was near, his Hindu followers told him they would cremate him, and the Muslims told him they would bury him. Guru Nanak told them to place flowers on both sides of him, the Hindus to place flowers on his right, the Muslims to place them on his left. He told them that the side on which the flowers remained the freshest would choose. He instructed them to pray, and laid down covering himself and the flowers with a sheet. On September 22, 1539, in the early hours of the morning, Guru Nanak merged with God, and when the followers lifted the sheet they found nothing more than a pile of flowers, all of them radiant and beautiful.

Sayings of Guru Nanak (These words are recorded at the beginning of the Sikh Holy Scriptures.)

"There is but one God, His name is truth, He is the creator, He fears none, He is without hate, He never dies, He is beyond the cycle of birth and death, He is self-illuminated, He is realized by the kindness of the True Guru. He was true in the beginning, He was true when the ages commenced and has ever been true. He is also true now."

"The entire humanity has originated from the same divine light, so how can there be divisions of good and bad, higher or lower amongst His creatures?"

"As you go about your affairs using your hands and feet, let your consciousness remain with the immaculate Lord."

"Whosoever, styling himself as a teacher, lives on the charity of others, never bow before him. Him who earns his livelihood by the sweat of his brow and shares it with others, only He can know the way."

"Even Kings and Emperors with heaps of wealth and vast dominion cannot compare with an ant filled with the love of God."

"As fragrance abides in the flower, as reflection is within the mirror, so does your Lord abide within you, why search for him without?"

EUROPE/RUSSIA

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891)

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was born in Russia, to Peter Von Hahn and Helena Andreyevna. She was a precocious, flamboyant and dramatic young woman who was early on aware of her psychic abilities. Her mother died when she was twelve years old. Later, Blavatsky, for unknown reasons, claimed that she died giving birth to her.

Her childhood was full of bizarre occurrences and unexplained phenomena. When she was between 3 and 4 years old, she was walking and talking in her sleep. At that time, in Russia, superstitions abounded. Fairytales were filled with mythological beings, the forests alive with brownies and goblins. Her nurses, because she was born in the seventh month of the year, called her a Sedmitchka, a term difficult to translate, but connected with the mystical qualities of the number 7. The household servants believed that Helena had the ability to control the spirit world. She claims several incidents that happened in her childhood showed her that she was powerful and aligned with greater forces. She became quite impossible to live with, throwing temper tantrums when she did not get her way. At one point her family had several exorcisms performed on her, but no change in her behavior occurred.

At 17 she married General Nicephore Blavatsky. The story is that her governess, being exhausted by Helena's show of temper, told her that she could not even get an old man to marry her. To prove her wrong Helena married Blavatsky, who she called very old, at least 70 or 80, but who was only 40 at the time. She did not stay with her husband long, attempting to return home to her grandparents, who had raised her after her mother died, but they sent her to her father instead. From here she quickly escaped, and was off to see the world and seek her fortune.

She began to travel, and spoke of being initiated into the understanding of ancient mysteries while visiting Tibet. Over the next ten years, Helena traveled the world. When she returned to Russia, she made a deal with her husband that she would return to his home as long as she could see him as little as possible. She began to gather groups, and conduct séances. She also had several love affairs during this time. She had a child, named Yuri, who was deformed. This was a mysterious aspect of Helena's life. When he was five, Helena took Yuri to doctors to try to have him cured, but he died and was buried in a small town in southern Russia.

There are many stories of Helena's displays of occult powers, and much controversy over the validity of these. In 1875, she founded the Theosophical Society with Colonel Olcott and others. She had begun to gather her understandings, synthesizing them into a complex cosmology that she called Theosophy, meaning *wisdom of the Gods*. In 1877 she published her great work, *Isis Unveiled*. Then in 1879 she began *The Theosophist*, a magazine chronicling the rapid growth of theosophy. She continued to write books, and in 1888 published *The Secret Doctrine*, an epic two part presentation of her Theosophical teachings. Her books, though very difficult to read, have greatly influenced the metaphysical movement. Many of the great thinkers of the time were influenced by her teachings, including Jung, Steiner, and others. Many believe that through her work much esoteric knowledge was brought out into the open, for the benefit of all.

Madame Blavatsky Quotes

*"All steps are necessary to make up the ladder.
The vices of man become steps in the ladder.
One by one, as they are surmounted,
give your aid to the few strong hands that hold back the powers of
darkness from obtaining complete victory
then do you enter into a partnership of joy,
which brings indeed terrible toil and profound sadness,
but also a great and ever increasing delight."*

*"Desire only that which is within you.
Desire only that which is beyond you.
Desire only that which is unattainable.
For within you is the light of the world –
the only light that can be shed upon the Path.
If you are unable to perceive it within you,
it is useless to look for it elsewhere.
It is beyond you, because when you reach for it you have lost yourself.
It is unattainable, because it forever recedes.
You will enter the light, but you will never touch the flame.*

"... stand-alone and isolated,

*because nothing that is embodied,
nothing that is conscious of separation,
nothing that is out of the eternal, can aid you.*

*“Anxiety is the foe of knowledge;
like unto a veil it falls down before the soul’s eye;
entertain it, and the veil only thicker grows;
cast it out, and the sun of truth may dissipate the cloudy veil.”*

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

Hildegard was born in western Germany, near the small town of Bockelheim. It is believed that her father was a knight. She did not enjoy good health as a child, and at the age of 8 she was placed in the care of Blessed Jutta, who lived as a recluse in a small home near the Abbey of St. Disibod. Jutta taught Hildegard much about devotion and prayer, and also provided her a traditional education.

Jutta became well known in the community, and founded a Benedictine Hermitage. Hildegard seemed to do well at the Hermitage, yet some were uncomfortable with her absorption in God. Around the age of 15, Hildegard began to engage in communion with God, beginning to have visions and speak prophecy. Some around her were skeptical, and felt uncomfortable with this display. She prayed fervently for understanding of her place in the community, and why she was being given these prophecies. As her reputation grew, and her devotional piety became apparent, many were convinced that her perceptions were real.

Jutta died in 1136, and Hildegard took her place as head of the Hermitage. The more responsibility she accepted, the more powerful her visions and prophecies became. She tried to deny them, but felt a strong desire to preserve them. With reluctance, she began to write. As her superiors became aware of her writing, a sample was sent to Archbishop Henry of Mainz. After a group of theologians examined her ideas on the love of Jesus, the care of angels for men and women, and temptations of the devil, the Archbishop made the conclusion that her visions “came from God.”

In 1141, she began writing a comprehensive book of her revelations, entitled *Scivias* (translated as “know the path”). She labored for 10 years on this work. It included 26 visions dealing with the relationship between God and people, to the phases of creation, redemption and the church. In it, she implored the church's leaders as well as ordinary people to practice morality and virtue at all times. There were some leaders who felt threatened by her powerful standing as a voice of God, yet hundreds of people worshipped her as a Saint. In 1147 she attracted the attention of Pope Eugene the third, and when he examined her works, he praised her insights, yet cautioned her to be careful of pride, a true danger to one so favored by God.

Hildegard viewed the world as God's playground. Many of her studies deal with different aspects of the natural world, including scientific studies on minerals, plants, trees, fish, birds and animals. She also conducted an investigation of the human body and its illnesses, including suggested treatments. As well, she wrote hundreds of letters to the leaders of the church, imploring them to live in harmony with Jesus' teachings, with morality, compassion, and a humble heart. She also wrote music, which is considered by many to be the work of genius.

In the last year of her life, she provided a burial for a young man who had been excommunicated. This caused difficulties for her monastery, and they were told that no worship would be allowed at her church. She wrote a letter in reply saying, “Those who impose silence, without good reason, on churches who are singing in God's honor, will not deserve to hear that glorious choir of angels that praises the Lord in heaven.” The letter hit home, and the ban was lifted.

Hildegard died peacefully in 1179. After her death her fame as a mystic grew as the beauty and simplicity of her writings was revealed. If alive, she likely would not have enjoyed this fame, as she had seen herself as a simple woman doing God's work, as was her duty. She said once:

“Listen: there was once a king sitting on his throne. Around him stood great and wonderfully beautiful columns ornamented with ivory, bearing the banners of the king with great honor. Then it pleased the king to raise a small feather from the ground, and he commanded it to fly. The feather flew, not because of anything in itself but because the air bore it along. Thus am I, a feather on the breath of God.”

Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760)

Born Israel Ben Eliezer in the late 17th-century in Poland, Baal Shem Tov, which means Master Of The Good Name, grew up in the time when Jewish people were suffering much persecution and slaughter. His parents died when he was young, and it is said that they were over 100 years old when he was born. He traveled, finding work where he could, and grew into a strong, determined and independent young man. In one of his jobs he became a caretaker in a synagogue. It was during this time that he had the opportunity to study and obtain an outstanding level of knowledge in Jewish spirituality, including the mysteries of the Kabbalah. Despite his growing wisdom and mastery, he publicly maintained an image of simplicity. He was drawn to solitude. Early on in his life he began to contemplate truth in relation to the culture in which he was growing up.

He married young, and his wife died soon after. He was then betrothed to a child, and he took her with him into the Carpathian Mountains, settling in a small Jewish community of poor peasants living close to the Earth. Soon his desire to know God led him into the wilderness to embrace a life of asceticism and solitude. His young wife by now had grown very devoted to him. She traveled back and forth between his camp and town, selling clay that was mined from the mountain to the village potters in town. In this way they were able to support themselves. Israel spent much time in prayer and contemplation during this period. One day he had visions in which the prophets Elijah, Shijah, and Shilonite appeared to him. They revealed to him that the power of prayer lay in inner devotion. He began to receive information in the form of mystical truths such as those received by Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha, and other great spiritual teachers. He continued to focus his attention inward for many years as he expanded in his spiritual understanding and wisdom. Then a time came, in his 40th year, in which he received the message, *"The time has come for you to reveal yourself."*

The Baal Shem Tov then began to spread his teachings, and became a great healer. He tirelessly traveled to all the villages in the area, helping anyone in need, the sick, the hopeless, the outcast, the thief, and the poor. All who had contact with him were blessed. There are many stories of the miracles he performed.

The Baal Shem Tov traveled so often and so quickly between villages, that it seemed to some that he could be in more than one place at a time, an ability often attributed to great and powerful spiritual beings. One story tells how a young man, who was a guest of the Baal Shem Tov, woke up at midnight, frightened because he thought the house was on fire. He jumped up only to find that the body of the sleeping Baal Shem was emanating a huge spiritual radiance in the form of a flame.

The Baal Shem Tov's primary focus was on bringing people together. He was interested in creating connections, as he considered unity to be a path to understanding ourselves. No one was left out of this circle, all were included; saints and sinners, wealthy and poor, healthy or sick, young or old, male or female. All are connected by the divine thread of God and sewn together with love and compassion. He taught others to unselfishly enjoy life and live with deep and humble gratitude. The Baal Shem Tov pointed out that it was only a self-centered and selfish person who could be unhappy, for one who was aware of the truths of humanity would rejoice, and this joy would reveal God. He did not found a school of thought or religion, although he is thought to be the founder of modern Hasidism. Once when a disciple attempted to write down his words, The Baal Shem Tov said, "There is nothing of me in your pages; you thought you heard what I didn't say." Yet he soon became widely known, as he developed a great following of devoted disciples.

At 60 years of age he became sick and sensed that he was leaving his body. When his disciples gathered around, prepared to mourn, he told them, "Why do you cry? I am leaving by one door, only to enter by another."

Though he never recorded any of his teachings, his disciples did, and a great transformative movement within the Jewish spiritual community began, becoming known as Hasidism, or Chassidus, meaning "piety."

Teachings and quotes from the Baal Shem Tov

"The world is new to us every morning—this is God's gift; and every man should believe he is reborn each day."

"The Earth shall rest as a Sabbath to the Lord, give earthiness a rest; permeate it with the Sabbath of spirituality and holiness."

"You shall establish three cities of refuge—we all possess three personal cities of refuge: our sacred thoughts, speech, and deeds."

"Before you can find God, you must lose yourself."

"Everything above and below is one unity."

"For any of us to come to the understanding that we are common and unlearned is the accomplishment of a lifetime."

"There is no room for God in the man who is filled with himself."

"When a father complains that his son has taken to evil ways, what should he do? Love him more than ever."

"We should learn and reflect to the best of our capacity, but when we reach a point where we are unable to make sense of life, we should supplant faith for understanding, and reflect again on what we do know."

"He who is full of joy is full of love."

St Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

St. Francis was born Francesco Bernardone, in Assisi, Italy. His father, Pietro, was a wealthy and successful merchant, who expected his son would follow him in the family business. Francis considered this, yet also dreamed, in his early years, of being a troubadour, and a hero for his country. He joined the military in 1201, and in 1202 was captured and spent a year in prison. Soon after this he began to question his lifestyle, and he began to desire to know God.

The history of his life was collected by Thomas of Celano, commissioned by Pope Gregory IX, and included information from many of the brothers who were closest to him. Thomas tells us, of that time in Francis's life in which he began to look within;

"Now perfectly changed in heart, and soon to be changed in body, Francis was strolling one day near the old church of St. Damien, which was nearly destroyed and abandoned by all. The spirit led him to enter the church and pray. Devoutly lying prostrate before the crucifix, stirred by unusual visitations, he found he was different than when he had entered. While he was in this affected state, something absolutely unheard of occurred. The crucifix moved its lips and began to speak. "Francis," it said, calling him by name, "go and repair my house, which, as you see, is completely destroyed." Francis was stupefied and nearly deranged by this speech. He prepared to obey, surrendering himself completely to the project. But since he considered the change in him to be beyond description, it is best for us to be silent about what he himself could not describe. From then on, compassion for the crucified one was imprinted in his holy soul and, one may devoutly suspect, the stigmata of the holy passions were deeply imprinted in his heart, though not yet in his flesh."

After this experience, Francis took all he owned and went to the market selling everything but his clothing and staff. He sought to get rid of the money from the sale as quickly as possible, as he decided that carrying money for any amount of time was a burden. He approached the city of Assisi, and entered the church of St. Damien, which was ready to collapse. He found a poor priest within, and fell to his knees, offering the money he was carrying and communicating his plans of repairing the church. The priest was stunned in disbelief, as he knew Francis as an ordinary, and far from spiritual, young man. With passion he begged for the priest to accept him, and the priest relented, but would not except the money. Francis threw it on the sill of the window, for, *"He wanted to possess wisdom, which is better than gold, and prudence, which is more precious than silver."*

Francis's father was very upset, and he locked his son up at home. His mother, soft of heart, released him. Finally in 1206 his father brought him before the bishop of Assisi, hoping for counsel. In audience with the bishop, Francis removed his clothing and threw them aside, returning them to his father. He stood there completely naked, showing his determination and passion in leaving behind life with his family, as well as wealth and comfort, and taking up the life as a man of spirit. The bishop saw that Francis was divinely inspired, and began to support him in his endeavors. After this, Francis began traveling, ministering to the sick, inspiring the poor, and rebuilding the churches in the area. He began to attract other devout men, who admired his simplicity and passion for God.

Eventually Pope Innocent III blessed the Franciscan order, and it quickly grew. Francis wrote Rules for the order, which included owning only one tunic, no shoes, a rope as a belt, and begging for the food necessary for sustenance, giving all excess to the poor. As the order grew, the Franciscans traveled widely and helped many, preaching love for God wherever they went.

St. Francis is well known today as the patron saint of animals. There are many stories of his communion with creatures of nature, whom he considered had their ears tuned to God at all times. He preached to the animals in the forest, and there are many stories of witnesses who saw them listening. One such story, recorded by Thomas of Celano, goes: *"One day he came to a town called Alviano, to preach the word of God. Ascending to where he could be seen by all, he asked for silence. The people became quiet and waited reverently, but a flock of swallows building nests in that place continued to chatter away, making it impossible for the people to hear. Francis spoke to them, 'My sisters the swallows, it's my turn to speak now, because you've already said enough. Listen to the word of God. Stay still and quiet until it's over.' To the people's amazement the little birds immediately stopped chattering and did not move until Francis had finished preaching. Those who witnessed this sight were filled with wonder and said, 'Truly this man is holy and a friend*

of the most High.' Praising and blessing God, they devoutly hurried to touch at least his clothing. And it is marvelous how these irrational creatures recognized his affection for them, sensed his love."

A story Thomas tells of St. Francis' protection of animals is: "Once, when he was staying in the town of Greccio, a hare was caught in a trap and brought to live with Francis by a brother. Seeing the hare, the blessed man was moved to pity and said, 'Brother hare, come here. Why did you let yourself be fooled in this way?' As soon as the hare was released by the brother, he dashed over to Francis and, without being forced to do so, settled into his lap as the safest place available. When he had rested for a while, the Holy Father, stroking him with maternal affection, let him go so that he could return to the wild. Each time he was placed on the ground, the hare ran back to Francis's lap. Finally Francis asked that the brothers carry him to a nearby forest."

There are many other stories of Francis' connection with animals, as well as many stories of miracles performed by St. Francis. People were healed by touching his clothing, and wherever he went, people gathered around him, seeking to touch the hem of his tunic. Often, people cut pieces of his tunic, to take them to loved ones in need. One story tells of a woman in childbirth, who was near death. Her family heard that St. Francis was passing through and sought him out. On seeing one of the Franciscan brothers, thinking this brother was St. Francis, the relative hastened to explain the situation. In finding out that St. Francis had already passed through, the brother took the bridle from a horse on which St. Francis had ridden. The bridle was taken and laid over the laboring mother, and she delivered quickly and safely.

St. Francis' fervent desire was to live as Jesus Christ, and in the last years of his life he had a vision that filled him with wonder. The vision was of a great Seraph, a man with six wings standing above him, with hands extended, and feet together, affixed to a cross. Two wings were raised over his head, two extended in flight, and two hid his entire body. He did not understand the vision, but rejoiced in it, while at the same time feeling sadness that the Seraph was suffering on the cross. As he contemplated deeply and passionately this vision, the mark of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, and a wound appeared on his right side, soaking his tunic with blood. In his final days, as he suffered illness, and great pain from his wounds, he sought to hide the stigmata, cherishing it as his private link with God.

St. Francis returned to his Father in 1226. However, his model of a life of simplicity, poverty, and humility before God, as well as his care of the poor and the animals, inspires the Franciscan church to this day. Many are familiar with this sublime poem, entitled:

Peace Prayer Of St. Francis

*Lord, make me an instrument for your peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy;
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving, that we receive,
it is in pardoning, that we are pardoned
and it is in dying, that we are born to the eternal*

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

St. Teresa of Avila was born Teresa de Cepeda Ahumada, in Avila, Spain. Her father, Sir Alonso Sanchez de Cloister Cepeda, and her mother Beatriz d'Avila y Ahumada instructed her in piousness at an early age. Her parents had converted to Judaism. At age 19, Teresa secretly left her home and entered the monastery of the Carmelite nuns at Avila. She experienced the suffering of illness for many years, simultaneously experiencing periods of spiritual ecstasy. She practiced the devotions in the book *Abecedario Espiritual*, commonly known as the third, or spiritual Alphabet. This work consisted of common mystical teachings of the time. It included instructions for tests of conscience, spiritual self-examination and contemplation. During her early years, when

she was suffering from illness, she saw the distinction between mortal and venous sin. She came upon a secret terror of sinful iniquity in the inherent nature of original sin. She saw the necessity of absolute subjection to God.

When friends and acquaintances pointed to what they saw as a diabolical nature in her visions, she took part in horrible self-inflicted tortures and mortifications far in excess of ordinary asceticism. When she was assured by the priest Francisco Borgia, to whom she made confession, that her visions were from God, she became firmly convinced that Christ was present to her in bodily form, though invisible. For more than two years she had an uninterrupted experience of direct communion with Christ. In one vision, a seraphim drove the fiery point of a golden lance repeatedly through her heart, causing spiritual-body pain. This caused her to cry out, in the characteristic quote attributed to her, "Lord, either let me suffer, or let me die."

St. Teresa of Avila is well known for reformation work. She founded a Carmelite monastery for nuns in which she endeavored to reform the lax attitude of the nuns of The Incarnation, as well as other nuns she encountered. She established as her prime principals absolute poverty and renunciation within the monastery, as well as instituting flagellation, asceticism, and the wearing of sandals instead of shoes. She was joined in vision by Juan De LaCruz, who started the men's movement, similar in its goal of reformation. Teresa went into seclusion to write from the depths of her mystical and visionary heart. During this period, Juan De LaCruz continued to carry the inner life of the movement.

Teresa and Juan were challenged by the elders of the Carmelite church, who forbade all further founding of convents by the two. She was told to retire to one of her convents, and she chose St. Joseph's at Toledo. Many of her friends were subjected to trials of the Inquisition, and suffered more than she did. Eventually, after many letters written to King Philip of Spain, the Inquisition against her and other nuns was dropped. For 20 years Teresa and Juan worked side-by-side, creating 17 nunneries, as well as many men's cloisters, holding true to the visionary reformation which was the heart of their work.

Teresa's writings described an "ascent of the soul, in four stages." They are described below:

The First, Heart's Devotion which is that of devout contemplation or concentration, the withdrawal of the soul from without, and especially the devout observance of the passion of Christ and penitence.

The Second, Devotion Of Peace in which at least the human will is lost in that of God by virtue of a charismatic, supernatural state given of God, while the other faculties, as memory, reason, and imagination, are not yet secured from worldly distractions. While a partial distraction is due to outer performances such as repetition of prayers and writing down spiritual things, the prevailing state is one of quietude.

The Third, Devotion Of Union ... an essentially ecstatic state. Here there is an absorption of the reason in God, and only the memory and imagination are left to ramble. This state is characterized by a blissful peace, a sweet slumber of at least the higher soul faculties, a conscious rapture in the love of God.

The Fourth, Devotion Of Ecstasy Or Rapture, a passive state, in which the consciousness of being in the body disappears. Sense activity ceases; the memory and imagination are also absorbed in God or intoxicated. The body and spirit are in the throes of a sweet, happy pain, alternating between a fearful fiery glow, a complete impotence and unconsciousness, and a spell of strangulation, intermitted sometimes by such an ecstatic flight that the body is literally lifted into space. This after half an hour is followed by a reactionary relaxation of a few hours in a swoon like weakness, attended by a negation of all the faculties in the union with God. From this the subject awakens in tears; it is the climax of mystical experience, productive of the trance.

In speaking of these experiences, St. Teresa is quoted as saying, "This secret union takes place in the deepest center of the soul, which must be where God himself dwells, and I do not think there is a need of a door by which to enter it. I say there is no need of a door because all that has so far been described seems to have come through the medium of the senses and faculties... but what passes in the union of the spiritual marriage is very different. The Lord appears in the center of the soul, not through an imaginary, but through an intellectual vision (although this is a subtler one than that already mentioned), just as he appeared to the apostles, without entering through the door... this instantaneous communication of God to the soul is so great a secret, so sublime a favor, and such delight is felt by the soul, that I do not know with what to compare, beyond saying that the Lord is pleased to manifest to the soul at that moment the glory that is in heaven, in a more sublime manner than is possible for any vision or spiritual consolation. It is impossible to say more than that, as far as one can understand, the soul (I mean the spirit of this soul) is made one with God, who, being likewise a Spirit, has been pleased to reveal the love that He has for us by showing to certain persons the extent of that love, so that we may

praise His greatness. For He has been pleased to unite Himself with His creature in such a way that they have become like two who cannot be separated from one another: even so He will not separate Himself from them.”

Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

Mother Teresa was born on August 26, 1910 in Albania, Yugoslavia. She was named Agnes Bojaxhiu by her parents, Nikola and Drane Bojaxhiu. Baptised Gonxha Agnes, she received her first communion at the age of 5 ½, and was confirmed in November 1916. From a very young age she showed great compassion for all souls. Her father died when she was 8 years old, leaving her mother to raise the children with very little money. Drane raised her children lovingly yet firmly. This love and devotion greatly influenced Teresa's character. She was very involved with the vibrant Jesuit parish of the Sacred Heart in which she received her spiritual guidance and teachings. At the age of 18 she left home to join the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ireland and become a missionary. It was there that she received the name Sister Mary Teresa, after Saint Therese of Lisieux. In December of that year she traveled to India to begin her mission, arriving in Calcutta on January 6, 1929.

In Calcutta, she taught at St. Mary's school for girls. On May 24, 1937 she made her final profession of vows, becoming the *“spouse of Jesus for all eternity,”* as she said in her own words. From that time on she was called Mother Teresa. She continued to teach at St. Mary's. In 1944 she became the school principal. She was deeply contemplative, with a profound love for everyone, and she spent 20 years sharing her grace at St. Mary's. She was known for her giving nature, her courageousness, and her tireless capacity for hard work.

She received visions over the next few months from Jesus, who desired for her to become his instrument of love and compassion. Then on September 10, 1926, she received *“divine inspiration,”* in her calling from Jesus. He revealed to her his pain at the neglect of the poor and the unfortunate, and asked her to *“Come be my light.”* He entreated her to find the poor and neglected, and to be of service to them, and teach them of his longing for their love, and of his infinite love for them. After a time of testing the provisions of the church, she was given permission to create Missionaries Of Charity, dedicating herself to the service of the poorest of the poor.

In the following years she visited the slums of Calcutta, ministering to families, washing sores, caring for the elderly and sick, and feeding the hungry. She began each day in contemplation with Jesus, and then went out, her rosary beads in her hands, to find and serve those who most needed the love of Jesus. The Missionaries Of Charity established foundations in several places in India, as well as in Rome, Tanzania, the Soviet Union, Albania and Cuba. She initiated many people into this work of caring for others, inspiring compassion in the heart of many people who were fortunate enough to be able to care for others.

Mother Teresa began to be recognized by the world for her work. She began receiving awards and acclaim, and in 1979 she received the Nobel Peace Prize. Her whole life and work represented her joy of loving and the greatness and dignity of every thing and every person. By 1997, the sisters of Charity numbered 4000 and were established in 610 foundations in 123 countries of the world. In her final years, despite increasingly severe health problems, Mother Teresa continued to do her work. She passed on September 5, 1997, and was buried in the mother house of the missionaries of Charity, where her tomb quickly became a place of pilgrimage and prayer for people of all faiths.

Mother Teresa taught that all people are worthy of the love of God, and that humans must love one another in the name of Jesus in order to fulfill his promise. She once said, *“What the poor need, even more than food and clothing and shelter (though they need these, too, desperately), is to be wanted. It is the outcast state their poverty imposes upon them that is the more agonizing.”*

Mother Theresa's Words (www.ewtn.com/mother)

“A clean heart is a free heart. A free heart can love Christ with an undivided love and chastity, convinced that nothing and nobody will separate it from his love. Purity, chastity, and virginity created a special beauty in Mary that attracted God's attention. He showed his great love for the world by giving Jesus to her.”

“There is a terrible hunger for love, and we all experience that in our lives, the pain, the loneliness. We must have courage to recognize it. The poor you may have right in your own family. Find them. Love them.”

“You and I, we are the Church, no? We have to share with our people. Suffering today is because people are hoarding, not giving, not sharing. Jesus made it very clear. Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to me. Give a glass of water, you give it to me. Receive a little child, you receive me.”

"A sacrifice to be real must cost, must hurt, must empty ourselves. The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace."

Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925)

Rudolph Steiner was born on Murr Island in Croatia in 1861. His childhood was spent in Austria, where his father was the station-master of a Southern Austrian Railway station. Early in his childhood, Steiner showed an awareness of that which could not be seen by others. When speaking of this time in his youth, he says, "The reality of the spiritual world was as certain to me as that of the physical. I felt the need, however, for a sort of justification for this assumption."

His father, recognizing his potential, sent him to an excellent school to begin his education. He eventually studied at the Technical University in Vienna. He mastered many subjects, even those outside this area of study. However, the thing that engaged him the most was thinking itself. He pondered the origins of consciousness, of ego, and the understanding that these were spiritual matters. He said of this, "Much more vital at that time was the need to find an answer to the question: how far is it possible to prove that in human thinking real spirit is the agent?"

He studied philosophy, particularly the writings of Kant. He was seeking to find an established philosophy that made sense to him. When he could not, he developed his own philosophy of the origins of consciousness. Steiner began to translate his direct perceptions of the spiritual world. He claims he perceived these directly from the Akashic records, and organized them into a philosophical structure. He called the process "introspective observation following the methods of Natural Science." During this time he wrote several books, including *The Philosophy Of Freedom* (1894), *Riddles Of Philosophy* (1901), and *Mysticism And Modern Thought* (1901). During this time he lectured often, bringing his ideas to the scientific, philosophical, and academic community. He was disappointed when he saw a narrow view of, and reception to, his work.

He became involved in the Theosophical Society, and their philosophy greatly influenced his own life. He was also initiated into the Rosicrucian Order. At this time his area of interest was European mysticism, and he lectured widely on the Gospels. The Theosophists were focusing more and more on the wisdom of the East. When they stated that they had found the new Messiah, or World Teacher, in Jiddu Krishnamurti, at that time a 16-year-old Indian boy, Steiner chose to disassociate himself from the group.

Steiner began calling his world view Anthroposophy, meaning *wisdom of or about man*. His voluminous writings concerning his version of cosmology, especially in his later years, is very complex and somewhat tedious reading, making it difficult to understand.

Of all his teachings, the legacy that is received most widely today is his educational philosophy, called Waldorf. He originally created the school for the children of the employees of Waldorf-Astoria tobacco company. Today Waldorf education is one of the fastest-growing alternative education philosophies. The aim of Waldorf education is to educate the *whole* child, "head, heart and hands." The idea is to create a genuine love of learning within each child.

One central tenant is that no formal academics are taught until 2nd grade. The reason for this is to allow the child's natural intelligence to unfold and blossom in a gentle, organic way. The young child is still very connected to the world of spirit, becoming familiar with residing in the human body, and creating relationship with the environment. These are the main focuses at this age. Body movement, including use of rhythmic games, as well as a creative exploration of the inner and outer world of the child through playing in nature and creating art from natural materials, prepare a firm foundation for the child's later academic studies. Waldorf teachers are considered to be in the unfolding process also, and are encouraged to explore their own inner and outer world in similar ways, continually growing and discovering more about themselves through teaching. This educational philosophy has become increasingly more popular as an alternative to the current public school teaching methods.

Quotes from Rudolph Steiner

"People must come closer to one another than they used to be, each becoming an awakener of everyone he meets. Modern human beings entering life today have stored up far too much karma not to feel a destined connection with every individual they encounter. In earlier ages, souls were younger and had not formed so many karmic ties. Now it has become necessary to be awakened not just by nature, but by the human beings with whom we are karmically connected and whom we want to seek."

“Esoteric science is the science of what takes place esoterically, in the sense that it is perceived not outside in nature but where one’s soul turns when it directs its inner being toward the spirit. Esoteric science is the opposite and counterpart of natural science.”

“All knowledge pursued merely for the enrichment of personal learning and the accumulation of personal treasure leads you away from the path; but all knowledge pursued for growth to ripeness within the process of human ennoblement and cosmic development brings you a step forward.”

Peter Deunov (Beinsa Duono) (1864-1944)

Peter Deunov was born into a Christian family in Bulgaria on July 11, 1864. His father was an Orthodox priest and a teacher. Peter was a gentle and sensitive child, who drew pleasure from helping others. He was also very quiet, and contemplative, spending much time by himself walking in nature. He had a great joy and love for music, and learned to play the violin at a young age. At a young age he chose to dedicate his life to knowing God, choosing the life of a monk.

On his way to a monastery in Mount Athos, his boat sank in a storm and he ended up in the town of Salomique. Once safely on shore, he headed to the church to pray to God and give thanks for his survival. In a mystical encounter, he met the old priest of the church, who told him not to become a monk, but to turn around and go home, because God had other plans for him. He listened, and headed home.

Once home, he finished school, and chose work as a schoolteacher in a small village. He was beloved as a teacher, and often played violin for his students, teaching them a love of music. At the age of 24 he chose to go to America to study further.

At school in America, the other students began to gather around him and listened to what he had to say. He spoke of the beauty of the natural world, and of the wisdom residing in the mathematical perfection and precision of nature. He spoke of the stars and the flowers, and wondered at the mind that had created such beauty. Some of these students looked to him for teaching. He began to understand that his purpose was to teach others about the perfect love and joy he felt, and to guide them toward their own understanding of light, love and spirit.

Upon completing his studies, he went back to Bulgaria. He went into seclusion, beginning a five-year period during which he went into deep contemplation, prayer, and meditation, spending most of his time in the mountains. It was within this period of time that he wrote his first book, *The Testament Of Colors*.

When he reemerged from his inner journey, he changed his name to his spiritual one of Beinsa Duono, and began to travel throughout Bulgaria, giving talks on his philosophy. The basis of his teachings were those of original Christianity, and in 1922 he founded The Initiatic School of YZGREVA, The Rising of the Sun, also called The White Brotherhood, or Fellowship Of Light. At gatherings of the fellowship, he spoke of these teachings for 22 years. Many influential thinkers of the time came to hear him speak, and to be initiated into these sacred, ancient teachings. Albert Einstein was one of his students, and said of him, “All the world renders homage to me, and I render homage to the Master Peter Deunov from Bulgaria.”

When speaking of his students, Peter said:

*“The disciple should have:
a heart as pure as a crystal
a mind as radiant as the Sun
a soul as vast as the universe
and a spirit as mighty as God
and one with God “*

Of his teachings, he said:

“I was sent from the divine world to proclaim love and to apply its force and its power within the world. He who teaches the divine knowledge is invulnerable. The divine knowledge is eternal and indivisible; it was in the past, it is in the present, and it will be in the future. Consequently, the person who taught it and who will teach it does not matter. It is the spirit of God which always counts, at all times and in all time periods; and no force in the world can possibly conquer it.”

According to his biography, found at Internet address www.telesma-evida.com, “On December 27th 1944, he who had pronounced these words and consecrated his life to the good of all beings abandoned his physical body in full consciousness, in the midst of his disciples and his friends gathered together to accompany

him one last time in song. He offered, as an inheritance to all beings of goodwill, an example, a living pulse, effective methods, and a teaching as vast as the universe.”

He taught many different methods of purification and alignment with the Divine, but what has drawn many to continue practicing his teachings is a dance called Paneurythmy. His students participated in this dance in the Rila mountains in Bulgaria, a place considered sacred, a place of high altitude, with blue sky, pure air, and beautiful lakes reflecting the heavens. Paneurythmy means *rhythm of the cosmos*, and the dance is said to follow the movements of the solar system, connecting heaven and earth through the dancer. It is thought to open, energize, and balance the energy centers of the body, as well as bring the dancer into unity with the universe. This dance is currently taught all over the world, and many groups practice it at spiritual conferences, at sacred sites, and at certain times of seasonal, astrological and spiritual significance.

“In the fulfillment of the will of God lies the power of human soul.” —Biensa Duono

G.I. Gurdjieff (1866- 1949)

Gurdjieff was born in the Cappadocian Greek quarter of Alexandropol. His father, who owned a small carpentry shop, entrusted Father Dean Borsh of the Russian military cathedral with the responsibility of Gurdjieff's private education. Gurdjieff was an intensive reader and avid student. When he was 15, his favorite sister died. During this same period, Gurdjieff had a brush with death himself in a shooting accident on Lake Alaguez. He became fascinated at this time with paranormal phenomena. Again at the age of 16, he narrowly escaped death in an adolescent duel with another boy. Although he was raised in a Christian home, he explored other religious practices through observance of the local people. He had an insatiable curiosity, and began to yearn for an understanding of the “truth.”

According to his autobiography, *Meetings With Remarkable Men* (1963), he traveled with other friends who were “truth seekers,” to Constantinople, Alexandria, Abyssinia, Sudan, Mecca, Medina, the remains of Babylon, Switzerland, Rome, Crete, Tabriz, Baghdad, Siberia, and Tibet. He was seeking to find the roots of the great mystery schools of antiquity, such as the Sarmoung Brotherhood, a wisdom school founded in Babylon, 2500 B.C., and the ancient Imastun Brotherhood in Crete. He studied Sufism with masters, and gained access to a secret Sarmoung monastery, in which he spent time studying the ancient mysteries.

The life of Gurdjieff, in compiling a biography, is very complex. His seeking spanned several decades and multiple philosophies. In 1922 he established The Institute For The Harmonious Development Of Man in Fountainbleau, France. One of his main methods of teaching was through his original choreographed dances, called “Sacred Gymnastics,” and later “Movements.”

His most famous student was P.D. Ouspensky, who recorded his teachings of The Fourth Way, an approach to enlightenment that involves observing one's life, not trying to change it, but observing it so closely that one becomes aware of what is underneath it. Instrumental to his teachings was that the individual need not follow anyone else's path but his own, and in seeking enlightenment, one must look within, question one's motives, and go through a process of what Gurdjieff called “self- remembering.” P.D. Ouspensky wrote *In Search Of The Miraculous* (1940), in which he describes the years of Gurdjieff's seeking. Ouspensky is well able to express Gurdjieff's ideas, and his unique way of working with people in order to awaken them to the true self.

Gurdjieff died on October 29, 1949, after, under intense pressures, his health failed. After his death, his teachings were carried on by several of his students in France and the United States.

Quotes from G.I. Gurdjieff

“Self-observation brings man to the realization of the necessity of self-change. In observing himself a man notices that self-observation itself brings about certain changes in his inner processes. He begins to understand that self-observation is an instrument of self-change, a means of awakening. It is the greatest mistake to think that man is always one and the same. A man is never the same for long. He is continually changing. He seldom remains the same even for half an hour.”

“A man will renounce any pleasures you like but he will not give up his suffering.”

“Without self-knowledge, without understanding the working and functions of his machine, man cannot be free, he cannot govern himself, and he'll always remain a slave.”

“If you help others, you will be helped, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps in 100 years, but you will be helped. Nature must pay off the debt... it is a mathematical law and all life is mathematics.”

INDIA

Sri Shankaracharya (788-820)

Advanced in age, and without children, Shivaguru and Vishishta Devi, journeyed into the Vrishna mountains close to their home. They practiced devotional worship of Lord Shiva, doing austerities such as living off fruits and berries and roots from the forest and eventually living only off of holy water, their bodies becoming quite weak. It was at this time that Lord Shiva visited Shivaguru in a dream. In acknowledgment of his devotion Lord Shiva granted him the wish of his heart's desire. Shivaguru asked to be blessed with "a son who would be long-lived, and all-knowing." Shiva told him, "If you long for an all-knowing son, he will not be long-lived. If on the other hand, you desire to have a son who will have a long life, he will not be all knowing. Do you ask for an all-knowing son or for one with a long life? The choice is yours." Shivaguru chose the all-knowing son. Then Lord Shiva told him that he himself would visit their family as their son. Shankara was born in 788 in the village of Kaladi in Karali, India.

In his first years, the child showed divine abilities that were obvious to all who saw him. His father made a vow to send him for spiritual training at the age of 5, yet his father died before that time. When Shankara reached his 5th year his mother chose to honor her husband's wish, and sent her son into training. Shankara proved to be a remarkable student, in fact, a prodigy. He had the ability to fully recall everything he saw and everything he heard. He could hear the chanting of scriptures and immediately commit them to memory, or read a book and know it from cover to cover. In two years time Shankara mastered his studies of the Upanishads, the Puranas, and many other sacred texts and teachings. At the age of seven he returned to his mother's home, already exhibiting the power to heal others, as well as other miraculous powers. Stories of this young boy's accomplishments quickly spread all over India. One of the stories told illustrates Shankara's devotion to his mother, whom he loved deeply:

The devout Aryamba used to go for a bath to the river Alwai every day. On her way back home she offered worship at the shrine of Keshava who was her family deity.

The Alwai was a sacred river in those parts. The river was a long way off from Shankara's house, but his mother, with great steadfastness, went to the river everyday for the holy bath.

Once in the summer season, Aryamba went to the river as usual, but even though a long time passed, she did not return home. Shankara was very much worried. He went in search of her and when he was walking along the riverbank, he saw her lying unconscious on the roadside. In deep misery at the sight he wept profusely and started nursing his mother back to her senses. When she came round he slowly led her home by the hand.

Shankara was by nature ardently devoted to his mother, so his feelings on seeing her in this condition were such that no words can portray. Her suffering quite unnerved him. In tears, he sent forth a prayer to God, saying, "Lord, thou art indeed omnipotent. If thou only wishest, anything is possible. I cannot bear to see the suffering of my mother. Be gracious, and bring the river closer to our house. Then there will be no more suffering for my mother." This was his only longing and it overwhelmed his heart and soul. Day and night he was immersed in this one supplication to the Lord.

The All-Merciful Lord is not deaf to the prayers of his devotees. He does hear them. Shankara's treaty moved him, and God responded. During the night, the rains were so heavy that the river changed its course. Breaking through its North bank, the Alwai River began to flow by the village of Kaladi. Aryamba was indeed proud of her son's accomplishment, and started telling everyone. "It is as a result of the prayers of my son Shankara that the Lord has brought the river close to our house." This miraculous incident was big news, and spread within a few days to all corners of the area. People came in groups to have a look at this wonder boy.

At this time, Four Brahmins came to see Shankara. On reviewing his horoscope, they predicted that he would become a great world teacher, yet he would live only until he was 8, 16, or 32. On hearing the prediction of the Brahmins, Shankara begged his mother to allow him to go out and seek his guru. His mother did not want to see her only son leave, yet she knew she had to let him go. He promised that in her last hours she would only have to think of him and he would appear before her. Following the decision, as was the tradition, his mother dressed him in the yellow robes of the Sannyasin, gave him a staff and a water pot, and watched as Shankara lit a ritual fire and performed his own initiation. All the local villagers came to witness the ceremony, and watched with his mother as he left home, at just eight years of age.

He heard of an ancient guru living in a cave beside the Narmada River at Omkareshwar. The Narmada River was north of his village, so he set out to follow the path to the river. Shankara's journey to find his teacher

took two months, during which he passed through difficult and hazardous terrain. At last Shankara approached the cave of his guru.

Govindapada, the ancient guru in the cave on the Narmada, was waiting for Shankara. It was said that Govindapada was Pantajali himself, and he had been in ecstatic trance inside of the cave for a thousand years. Many yogis had taken up residence in caves around Govindapada, in hopes to be present for his awakening and hear his words of wisdom. When Shankara approached, and asked the yogis where he could find Govindapada, these wise men looked upon this eight-year-old boy with amazement. His face glowed and his countenance was of one of great wisdom, intelligence, and compassion. They recognized him as more than what he appeared. They pointed out the cave in which Govindapada resided.

Shankara approached the cave, and crawled within its dark interior carrying a small lamp. When he reached the interior he saw the beautiful and commanding figure of this Great One. He prostrated himself, tears of love and devotion pouring from his eyes, and began to sing a devotional hymn that he himself had written. Slowly Govindapada resumed consciousness of the physical world and opened his eyes on the sight of Shankara. He recognized Shiva himself in the form of this small boy. He gave himself completely to the task of instructing his divine disciple. Under his guidance Shankara mastered Hatha, Raja, and Jnana Yoga, and at the age and 11 he received initiation in the knowledge of Brahma. Additionally it is recorded that Shankara received the blessing of the Ageless Himalayan yogi, Maha Muni Babaji. Under his instruction, he practiced attaining the spontaneous state of pure consciousness.

Shankara's spiritual powers became very great, and Govindapada told him that his guru, Sukadeva, had predicted the coming of one such as him. His mission would be to assimilate all of the Vedic teachings and spread truth throughout India. Shortly after this, Shankara left the cave of his guru, and began his mission. At this time Govindapada closed his eyes, focused on his eyebrow center, and directing his Prana at the thousand petalled Lotus of Sahasrara, attained Maha Samhadi and final liberation from the cycle of rebirth, attaining consciousness of absolute oneness with the divine.

At this time, Shankara began his travels, flooding with wisdom and understanding of all the places he visited. He taught many disciples, the first of which was Sanandana, who became his faithful and devoted servant. He made brilliant commentaries on the scriptures, filling them with new life. He established great monasteries at the four corners of India, and infused the country anew with the sacred ancient science of Advaita Vedanta. At 32 years of age, this great being went into deep meditation, and attained the state of Nirvikalpa Samhadi, body glowing with the brightness of the thousand suns. His earthly body transformed into a dazzling sphere of light and disappeared into the ethers.

"Just as a stone, a tree, a straw, a grain, a mat, a cloth, a pot, and so on, when burned, are reduced to earth (from which they came), so the body and its sense organs, on being burned in the fire of Knowledge, become Knowledge and are absorbed in Brahman, like darkness in the light of the sun." —Shankaracharya

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886)

Ramakrishna was born into a Brahman family who had little money but were spiritually rich. They lived in a small town near Calcutta, India. His parents were very devotional in temperament, and they both experienced visions of the divine. His father once had a vision in which Vishnu appeared to him and told him that he himself would be born into their family as their son. When he was born they named him Gadadhar.

From a very early age, Gadadhar had ecstatic experiences and spiritual visions. His earliest ecstatic spiritual experience came when he was five years old and he saw a flock of white cranes flying in the air above his head. In the moment of seeing this common sight, he fell into a state of spiritual bliss. On another occasion, he was playing the role of the God Shiva in a school play and lost consciousness as he experienced himself as Shiva.

Gadadhar was not a great scholar, and had little interest in learning about the world. He was a daydreamer and spiritual visionary, a lover of nature, spending long hours wandering in the fields and along the river. He was very creative and artistic, as well a storyteller and actor. His father died when he was 7, and the financial status of his family became very difficult. At the age of 16, he began to work as a priest in the temple of Kali at Dakshineswar.

He became a passionate devotee of the Divine Mother Goddess, and began to spend much of his time making offerings and meditating on Her image. Not long after this he experienced a spontaneous spiritual awakening in his deeply devout desire to see the Divine Mother, Kali. His longing to receive a visit from Kali was so strong that he decided to take his life. He described this incident: "When I jumped up like a madman and grabbed a

sword, suddenly the Blessed Mother revealed herself. The buildings with their different parts, the temple, and everything vanished from my sight, leaving no trace whatsoever, and in their stead I saw a limitless, infinite, effulgent Ocean of Consciousness. As far as the eye could see, the shining billows were madly rushing at me from all sides with a terrific noise, to swallow me up. I was caught in the rush and collapsed, unconscious... within me there was a steady flow of undiluted bliss, altogether new, and I felt the presence of the Divine Mother.

Following this experience, many teachers came to the temple and taught Gadadhar, and he made great progress, mastering all the Yogic teachings. Very soon word spread of his spiritual accomplishments. It was during this time he received the name of Ramakrishna. He became a renunciate, and studied the non-dualist form of Vedanta philosophy, which views God as the formless, unmanifest energy that supports the cosmos. He experienced the powerful and deep form of trance called nirvikalpa samhadi, which can be described as complete absorption of one's being into the Divine Ocean of consciousness. He began to show what many of the temple saw as mental instability, but a holy woman who appeared at the temple determined that Ramakrishna's madness was spiritual madness, that he was literally mad for a vision of God.

He began to gather disciples around him, at which time his most devoted disciple, the Swami Vivekananda, began to record his teachings. Another of his disciples, Sarada Devi, became his wife and spiritual companion, she herself being enlightened, and a perfect compliment to Ramakrishna. She was considered to be an incarnation of the Holy Mother, and many came specifically as her disciples. It was during this time as that Ramakrishna began to study different religious paths such as Christianity and Islam, deciding after doing so that all religions reach the same goal when practiced with devotion and singular focus. His teachings became widely known, and all who came to see him felt blessed by his profound presence, obvious God-consciousness, unconditional love and compassion for all beings, and his expression of Oneness. People of all faiths, religions, and races were drawn to his teachings of the universal reality of God's presence permeating perceived boundaries. He often asked people how *they* viewed God, and then he tailored his teachings to their beliefs.

Universal Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna

See God in all

I have now come to a stage of realization in which I see that God is walking in every human form and manifesting himself alike through the sage and the sinner, the virtuous and the vicious. Therefore when I meet different people I say to myself, God in the form of a saint, God in the form of the sinner, God in the form of the righteous, God in the form of the unrighteous.

God is within you

Do you know what I see? I see Him as All. Men and other creatures appear to me only as hollow forms, moving their heads and hands and feet, but within is the Lord himself.

Trust completely in God

What are you to do when you are placed in the world? Give up everything to Him, resign yourself to Him, and there will be no more trouble for you. Then you will come to know that everything is done by His will.

Persevere in your search for God

There are pearls in the deep sea, but one must hazard all to find them. If diving once does not bring you pearls, you need not therefore conclude that the sea is without them. Dive again and again. You are sure to be rewarded in the end. So is it with the finding of the Lord in this world. If your first attempt proves fruitless, do not lose heart. Persevere in your efforts. You are sure to realize Him at last.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

Vivekananda was born to the name Narendra on January 12, 1863 in Calcutta. His father was Vishwanatha Datta and his mother Bhuvanishwari Devi.

As a child, Narendra was very mischievous and precocious. He was a natural leader, and the boys who lived close to him followed him and did what he said. Once, when a neighbor who was annoyed by the antics of the children, told them that a demon lived in a tree near his house and would come out and get them. All the children except Narendra ran away. Narendra sat on a branch of the tree, unafraid, and after several hours proclaimed that he had disproved the neighbor's claim, there was no demon, and the children could return.

Early on, Narendra was proficient at meditation, and became oblivious to the outer world as he sat in great concentration. His trance could not be disturbed by animals, his friends, or his mother, to her dismay.

Even as a child he had great respect for the Sannyasis, or ascetics. He would give them anything they asked for, his clothing, his food, whatever he possessed. This disturbed his mother, and she took to locking him in his room when one of these wandering holy men came near. The Sannyasis and beggars knew the nature of Narendra, and would stand outside his window, and Narendra would throw down whatever possessions he had. His mother was concerned that he would himself become a wandering ascetic, as his grandfather had been. Once she found him sitting before the idol of Lord Shiva, his body smeared with ash. When she asked him what he was up to, he replied, "Mother, I'm the Lord Shiva."

Narendra was known for his compassion, and would often help others in need. There were many incidences in his early life when he helped strangers who were sick, injured, or in need. He was developing a growing disdain for the worship of idols, and began to question the Hindu religion in which he had been raised. He was excellent in sports, as well as his studies. He was a quick and alert student with a remarkable memory. He memorized lessons after one reading and excelled through great concentration. He was quite fearless, giving no thought to questioning authority and speaking his mind.

His father loved him and took time when he could to teach him the essentials of a virtuous life. He told him, "You need fear no one so long as you keep to the path of truth and Dharma. One should not be browbeaten. One should guard one's self-respect. Love of one's religion should not mean hatred of the other religions." Narendra listened to his father, and gauged his words by his own inner understanding. He had great respect for him, yet would not hesitate to question him if he had doubts.

Narendra's great love was his mother, and to him she was a goddess. He was in awe of her ability to make sacrifices for others, and felt that a mother must have the highest place in the home as well as in society. Narendra had a beautiful voice, and his parents loved to listen to him sing. When he sang devotional songs, he became radiant. He was adored by both his parents.

In college, Narendra became ravenous for knowledge. He quickly and efficiently learned all that his teachers taught him, and studied on his own as well, reading many books not related to the courses he was taking. His main fascination was with understanding God. He read many books on history, science, religion, and took a particular interest in Western philosophy. He began to develop intellectual discernment, and along with this came doubts and uncertainties. He left behind blind belief and sought truth through understanding. He went to the great scholars and thinkers at the University and questioned them, and though they excelled in expounding logic, they did not satisfy his seeking. He viewed their knowledge as learned, not experiential, and felt it lacked life. He began to seek someone who had direct experience of God.

Narendra learned of one named Ramakrishna, who was a priest in the temple of the goddess Kali. Though he was not a scholar, it was said that he had realized God. Narendra and some of his friends went to see him. When they entered the temple, Ramakrishna sat surrounded by his disciples, speaking about God. Narendra sat in the corner with his friends. All at once Ramakrishna's eyes turned toward Narendra. Immediately Ramakrishna lost his train of thought, and began to go into a trance, remembering an earlier meeting with this one. He asked Narendra, "Can you sing?" And Narendra sang some Bengali songs in a sweet and beautiful voice. Once again Ramakrishna went into a trance listening to Narendra. After a time, he took him into a room and spoke to him, saying, "My child, why are you so late? I have grown weary, waiting for you all these days. I wanted to share my experiences with the right person. You are not an ordinary man. You are Lord Vishnu in human form. Do you know how much I have been craving for you?"

Narendra thought the old man to be insane. He wanted to leave, and promised to return just so he could get away. He returned to his friends, saying nothing, and they listened to the rest of Ramakrishna's talk. Then Narendra asked him, "Have you seen God?" And Ramakrishna answered, "Of course I have, I have seen him just as I'm looking at you." Narendra was thoughtful, for this was the first person he met who told him that he had seen God. He did return, and soon became a disciple of Ramakrishna. The two became inseparable, and a great love grew between them.

His father died, and poverty overcame the family. Narendra, who had graduated with a B.A., began to search for a job. His search was long, difficult, and his family went hungry. He went long periods of time without food, so that his family could eat. Finally, he approached his guru, and asked for him to pray to the blessed mother Kali on his behalf, asking for relief from poverty for him and his family. Then Ramakrishna told him to pray to the goddess himself.

Narendra approached the idol of Kali and sat before her, going into a deep meditation. He prayed to the goddess, "O Mother, bestow on me the spirit of renunciation. Let me see you, that is all I beg of you." When he came out, Ramakrishna asked, "Did you submit your prayer to Her? What did She say?" Narendra replied "O! I forgot about it completely," meaning he forgot to pray for relief from poverty. Twice more he attempted to beseech the Goddess to remove poverty from his family. Twice more he asked only to see Her. He could not seem, when in deep communion with the Divine One, to ask anything more than to become One with Her. Ramakrishna responded with great joy, telling Narendra, "My child, you should not pray for only food and clothes. They are not the ultimate goals of man. Have faith in God. He will look after the welfare of your family."

After some time Ramakrishna developed a tumor in his throat. Near the end, he called Narendra to his bedside and touched him. Then he told him, "Narendra, now you are all-powerful. All these are my children. It is your duty to take care of them."

After the death of Ramakrishna, Narendra founded an institute to continue the teachings of his master, and house the disciples. He taught Sanskrit and philosophy, as well as the teachings of Ramakrishna.

After establishing the retreat, he began to wander and travel as a sannyasin, with the yellow robes, water bowl, and staff. It was during this period that he received the name Swami Vivekananda. He traveled widely, but unless someone paid for his train ticket, he walked, and unless someone offered him food, he did not eat, and unless someone offered him shelter, he slept in the street. He met many scholars and wise men, and began to gather disciples. During his travels, he also met with the leaders and rulers of the land. He gained great respect, and when he visited Ramanad, he spoke with the ruler there, who told him of the problems the country was facing. He was treated with great respect, and the Prince told him, "You should attend the conference of World Religions in America. I will bear all your travel expenses."

Vivekananda traveled to the coast, and visited the ocean, swimming to a rock and sitting on it. He reflected on the suffering endured by the people of his country. He thought of the poverty of the masses, and he felt great sadness and compassion. He decided that the caste system had to be rooted out if India was going to evolve spiritually. He decided to go to the Western countries to unveil the great and ancient spiritual traditions of India, and then return to awaken his homeland. During this time he was becoming very well known in India, and many gathered to hear him speak. Many gave him contributions of money for the journey ahead, though he kept only enough to travel modestly. He left for America on May 31, 1893.

After many stops, the ship arrived in Chicago in July. Vivekananda inquired about when the Conference Of World Religions would begin, and found out that it was three months away. He wondered what he would do for three months in the strange land. The money he had was fast disappearing. He found an international fair at which he spotted a maharajah from India, but at his approach the man turned away. He spent some time in Boston as room and board were less expensive there. He met many people who were impressed with his knowledge and presence. He began speaking in coffee houses and tea rooms. People were drawn to him. Eventually he made his way back to Chicago where he attended the Conference of World Religions, which began on September 11, 1893. Thousands of delegates from many countries of the world gathered at the conference, and Vivekananda was the youngest of them all. When it was his turn to speak he was very nervous. His heart was pounding and his throat was dry. He asked the president to allow him to be the last speaker. When his turn finally came he prayed to Sri Ramakrishna, and stood up to speak. When he began his address with the words, "Brothers and Sisters of America," a thunderous applause filled the hall. It lasted for a full three minutes.

When he was able to continue he spoke about people being born into different religions, and how they finally reached the same God, as rivers born into different places finally reached the sea. He passionately declared that no religion is superior and that none is inferior. His speech was praised by all the delegates. He became an overnight sensation, and everyone wanted to hear his words. His great beauty, melodious verse and intense, yet humble presence attracted all. He quickly became world-famous. Wherever he went he spoke at great length about the beauty and depth of Eastern Indian culture. He spoke with ease and confidence on any topic.

An example of one of the many newspaper articles said, "He speaks without a scrap of paper in his hand. We see in him some of the qualities of Jesus himself. A strange attire, a radiant personality, a rare elegance, the skills to epitomize Hinduism superbly with ease, with these gifts he has won the hearts of our people. He is mesmeric. He is unsurpassed in conversation. His mastery of English is exceptional. A man like him appears only once in an age. We're fortunate that we can see him and hear him."

Vivekananda raised America's view of India to an honored position, not only in America but in all the progressive nations. Wherever he went to speak, people listened. He had many invitations from important and wealthy people to stay at their houses, and he was treated as an honored guest. During this time he was constantly and painfully reminded of the poverty in India and spent many sleepless and tortured nights. He spent four years traveling in Europe and the United States before he returned to India.

Vivekananda received a welcome befitting a king in India. Huge crowds came to greet him. He established The Sri Ramakrishna Mission in 1897, formulating its ideology and goal. He said, "I do not want salvation, as long as there is a single sorrow-stricken man in India." He became a tireless missionary, traveling extensively throughout India and the Himalayas.

He returned to America for a while and then participated in the next Conference Of World Religions in Paris. He worked so hard that his health began to deteriorate, and despite his disciples encouraging him to take time off, he would not rest. His body grew weak, yet he was still active and alert. On July 4, 1902 the day proceeded as usual. He taught his disciples, rested for a while after eating, and then spent time talking to his followers and even joking. That night at 9:00 P.M. he was looking very tired and his hands were trembling. He cried out and sat up, breathed a deep sigh and went to sleep. He never woke up again but attained eternal bliss.

Here is his famous speech at the World Conference On Religions, in which so many found a beloved teacher: "Brothers and Sisters of America, it fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the Mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes. My thanks also, to some of the speakers on this platform who, referring to the delegates from the Orient, have told you that these men from far off nations may well claim the honor of bearing to different lands the idea of toleration. I am proud to belong to the religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to the nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I'm proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion that has sheltered and is still fostering the amendment of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you brethren in a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: *As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle with their water in the sea, so, oh Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to thee.* The present convention which is one of the most of dust assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, the declaration to the world, of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: *Whosoever comes to me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me.*'

"Sectarianism known as bigotry, and its horrible descendent fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, shed human blood, destroyed civilizations, and sent some nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more evolved than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and does all uncharitable feelings between persons winding their way to the same goal."

Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952)

Paramahansa was born on January 5, 1893, in Gorakhpur, India. He was named Mukunda Lal Ghosh by his parents, who were devout Hindus with middle-class standing. When he was very young, he showed a great affinity for the spiritual life. At an early age he began to seek out the teachings of Saints and sages, looking for a teacher to help guide him in quenching his spiritual thirst. At the age of 17, he found his teacher in Swami Sri Yukteswar. He became a disciple, and spent the next 10 years in retreat with this Great Master.

After graduating from Calcutta University, in 1915, he took vows as a monk in the monastic Swami Order of India, and received the name Yogananda, which means Bliss (ananda), through divine union (Yoga). He gave himself mind, body, and spirit in loving service to God.

He founded a school for boys in 1917. Modern educational methods were combined with Yogic training and instruction in living with spiritual integrity. In 1920, he founded the Self-Realization Fellowship in order to

expand understanding and knowledge of India's ancient teachings on the science and philosophy of Yoga. He began lecturing and teaching on the East Coast of the United States, and eventually extended his tour in 1924 to include the entire country, even Mexico. In 1925 he established an international headquarters for the Self-Realization Fellowship, which became the spiritual nexus of his fast growing work. He was widely received, speaking to audiences in the largest auditoriums in the country, including New York's Carnegie Hall and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The Los Angeles Times reported, "The Philharmonic Auditorium presents the extraordinary spectacle of thousands... being turned away an hour before the advertised opening of a lecture with the 3000-seat hall filled to capacity."

In 1935, Yogananda returned to India for a year, and spoke to the people of his homeland. He initiated Mahatma Gandhi in Kriya Yoga, and sat with many other spiritual masters of India, including Sri. Ramana Maharishi. At this time his Guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar, gave him India's highest spiritual title, that of Paramahansa, which means "Supreme Swan," and signifies, "One who manifests the supreme state of unbroken communion with God."

Yogananda taught about the inherent oneness at the root of the world's great religions. He taught methods for all people to attain direct personal experience of God. To his disciples he taught Kriya Yoga, the sacred spiritual science originating millenniums ago in India. In his book, *Autobiography Of A Yogi* (1946), he explains in simple terms the basics of Kriya Yoga: "Kriya Yoga [means]... union... with the Infinite through a certain action or rite... he describes this method as, "a simple psycho-physiological method by which human blood is decarbonated and recharged with oxygen. The atoms of this extra oxygen are transmuted into life current to rejuvenate the brain and spinal centers. By stopping the accumulation of venous blood, one is able to lessen or prevent decay of tissues. The advanced Yogi transmutes his cells into energy. Elijah, Jesus, Kabir, and other prophets were past masters in the use of Kriya, or a similar technique, by which they caused their bodies to materialize and dematerialize at will."

Yogananda tells us that Kriya Yoga is the teaching that Krishna gave to Arjuna. It is mentioned in the Bhagavad-Gita, one of the stanzas reads, "Offering the inhaling breath into the exhaling breath and offering the exhaling breath into the inhaling breath, the Yogi neutralizes both breaths; thus he releases *prana* from the heart and brings life force under his control." Yogananda interprets this as, "The yogi arrests decay in the body by securing an additional supply of *prana* (life force) through quieting the action of the lungs and heart; he also arrests mutations of growth in the body by control of *apana* (eliminating current). Thus neutralizing decay and growth, the yogi learns life-force control."

Yogananda tells of his moment of enlightenment. His guru, Sri Yukteswar, struck him on the chest lightly, with his finger. Yogananda repeats, "*My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet. Soul and mind instantly lost their physical bondage, and streamed out like a fluid, piercing light from my every pore. The flesh was as though dead; yet in my intense awareness I knew that never before had I been fully alive. My sense of identity was no longer narrowly confined to a body but embraced the circumambient atoms. People on distant streets seemed to be moving gently over my own remote periphery. The roots of plants and trees appeared through a dim transparency of the soil; I discerned the inward flow of their sap.*

"The whole vicinity lay bare before me. My ordinary frontal vision was now changed to a vast spherical sight, simultaneously all perceptive. Through the back of my head I saw men strolling far down Rai Gat Lane, and noticed also a white cow that was leisurely approaching. When she reached the open ashram gate, I observed her as though with my two physical eyes. After she had passed behind the brick wall of the courtyard, I saw her clearly still.

"All objects within my panoramic gaze trembled and vibrated like quick motion pictures. My body, Master's, the pillar courtyard, the furniture and floor, the trees and sunshine, occasionally became violently agitated, until all melted into a luminescent sea; even as sugar crystals, thrown into a glass of water, dissolve after being shaken. The unifying light alternated with materializations of form, metamorphoses revealing the law of cause and effect in creation."

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986)

Jiddu Krishnamurti was born on May 11, 1895. He was born into large family near Madras, in India, to Brahmin parents. His mother died when he was 10 years old. Soon after that, he began his first secretarial job.

At this time many Theosophists were watching closely for signs of the coming of the Lord Maitreya, the awaited World Teacher. Krishnamurti was spotted on the beach by a member of the society who claimed clairvoyance. He observed that Krishnamurti's aura was very pure, with no traces of self-absorption. Soon after he

was adopted into the society along with his younger brother Nitya. The ones who claimed him as Lord Maitreya founded an organization called The Order Of The Star, in preparation for the announcing of the arrival of The World Teacher. Both boys were educated by Theosophist tutors, until 1921 when Krishnamurti was summoned back to India so that he could begin speaking on behalf of The Order Of The Star. It was with reluctance that he returned. His brother had contracted tuberculosis, and soon the two found themselves in San Francisco in a small cottage.

It was here that Krishnamurti had a profound spiritual experience, which was a pivotal point in his spiritual growth. It brought with it a legacy of excruciating pain in his head and spine. He called this "the process," and for many years he experienced periods of great pain. In 1927, it was announced by representatives of the order of The Star, that The World Teacher, Lord Maitreya, was here. In 1929, before a group of 3000 members of the order of The Star, Krishnamurti dissolved the organization. He did not so much deny being The World Teacher, but said, "I do not care if you believe I am The World Teacher or not. That is of very little importance... I do not want you to follow me... you have been accustomed to being told... what your spiritual status is. How childish! Who but yourself can tell you if you are beautiful or ugly inside?"

At the heart of Krishnamurti's teachings is the idea that all conflicts and suffering in the world are a result of the inner world of each individual, and that one could not separate oneself from what one sees. In *The Open Door* (1988), by Mary Lutyens, Volume 3 of a comprehensive study of Krishnamurti's life, the author says, "Krishnamurti saw the outer conflict in the world as being inseparable from the inner conflict in man. Society was the result of the individual and the individual the result of society; therefore we are, each one of us, responsible for all the horror and sorrow in the world, and, because every human being on earth suffers from the world's suffering, that we share a consciousness with the rest of humanity and are not really individuals at all, except superficially. No religion, no authority, no social reforms can ever end conflict and sorrow; the only thing that can is a complete mutation of each human psyche, a stepping out of the river of human consciousness, a change in the very brain cells themselves. And the mutation has to be instantaneous; it is useless *trying* to change, for what we are today we will inevitably be tomorrow."

Thousands of people year after year have listened to Krishnamurti's talks, in person and on audiotapes, and watched him on video. People who were close to him were puzzled by his "vacant mind." He retained very little memory, focusing his awareness so fully on the moment. At times this was difficult for those who cared for him.

In his talks he would often speak about what things are not, instead of describing what they are, so that by letting all that "is not" fall away, "what is" would be revealed. In a talk in which he was trying to light upon what love is, he said, "...fear is not love, dependence is not love, jealousy is not love, possessiveness and domination are not love, responsibility and duty are not love, self-pity is not love, love is not the opposite of hate any more than humility is the opposite of vanity. So if you can eliminate all these, not by forcing them but by washing them away as the rain washes the dust of many days from a leaf then perhaps you will come upon this strange flower which man always hungers after."

Ramana Maharishi (1897-1950)

Ramana is considered by many to be the most important Indian sage of the 20th century. He was born on December 30, 1879 in Tirucculi, in southern India. His parents were middle-class, and his father died when he was 12. At this time he went to live with his uncle and attended American mission high school. At 16 he heard someone say the name Arunachala, and although he did not know anything about this holy hill, associated with the God Shiva, when he heard the name he felt filled by a powerful energy.

At the time he was reading a book describing the lives of Shaivite Saints, and he became intensely focused on, and fascinated by, his studies. Soon after, he had an experience where he all of a sudden felt that his death was upon him. He laid down on the floor, his body stiff, his breath still, and realized, "My body is dead now, but I am still alive." A door opened in his consciousness and a flood of spiritual understanding filled him.

After this experience, Ramana ran away from home and went to Arunachala, where he stayed for the rest of his life. For some years he spoke to no one, and spent most of his time immersed in samadhi, or spiritual bliss. When speaking of this time, Ramana said, "I knew nothing, had learned nothing before I came here, some mysterious power took possession of me and effected a thorough transformation. I knew nothing and planned nothing. When I left home in my 17th year, I was like a speck swept on by a tremendous flood. I knew not my body or the world, whether it was day or night. It was difficult even to open my eyes. The eyelids seemed to be glued down. My body became a mere skeleton. Visitors pitied my plight, as they were not aware of how blissful I was."

When he began speaking once again, he quickly gained a reputation as a sage. So many people came to ask him questions, hear his words, and to just be in his presence, that soon an ashram was built on the hill. One of his early devotees named him Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, which means *Divine Eminent Ramana The Great Seer*. This name stayed with him. Thousands of people came from all over the world to receive his blessing in the ashram at Arunachala until his death in 1950 at the age of 70.

Ramana taught self-inquiry as a means of enlightenment. He encouraged people to bring full attention to a thought, and by becoming absorbed in the thought, find the source. As all phenomenon arises from the source, following any thought back to the source leads to realization of the true nature of the Self.

Ramana was often silent, blissful, peaceful and shining with radiance, expanding to include all beings in his awareness. People who came close to him often had great shifts in their spiritual consciousness. He spoke to people of looking within to decide whether they were actually the body, or really, the changeless eternal being. His powerful transmission of resting in this state of being, which is before every thing, inspired many people to come to this realization of the Self.

In Ramana Maharshi And The Path Of Self-Knowledge (1995), Samuel Weiser speaks of Ramana's piercing gaze: "Ramana would turn to the devotee, his eyes fixed upon him with blazing intentness. The luminosity, the power of his eyes, pierced into one, breaking down the thought process. Sometimes it was as though an electric current was passing through one, a vast peace, a flood of light. One devotee has described it: 'Suddenly Bhagavan turned his luminous, transparent eyes on me. Before that I could not stand his gaze for long. Now I look straight back into those terrible, wonderful eyes, how long I could not tell. They held me in a sort of vibration distinctly audible to me.'"

Teachings of Ramana Maharishi

"There is no greater mystery than this, that being the reality yourself, you seek to gain reality. You think that there is something binding your reality and that something must be destroyed before the reality is freed. This is ridiculous."

"A day will dawn when you will laugh at all your efforts. What is there to realize? The real is always as it is."

"You have realized the unreal, in other words, you regard the unreal as that which is real. Give up this attitude and you will attain wisdom."

"There is nothing new nor anything you do not already have which needs to be gained. The feeling that you have not yet realized is the sole obstruction to realization."

"In fact you are already free. If it were not so, the realization would be new. If it has not existed so far, it must take place hereafter. What comes will also go, what can be gained can also be lost."

"If realization is not eternal it is not worth having. Therefore what you seek is not that which must happen afresh. It is only that which is eternal, but not now known due to obstruction."

"Remove the obstruction. That which is eternal is not known to be so because of ignorance. Ignorance is the obstruction. Get over the ignorance and all will be well."

"The ignorance is identical with the I-thought. Find It's source and it will vanish. Then the self alone will shine as it always has, in the stillness of being."

Poonjaji (1910-1997)

Poonjaji was born Hari Wansch Lal Poonja, in Punjab, India. His mother and father were Yamuna and Paramanand Devi, and Yamuna's brother was a highly revered spiritual teacher Swami Rama Tirtha. His parents were deeply spiritual, with a strong desire to know God.

At the tender age of eight years old, Poonjaji was visiting some relatives with his family, when he had his first conscious glimpse of bliss. Here it is described in his own words;

"One evening, while we were all sitting in my relatives' house in Lahore, someone started to prepare a mango, milk and almond drink for everyone. It should have been a mouth-watering treat for a boy my age, but when a glass full of it was offered to me, I made no attempt to stretch out my hand to receive it. It was not that I didn't want to drink it. The truth was I had just been consumed and engulfed by an experience that made me so peaceful and happy, I was unable to respond to the offered glass. For two whole days I stayed in this peaceful, blissful, happy state, unable to communicate with anyone, but still fully aware of the various things that were going on around me."

His parents encouraged his spirituality, and his mother encouraged him to embrace Krishna. Poonjaji became completely absorbed in Krishna throughout his childhood, his marriage and long into his family life. In 1942, Poonjaji joined the British army, as he was involved with revolutionary groups determined to end British

rule in India. The group chose the method of infiltration as a means to overturn British rule. Throughout his training, he continued to look within, and he is quoted as saying, "The rigorousness and the brutality of the training could not suppress the inner spiritual fire that still burned within me."

Soon after training was completed Poojaji left the army to seek God. His inner yearning was so great that it eclipsed everything else. Not long after, he was at his family home when a wandering Sadhu appeared at his door, asking for food. He invited the man in, gave him food, and asked him, "Can you show me God? If not, do you know anyone who can?"

Poonjaji, reflecting on it later said, "Much to my surprise he gave me a positive answer. 'Yes, I know of a person who can show you God. If you go and see that man everything will be all right for you. His name is Ramana Maharshi. He lives in Sri Ramanashram Tiruvannamalai.'"

When Poonjaji (also known as Papaji) met Ramana he asked him, "Have you seen God?" Ramana answered, "Anything that you see cannot be God. God is not an object of your senses. Your God is a woman through whom all things are seen, tasted, touched, heard and smelled, yet he himself cannot be seen because he is the seer, not an object of sight." He told Poonjaji, "Find out who his seer is." Poonjaji reports about Ramana, "In his presence, I experienced the seer, what it was. It was so quick. My body was vibrating and became one. I did not understand this tremendous Bliss, this tremendous Happiness, this Beauty, in just an instant."

Poonjaji described an occasion when Ramana looked directly into his eyes, "He looked straight into my eyes, eye meeting eye, like a lover looking into the eyes of his beloved. My whole body shook and vibrated. I did not feel the presence of the body at all. Tears were falling from my eyes, and my throat choked. For hours I could not speak to anyone... He told me, 'I am with you wherever you are.' That was his promise, and that is my experience. There is no one called Poonjaji left anymore. There is only an emptiness where he used to be. And in that emptiness there shines the *I*, the *I* that is my reality, the *I* that is my master, the *I* that promised would be with me wherever I am."

The central point of Poonjaji's teachings, as Ramana taught before him, is emptiness. Many report instantaneous experiences of emptiness, inner bliss, thoughtlessness, and attainment of the state of no mind when sitting in Poonjaji's presence. Many have experienced permanent shifts in their awareness. Poonjaji's transmission of emptiness is complete.

Once a devotee told Poonjaji, "To abide in emptiness frightens me. Also that makes me feel as if I'm wasting my time." Papaji replied, "True, real emptiness is not frightening. If you experienced fear or fright, it was not a state of emptiness. You have never allowed yourself to experience the emptiness that is empty of all objects. Reject all known expressions, all pictures borrowed from the familiar world of your memory."

Once Papaji, as his devotees liked to call him, was speaking to a devotee practicing japa, repeating the name of God as a mantra. He told her, "If you say it properly, once will be enough." Then he put two apples on a table and said, "One repetition has just come and gone," as he removed one apple. Picking up the other apple he continued, "I have taken away the second japa before you can say it. Now, between the disappearance of the first japa, and the start of the second japa, what is there? What is left?" The devotee says of this experience, "I knew the answer was 'nothing,' but it wasn't that it appeared in the mind. In the moment he asked the question, I knew myself to be that nothingness, that emptiness. His question made me aware of what I really am. I couldn't answer his question because I wasn't capable of uttering even a single word, but I knew, without a doubt, who and what I was. The knowledge that I was nothingness, emptiness, was revealed to me in a moment, and it has remained with me ever since. He emptied me of everything. That is my state."

Gandhi (1869-1948)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869. His place of birth was Porbandar, a small town on the western coast of India. His father was named Karamchand. He was the prime minister of Porbandar, as his father had been before him. His mother, Putlibai, was a deeply spiritual, gentle and compassionate woman.

His years in school were unremarkable. At 13 he was married to Kasturbai, a young woman of the same age. After high school he enrolled at Samaldas College. He found his studies to be challenging, and the atmosphere not conducive to positive growth and development. His father died in 1885. He decided to go to England and study to become a barrister in order to be able to take the place of his father when the time came.

While in England, he was introduced to an English translation of the Bhagavad-Gita by Sir Edward Arnold. He read it, and from that time forward, the Gita became his favorite spiritual text. He says of it, "The

book struck me as one of priceless worth. This opinion of a key text has ever since been growing on me, with the result that I regard today as the supreme book for the knowledge of Truth. It has afforded me invaluable help in my moments of gloom." It was at this time that he also began to study the Bible. He especially connected to the New Testament, being very moved by the Sermon on the Mount. Continually expanding his spiritual studies, he read of Buddha's life and teachings, as well as that of Mohammed. He began to form an attitude of respect for all religions, and a desire to understand the underlying spiritual message in each one of them.

In 1891 he completed his studies and returned to India. In 1893 he traveled to South Africa to assist in defense of the resident Indians there. Quickly he learned the British rule in South Africa was exceedingly unfair towards his countrymen. Though he had come to work for only a year, he ended up staying for 21 years, working tirelessly and diligently to secure basic rights for the Indian citizens. He was arrested several times, and gave up time with his family, and many of the conveniences of modern middle-class life. He simplified his lifestyle, washing his own clothing and cleaning his own living space. He also studied midwifery, and attended the birth of his fourth son.

Gandhi continually challenged British rule, and successfully organized the Indian people, yet he always strove to cooperate with all concerned. Though never compromising truth, he ever extended love, compassion, and good humor toward all. Many times he entered volatile situations, but quickly the energy dissipated, as his obvious goodwill awakened this quality in others. With his help, many victories over injustice were realized.

He studied Tolstoy and Thoreau, and was interested in the concepts of civil disobedience and passive resistance. However, neither one of these paths truly struck a chord in his heart. When he was introduced to the concept of Sadagraha, meaning "holding fast to truth or firmness in a righteous cause," he became a Satyagraha. He began to teach this way to many others. With his natural charm and enthusiasm, as well as his steadfastness, the movement grew.

One example of his work is recorded at www.engagedpage.com:

In 1907, when the Transvaal received responsible government, it passed what came to be known as the Black Act, requiring all Indians, men and women, to register and submit to fingerprints. Gandhi advised the Indian community to refuse to submit to this indignity and to court imprisonment by defying the law. In January 1908, he was arrested and sentenced to two months' simple imprisonment. He was followed by other satyagrahis.

Before the prison term was over General Smuts sent him an emissary proposing that if the Indians voluntarily registered themselves he promised to repeal the Act. Gandhi agreed to the compromise. He always believed in trusting the opponent, but the other Indians were not so trusting. One burly Pathan even charged Gandhi with having betrayed them and threatened to kill him if he registered. On the day Gandhi went out to register he was waylaid and attacked by this and other Pathans and severely injured. When he recovered consciousness and was told that his assailants had been arrested he insisted on their being released.

Gandhi registered, but his disappointment was great when Smuts went back on his word and refused to repeal the Black Act. The Indians made a bonfire of their registration certificates and decided to defy the ban on immigration to the Transvaal. Jails began to be filled. Gandhi was arrested a second time in September 1908 and sentenced to two months' imprisonment, this time hard labor. The struggle continued. In February 1909 he was arrested a third time and sentenced to three months' hard labor. He made such good use of his time in jail with study and prayer that he was able to declare. "The real road to ultimate happiness lies in going to jail and undergoing sufferings and privations there in the interest of one's own country and religion."

In 1911, a provisional settlement of the Asiatic question in the Transvaal brought about a suspension of the satyagraha. In the following year, Gokhale visited South Africa, and on the eve of his departure assured Gandhi that the Union Government had promised to repeal the Black Act, remove the racial bar from the immigration law and abolish the £3 tax. But Gandhi had his fears that were soon borne out. The Union Government went back on its promise, and to this fire was added a very powerful fuel when a judgment of the Supreme Court ruled that only Christian marriages were legal in South Africa, turning at one stroke all Indian marriages in South Africa invalid and all Indian wives into concubines. This provoked Indian women, including, Kasturbai, to join the struggle.

It was illegal for the Indians to cross the border from the Transvaal into Natal, and vice versa, without a permit. Indian women from the Tolstoy Ashram crossed the border without permits and proceeded to Newcastle to persuade the Indian miners there to strike. They succeeded and were arrested. The strike spread and thousands of miners and other Indians prepared, under Gandhi's leadership, to march to the Transvaal border in a concerted act of non-violent defiance. Gandhi made strict rules for the conduct of the satyagrahis who were to submit patiently and

without retaliation to insult, flogging or arrest. He was arrested and sentenced, but the satyagraha spread. At one time there were about fifty thousand indentured laborers on strike and several thousand other Indians in jail. The Government tried repression and even shooting, and many lives were lost. "In the end," as an American biographer has put it, "General Smuts did what every Government that ever opposed Gandhi had to do—he yielded."

Gandhi was released and, in January 1914, a provisional agreement was arrived at between him and General Smuts. The main Indian demands were conceded. Gandhi's work in South Africa was now over and, in July 1914, he sailed with his wife for England where Gokhale had called him. Before sailing, he sent a pair of sandals he had made in jail to General Smuts as a gift. Recalling the gift twenty-five years later, the General wrote: "I have worn these sandals for many a summer since then even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man."

Gandhi continued throughout his life to challenge injustice, and to do so with the utmost respect for all involved. He challenged the beliefs and ideas that created the conditions of injustice, not the people themselves. He believed in educating people in morality, justice, and compassion. He held the opinion that people would do good if they were taught to.

At www.mkgandhi.org/biographyicon/bioindex.htm, in reference to his time in Africa, is written: "Though he stayed on specifically to challenge European arrogance and to resist injustice, he harboured no hatred in his heart and was in fact always ready to help his opponents when they were in distress. It was this rare combination of readiness to resist wrong and capacity to love his opponent that baffled his enemies and compelled their admiration. When the so-called Zulu rebellion broke out, he again offered his help to the Government and raised an Indian Ambulance Corps. He and his men nursed the sick and dying Zulus whom the white doctors and nurses were unwilling to touch."

Upon his return to India, he used the principles of Satyagraha to lead the campaign for Indian independence from Britain. Gandhi was arrested many times by the British for his activities in South Africa and India. Altogether he spent seven years in prison for his political activities. More than once Gandhi used fasting to impress upon others the need to be nonviolent. India was granted independence in 1947, and was partitioned into India and Pakistan. Rioting between Hindus and Muslims followed. Gandhi had been an advocate for a united India where Hindus and Muslims lived together in peace.

On January 13, 1948, at the age of 78, he began a fast with the purpose of stopping the bloodshed. After 5 days, the opposing leaders pledged to stop the fighting and Gandhi broke his fast. Twelve days later a Hindu fanatic, Nathuram Godse, who opposed his program of tolerance for all creeds and religions, assassinated Gandhi.

Gandhi was a good man who inspired others to be good humans. As quoted at www.mkgandhi.org/biographyicon/bioindex.htm, "If at the end he seemed like no other man, it is good to remember that when he began he was like any other man."

From Gandhi

"Non-cooperation with evil is a sacred duty."

"You assist an evil system most effectively by obeying its orders and decrees. An evil system never deserves such allegiance. Allegiance to it means partaking of the evil. A good person will resist an evil system with his or her whole soul. Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man."

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world. Whether humanity will consciously follow the law of love, I do not know. But that need not disturb me. The law will work just as the law of gravitation works, whether we accept it or not. The person who discovered the law of love was a far greater scientist than any of our modern scientists."

"However much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes."

"Man and his deed are two distinct things. Whereas a good deed should call forth approbation, and a wicked deed disapprobation, the doer of the deed, whether good or wicked always deserves respect or pity as the case may be. Nonviolence and cowardice are contradictory terms. Nonviolence is the greatest virtue, cowardice the greatest vice. Nonviolence springs from love, cowardice from hate. Nonviolence always suffers, cowardice always inflicts suffering. Perfect nonviolence is the highest bravery. Nonviolent conduct is never demoralizing, cowardice always is."

"Nonviolence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our being."

"It is good to see ourselves as others see us. Try as we may, we are never able to know ourselves fully as we are, especially the evil side of us. This we can do only if we are not angry with our critics but will take in good heart whatever they might have to say."

"It is the law of love that rules mankind. Had violence, i.e. hate, ruled us we should have become extinct long ago. And yet, the tragedy is that the so-called civilized men and nations conduct themselves as if the basis of society was violence."

Gandhi was once asked what he thought about western civilization. His response was: *"I think it would be a good idea."*

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (1931-1990)

Born Rajneesh Chandra Mohan, in Cuchara, a town in Central India, Rajneesh's parents practiced Jainism. From a very early age only he was independent. He had his own ideas about the world, and loved to debate with anyone who would engage with him. He was considered rebellious, and ran into trouble with his teachers in school, though he was a brilliant student. At the age of 21, he attained enlightenment, merging his consciousness with the universe. He received his masters of arts in philosophy, and spent ten years teaching philosophy at the University of Jabalpur, in India. He also traveled throughout the country giving lectures, challenging every kind of organized religion.

He soon began to gather disciples, and left the University to settle in Bombay. Many Westerners seeking Indian wisdom came to hear him speak, and most found him charismatic, an excellent speaker, full of energy, presenting fresh ideas with great clarity and shining intelligence. Intellectuals were drawn to him, as well as many middle and upper class Western seekers. As his number of followers grew, he moved to Poona and established an ashram. Soon thousands of disciples were coming to visit him, and many stayed.

A variety of experimental therapeutic techniques were used to expand the consciousness of the disciples, including massage, reflexology, acupuncture, Rolfing, postural integration, hypnosis, counseling, rebirthing, and Rajneesh's own dynamic meditations. The latter involved an evolving process of movement based meditations, taking the practitioner through a physical, and psychological process which involved deep breath work, aerobic dance movements, escalating into a wild and emotive spontaneous dance expression, with the practitioner jumping up and down, moving limbs wildly, and shouting hoooo, hoooo, repeatedly. This was followed by a period of mindless relaxation many described as a pure and cleansed state of consciousness.

Some of the practices were considered more controversial than others. Rajneesh encouraged total sexual freedom, and this was practiced fully by his disciples. This was disturbing to some, especially with the Hindu population. Another controversial aspect was violence in the therapy encounter groups, which happened spontaneously, for the expression of rage was encouraged. Despite these controversies, this center became known in the West as one of the most progressive personal and spiritual growth centers in the world.

Possibly because of the controversy, cited for health reasons, Rajneesh and his disciples moved to the U.S., purchasing a ranch in Oregon near the town of Antelope. He and his disciples began to build a town they considered the beginning of a sacred city, which they named Rajneeshpuram. At that time, the energy and enthusiasm of the disciples was great. The arid landscape was transformed into a flourishing town with over 3000 residents, a large reservoir, a huge meeting hall, and a paved airstrip. The initial community was a cooperative success, with an organic farm, and production of various goods benefiting the community.

From the beginning there was conflict between the citizens of Antelope, and Rajneesh and his disciples. The locals were not appreciative of this comparatively large population of people descending on the community and threatening their traditional, mainstream American values with what they perceived as radical and foreign cultural ideas. One of the ways this conflict manifested is that building permits were withheld without good reason from Rajneeshpuram. Many of the buildings had to be constructed illegally, which later became a point of confrontation.

It was during this time that Rajneesh's secretary, Ma Anand Sheela, became quite powerful in the organization, as Rajneesh International was quickly becoming a multi-million dollar corporation. Many wealthy Americans and Europeans had become disciples, and large amounts of money came into the organization daily. (Another controversial subject was the 100 Rolls-Royce cars owned by Rajneesh.) During the time when Sheela wielded so much power, many bizarre things began to happen. Accusations of intimidation, control, violence, and even attempted murder and mass poisoning of local citizens eventually came about. The latter was connected to an event that occurred on the day of an election in which issues concerning Rajneeshpuram were to be decided by the local community. Over 700 people who ate at 10 different local restaurants got sick with salmonella poisoning. Some believe that the disciples were responsible and that contamination of salad bars was

the method they used in order to ensure that a smaller number of non-disciple voters would turn out. Eventually the citizens of Rajneeshpuram gained control of the City Council, renaming Antelope "City of Rajneesh." At some point the FBI had become involved, and an investigation into the practices of the group was initiated. In particular the practices of Ma Anand Sheela came into question, and many of the inner circle began to leave, some making comments to the press concerning their reasons for leaving.

Throughout his teaching years, Rajneesh wrote many books, some of which are considered powerful spiritual works. He wrote as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, and later as Osho. His grasp of many different spiritual teachings and ancient scriptures, as well as psychology and philosophy, and his original and refreshing way of framing these different teachings, set him apart from other writers.

Rajneesh returned to India in 1987, forcibly deported by legal authorities in the United States, and around this time his health began to fail. He changed his name to Osho and also began to modify his views on complete sexual freedom, as he had begun to be concerned about the AIDS virus. He died in 1990. His death was surrounded by controversy, with rumors of CIA involvement. When he was departing the U.S., his private plane was grounded. It was suspected that he was poisoned while being held for questioning. He was then let go, but became very ill from toxicity. Despite all the controversy, Rajneesh died the beloved spiritual leader of thousands of devoted disciples. Many of them consider him to be the most brilliant enlightened spiritual teacher of all time. He was definitely an eloquent speaker.

Teachings of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Osho)

"Remember: whatsoever I'm saying it is not the thing that I want to say to you. The whatsoever I'm saying has nothing to do with the truth, because truth cannot be said. Whatsoever I am saying is nothing but hammering. If you become awake, you'll see the truth."

"Why do I contradict myself? I am not teaching philosophy here, the philosopher has to be very consistent—flawless, logical, rational, always ready to argue and prove his statements. I am not a philosopher. I'm not here giving you a consistent dogma to which you can cling. My whole effort is to give you a no-mind."

"I have been misunderstood perhaps more than anyone else ever, but it has not affected me, for the simple reason that there is no desire to be understood. If I'm misunderstood, it is their problem in their misery. I am not going to waste sleep because millions of people are misunderstanding me."

"I don't think about the future at all, it is irrelevant. My whole effort is how to beautify this present moment, how to make people more celebrating, how to make people more joyous, how to give a little glimpse of blissful life, how to bring laughter to their life."

"I am trying in every possible way to drop all those things, which in the past have been barriers for the revolution to continue and grow. I don't want anybody to stand between the individual and existence. No prayer, no priest—you alone are enough to face the sunrise, you don't need somebody to interpret for you what a beautiful sunrise it is."

"I want to leave you alone, absolutely alone, so that you cannot take anybody's help, so you cannot cling to any prophet, so that you cannot think that Guatam Buddha is going to save you. Left alone—utterly alone—you're bound to find your innermost center."

"I am not here to buttress your egos; I'm here to destroy them. I have to speak against them. My whole work consists in destroying. First a great destruction is needed, only then your energies are released for some creative work."

"My message is too new. India is too old, the ancient, traditional. I am rebellious. In fact I am not an Indian. If I am an Indian, then I am already prejudiced in favor of India. Then my message cannot be universal. It will be deep down Indian, basically Indian—camouflaged, hidden behind beautiful words, abstractions, but it will remain essentially Indian. They can't be universal. I am not an Indian. I belong to no nation. My message is universal."

"My whole effort is to take all the props away from you, all beliefs, Osho included. First I pretend to give you help... because that is the only language you understand! Then by and by I start withdrawing myself. First I take you away from your other desires and help you to become very passionate about Nirvana, liberation, truth. When all desires have disappeared, there is only one desire left, and I start hammering on that desire, and I say, drop it, because this is the only barrier. And I start taking the last desire from you. Once the last desire disappears you are enlightened. Then you are Osho."

Ammachi (1953-present)

Amma was born on September 27, 1953, in a small village in Kerala, India. She was given the name Sudhamani, and those present at her birth say that she was born with a beautiful smile upon her face... From a

very young age, Sudhamani would often be found absorbed in deep meditation. By the age of 5, she was composing deeply spiritual devotional songs. Even then, she was tirelessly doing all she could to relieve the suffering of those who she encountered. She took food and clothing from her house to feed the hungry and warm the forgotten. She also bathed and cared for the ill and elderly. Though she suffered consequences and her family's disapproval, nothing could stop her. In her words, "An unbroken stream of Love flows through me towards all beings in the cosmos. That is my inborn nature."

Now called only Amma, meaning "Mother," she is known as the hugging Saint. She is known all over the world for her selfless compassion and tireless giving. She has founded innumerable humanitarian and social service agencies, which she oversees with the help of thousands of devotees inspired by her merciful, unconditional love.

The scope of her loving service is vast, yet her most remarkable and unusual service comes in the form of hugs. Amma's embrace is given to thousands each year, often hundreds per day. She tirelessly receives people for hours on end, giving each person the attention a mother gives her baby. Her hug is a gift from God, The Divine giving love to the people through this saintly being. Multitudes have claimed this blessing, and many believe this is the Guru's Touch, awakening the spiritual energy within each person who receives it. Each person who receives Amma's hug spreads this blessing as he or she moves out into the world. Amma travels around the world for 8-9 months per year. Day after day she receives people and bestows her gift, Gods gift. Amma's two arms embrace many, yet the innumerable arms of her heart wrap around the whole world.

Amma resides in the Amritapuri Ashram in India, along with 2,000 residents from all over the world. She also has spiritual centers established worldwide. She has been recognized by the United Nations for her service, and has been asked to speak at UN conferences several times. All who have been in her presence were touched deeply by the experience. Her radiant smile and sweet voice often bring people to tears, as they are cleansed emotionally and awakened spiritually.

When speaking of service, Amma teaches, "The beauty and charm of selfless love and service should not die away from the face of the earth. The world should know that a life of dedication is possible, that a life inspired by love and service to humanity is possible." She tells us that our purpose in life is to realize who we really are. "By realizing our own Self we become full, with nothing more to gain in life. Life becomes perfect."

FROM AMERICA

Hyemeyohsts Storm (1935-Present)

Hyemeyohsts Storm was born in 1935, in Lame Deer, Montana. His mother was Pearl Eastman, and her clan was the Northern Cheyenne. He was raised on the Cheyenne and Crow reservations, and attended Eastern Montana College in Billings. He says he is an enrolled Indian and a Breed of mixed blood. He also speaks of having the opportunity early in his youth to become apprentice to "...the brilliant and powerful Zero Chief and holy woman, Estcheemah. "He describes her as a Mayan Breed Indian who was born during the Indian wars of the late 1800s. In his words, "She was one of the wisest and most powerful Medicine Chiefs of her time, and a carrier and teacher of the Medicine Wheels. She taught of the histories and sophisticated knowledge of the Zero Chiefs." He says it took several decades for him to integrate the teachings of Estcheemah into his being.

Hyemeyohsts, or Wolf Storm, is the founder and director of the spiritual organization The Circle Of The Earth Temple And Institute, as well as the founder and director of The International School Of Metis Art. Along with his wife Swan Storm, he has traveled, lectured, and taught all over the world, bringing these sacred teachings to the people of The Earth. In his book, *Seven Arrows*, he introduces the teachings of the Medicine Wheel to the world "...for the first time." He is also an artist, specializing in designing different kinds of shields, and teaching this to others. This traditional art form is displayed in his book *Lightningbolt*. Of these teachings he says, "I tell all of my students to strive to treasure our Living Earth and look to her for the symbols and meanings in their art. Consequently, all of our art is, in some way, an honoring of our Living Planet and also a celebration of the many diverse cultures and peoples, throughout human history, who have loved and cherished our Mother Earth. Our art is dedicated to the Beauty and Natural Balance of Mother Life. In this way we have found our common ground, our Earth heritage, which bridges across race, gender, culture, religion, and all other human invented boundaries. The responsibility and care of our Earth is in our hands, as Earth citizens."

In an interview with *The Monthly Aspectarian*, when speaking of the living universe, Hyemeyohsts says "People don't like to die. They fight for life. They want to see the next sunset and sunrise. They want to see these beautiful things. So it's the same thing when we look at the rivers and the oceans and the lakes. These are not

dead. They are alive. The ocean is alive. The rivers are alive and trees are alive, the flowers are alive. And again, these are our relatives. These are our great teachers. When we get tired and we get sick and we get lonely and we are crying, we automatically will go to the river, go to the trees, walk on a shady part of a lane of a street, being with the trees, being with the flowers. We send flowers to people who are sick, and we love, because everybody on this cellular, human level knows that all these grandmothers and grandfathers are alive and that we can communicate with them. And that's why I hug a tree. It's the same thing when we're talking about the birds, songbirds, the Eagles, Buffalo, our cattle, our sheep—anyone who's ever worked with animals knows that there is a wondrous communication between these beings; the sweet medicine, these pictures of life.

“What we have always taught as Zero Chiefs is a very simple thing: we teach people to appreciate themselves and celebrate their lives, and that way they can understand that they are a self, a being, and that they have Choice... That means that they have a mind. And that we as human beings can make a choice to destroy or to build or to love or to ignore. We have all these things to teach us as a spirit.” And speaking on ecology, “It's fantastic to overcome a lot of our bigotry and hatred, because then there's a wonderful thing that happens in the heart of overcoming it: people feel that they have achieved some greatness when they do that. It's wonderful when a young person realizes that yes, our world is in trouble; yes, our Earth has been polluted; yes, there are people who do not care. But if you just crush yourself with all of this information and do not realize that there are things that you can do about it on a second by second, day by day basis, and that your prayers do count, and your planting a seed in the ground, just planting one tree, whether it's next to the freeway or some by-road or in your backyard, or going to the river and praying for the river to clean up, all of this works because what happens is, people feel the energy of these things. They sense that your purpose is much greater and clearer.

“Mother Earth will answer these prayers in ways that are very beautiful, and people feel good when they go to the river now. They're cleansed spiritually because they're caring for the river. They're cleansed spiritually because they begin to care about the mountains, and don't want the guts ripped out of a mountain.” And when speaking of enjoying the comforts of modern life, he says, “By the same token, I would like to bring up the fact that we as human beings do like to wear shoes, pants, clothes, hats. We like our television sets, we like our radios, we like our computers, we like our recording equipment. There's nothing the matter with this. What there is something the matter with is we build cups to disintegrate. We build recorders to destroy themselves. In other words, we can do better, can't we? We can do better with everything on Earth. If we could really begin to understand, especially the young person reading this article, that one day they will have their say. There will be that moment. Maybe they will become an executive. Maybe they will become a mother, a father. That mother or that father might be the only person who shows a child how to respect life, to respect the mountain and the grass and the grasshoppers and the birds and everything equally. That person might be the next great woman or man on Earth who will make all the difference. In other words, if everybody begins to hold precious their opportunity in life, then things begin to change.”

Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968)

Born January 15, 1929, Martin Luther King Jr. came from a family line of Baptist pastors. His grandfather was pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, serving from 1914 to 1931 when his father took over. From 1960 to until his death in 1968, Martin served as co-pastor with his father. He attended segregated public school in Georgia, graduating from high school at the age of 15. He then received his BA degree in 1948 from Morehouse College, from which both his grandfather and father graduated. He studied for three years at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, and was elected president of the mostly white senior class. He went on to obtain his doctorate at Boston University in 1955. During this time he met and married Coretta Scott, an intelligent and artistic young woman. Together they had two sons and two daughters. In 1954 he accepted the pastoral of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

He worked as an executive committee member of The National Association For The Advancement Of Colored People, which was the leading organization of its kind. In December 1955 he led a Negro boycott of buses, the first mass nonviolent protest of the civil rights movement. The boycott lasted 328 days and culminated in the Supreme Court deciding that the laws requiring segregation on buses were unconstitutional. During the boycott King was arrested, his house was bombed, and he and his family were subjected to various abuses. Despite this, the success of the boycott put King in the ranks of great civil rights leaders.

In 1957 he was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which served to provide leadership for the fast-growing civil rights movement. As leader of this organization, he blended the ideals of Christianity with the nonviolent civil disobedience techniques of Ghandi, and between 1957 and 1968, he traveled six million miles and spoke 2,500 times, appearing wherever there was injustice, protest, and action. He wrote five books and numerous articles, as well as led a massive protest in Birmingham, organizing what he called a "coalition of conscience." He helped register voters in Alabama and directed the peaceful march to Washington D.C. of 250,000 people, to whom he delivered his famous "I Have A Dream" speech. He was arrested over twenty times and assaulted at least four. He was awarded five honorary degrees, and was named Man Of The Year by Time magazine in 1963. At 35 years old, he became the youngest man to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

On April 4, 1968, on the eve of a protest march for striking garbage workers, he was assassinated. James Earl Ray was arrested, plead guilty, and was sentenced to 99 years in federal prison. In December of 1999, a jury of 12 citizens of Memphis Tennessee concluded in *Coretta Scott King, Martin Luther King III, Bernice King, Dexter Scott King and Yolanda King vs. Lloyd Jowers and other unknown conspirators* that Lloyd Jowers and governmental agencies including the city of Memphis, the state of Tennessee, and federal government were party to the conspiracy to assassinate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (<http://thekingcenter.com>).

From the sermon given the night before he was assassinated:

"I've Been To The Mountaintop" April 3, 1968

"... that's the question before you tonight. Not, if I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to my job. Not, if I stopped to help the sanitation worker, what will happen to all of the hours that I usually spend in my office every day and every week as a pastor? The question is not, If I stop to help this man in need, what will happen to me? The question is, if I do not stop to help the sanitation worker, what will happen to him? That's the question.

"Let us rise up tonight with a greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge, to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation. And I want to thank God once more for allowing me to be here with you... and then I got into Memphis. And some began to say threats, or talk about the threats that were out there.

"What would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers? Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop and I don't mind. Like anybody else I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I am not concerned with that now. I just want to do God's will, and He's allowed me to go to the mountain. And I've looked over and I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight, that we as people will get to the Promised Land. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord." —Martin Luther King Jr.

Peace Pilgrim (1908-1981)

The woman who called herself Peace Pilgrim gave up her former identity and began a pilgrimage in 1953, at the age of 45, making her life a "prayer for peace." She walked more than 25,000 miles across the United States, walking until given shelter, and fasting until offered food. All the while she spoke with people about peace. She walked on many roads and through many small towns as well as large cities. Throughout, her message was always the same, that world peace could only be realized when enough people attain inner peace.

Free of possessions that could not fit in the pockets of her tunic, which was emblazoned with the words "Peace Pilgrim," she vowed, "I shall remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace." She spoke of peace among nations, among groups, between individuals, and most importantly, she spoke about inner peace, since that is where peace begins. In her 28-year pilgrimage, she taught a simple way of life and spoke words rich with truth and integrity. She taught:

"A pilgrimage is a gentle journey of prayer and example. My walking is first of all a prayer for peace. If you live your life as a prayer you intensify the prayer beyond all measure... This is the way of peace: overcome evil with good, falsehood with truths, and hatred with love."

She taught the **Four Preparations, Four Purifications, and Four Relinquishments** which are:

Four Preparations:

1. Assume right attitudes towards life
2. Live good beliefs

3. Find your place in the life pattern
4. Simplify life to bring inner and outer well-being into harmony.

Four Purifications:

1. Purification of the bodily Temple
2. Purification of the thoughts
3. Purification of the desires
4. Purification of motives

Four Relinquishments

1. Relinquishment of self-will
2. Relinquishment of the feeling of separateness
3. Relinquishment of attachments
4. Relinquishment of all negative feelings

When asked by a questioner, "How can I feel close to God?" she gave the answer, "God is love, and whenever you reach out in loving kindness, you are expressing God. God is truth, and whenever you seek truth, you are seeking God. God is beauty, and whenever you touch the beauty of a flower or a sunset, you are touching God. God is the intelligence that creates all and sustains all and binds all together and gives life to all. So you are within God and God is within you, you could not be where God is not. Permeating all is the law of God, physical law and spiritual law. Disobey it and you feel unhappiness, you feel separated from God. Obey it and you feel harmony, you feel close to God."

Andrew Cohen (1955- present)

Andrew Cohen was born in the 1955, in New York City. At the age of 16 he had a consciousness expanding spiritual experience. He describes this in his words, "I had an experience of cosmic consciousness that occurred spontaneously, completely unsought, it emerged from the unknown. I was sitting up late one evening, speaking with someone and suddenly, for no apparent reason, the doors of perceptions opened. In an instant all boundaries disappeared and it literally seemed as if there were no walls, as if I wasn't sitting in a room having a conversation, and that I was sitting in the middle of infinite space. I could see the walls, could see the room that I was in but, inwardly, my experience was that all boundaries were gone and I was actually existing *in and as* infinite space. It became clear to me at that moment that there is only one point in space and that, no matter where we may appear to be physically located at anytime, we will always be in exactly the same place."

Andrew continued with his regular, daily life, and though this experience had made a great impression on him and opened his eyes, it gradually receded in his consciousness. He was a young man, trying to realize the dream of becoming a musician. Later, in his 20's, he gave up the dream and instead pursued understanding the origins of the spiritual experience he had. He began an inward journey that consisted of intensive spiritual seeking, including the study of martial arts, Kriya Yoga, and Buddhist meditations. Eventually this journey led him to India, where he met his guru, H. W. L. Poonja (Poonjaji, also known as Papaji). He describes his meeting with Papaji in his book *Living Enlightenment* (2002). "I went to see Poonjaji for what I thought would be only three days. When I told him that I had no expectations, his response was, "That's good!"

The next day, I asked a question about making effort on the spiritual path, and he replied: 'You don't have to make any effort to be free.' When he said that, something happened. For a split-second, it became apparent to me that I had never been 'unfree.' I saw it; I felt it. But then it was gone. And he smiled because he knew what had happened. A few days later, I described to him, as I had to all my teachers, the experience of cosmic consciousness that had occurred when I was 16. To my surprise, he said, 'You knew everything then.' A powerful confidence in what had already happened began to emerge within me. It was miraculous. Something released and just let go. And I knew that my seeking had come to an end. Over the next three weeks, there was an explosion inside me. Tremendous energy, experienced as overwhelming bliss, was so intense at times that I thought my body wouldn't be able to withstand it. I felt like I was going to explode into 1,000 pieces. A powerful presence was slowly but surely consuming my entire being, and I was scared at times. Day by day I was literally being overtaken by this unconscious energy. Then, early one morning in a hotel room in Delhi, I sat up on my bed and heard these words come out of my mouth: 'I surrender my life to you; do with me what you will.'"

After this experience, Andrew began talking about this new consciousness. He noticed that those around him seemed to be able to go deep within themselves just through close connection with him. Of this he says, "It was as if I was on fire and anybody who got too close to me started catching that same fire themselves." Soon he went to Rishikesh, a sacred town on the Ganges River, and stayed there awhile before going to England to begin teaching. Many seekers began to gather around him.

Since then, Cohen has continued teaching his understanding of truth, which is based on his belief that Enlightenment must be attained, not for the good of the individual, but for the evolution of human consciousness. He travels the world, speaking, giving retreats, and connecting with important spiritual leaders and visionaries from different spiritual paths. Aside from writing several books, he has also created a magazine called *What Is Enlightenment?* In which he and others engage in a dialogue examining spirituality, conscious evolution, and the implications of being enlightened during this time in history. He is an inspiration to hundreds of students around the world, who have collectively created the International Fellowship For The Realization Of Impersonal Enlightenment. This collective is committed to attaining Enlightenment with the intent of helping humanity to awaken to its true potential.

Andrew Cohen's Teachings:

Excerpts from his book *My Master Is Myself*, found at Internet address:

<http://www.geocities.com/brianperkins77/179andrewcohen.htm>

"Through simply letting everything be as it is, we will experience SPACE—a vast, expansive emptiness where there is deep, deep, peace. This is a place where nothing ever happened, a place before the universe was born. When we experience that miraculous depth inside our own self, we recognize who we really are. In this state of deep and profound peace, we experience our True Self."

From a conversation with Ken Wilbur, Issue #25, *What Is Enlightenment?* Magazine:

Andrew: I wanted to speak about something we've discussed before, which is what I call the Authentic Self. In the development of my work in the field of evolutionary spirituality, I've come to the conclusion that awakening to this authentic self is a pivotal factor in the transformational process. And I think that a lot of people who are interested in Enlightenment, including myself for a long time, have unintentionally been failing to make the important distinctions between the Self Absolute, the Authentic Self, and the ego. As I have come to understand it, the authentic self is the deepest part of our humanity, beyond ego, or the awakened spiritual conscience. The great 20th-century sage Sri Aurobindo referred to it as the psychic being, and some might call it the soul. And this recognition was very helpful to me because for a long time the traditional Enlightenment model, which only seems to describe the path from the ego to the self absolute, had not been meeting my own evolving understanding of what radical realization is all about when one is no longer merely trying to transcend the world but is simultaneously aspiring to transform it.

Ken: Yes. The traditional model goes from ego to absolute, and that's it. And now you're emphasizing the authentic self as an important ingredient in this whole equation.

Andrew: It is so important. The authentic self is a completely different dimension of the self than either the Self Absolute or as the ego. It is that part of ourselves that is already whole. It has never been hurt, wounded, traumatized, or victimized. It is already whole and complete, and yet it can and does develop. For the Authentic Self, the point of departure in the developmental process is Wholeness itself. This is the part of ourselves that cares passionately about evolution for its own sake, already. When individuals awaken to the Authentic Self—even if it's only temporarily—suddenly they become aware of a living evolutionary context and experience a passion and concern about the necessity for development itself. I identify the Authentic Self as being synonymous with what we could call the first cause, the creative impulse, and its expression in the awakening human. The Authentic Self doesn't abide in the gross realm; it abides in what you would call the subtle realm. It's aware of everything that is happening here, cares passionately about and can act in response to everything that's happening here, but is always free from everything that is happening here."

Ken: Right.

Andrew: The ego, or what you would call the frontal self, exists only in this world. And that's why, of course, when people fall back into the ego and the world of the personal self in the gross realm, after having experienced the ecstatic evolutionary passion of the authentic self in the subtle realm, they lose touch with that passion in an instant.

Ken: Not a problem.

Andrew: Right. The Authentic Self cares passionately, cares desperately about everything.

Gangaji (1942-present)

Antoinette Roberson Varner was born in Texas in 1942, and grew up in Mississippi. Her childhood was difficult, due to an environment clouded by alcoholism and emotional repression. She married young, and had a daughter, yet she did not find true fulfillment in these experiences. She moved to San Francisco in 1972 and immersed herself in spiritual seeking. Soon she found herself divorced, and after a time of political activism, she chose to take Buddhist vows. She practiced Zen and Vipassana meditation, and was involved in establishing a Tibetan Buddhist Center. Though she was an ardent seeker and a dedicated student, she did not feel fulfilled. Her deepest prayer was for a true and final teacher to appear and reflect her own true nature back to her.

In 1990 her prayer was answered. She traveled to India and met Poonjaji, affectionately known as Papaji by his students. Gangaji says, "The secret that cannot be taught revealed itself." Of their meeting, she says, "I found myself being welcomed, open arms, and open-heart, and eyes from which radiated the love of the whole cosmos. I thought: here I can finally stop. Rest. Here's something that is bigger than anything I have ever seen." At that time Papaji named her Ganga, after the Holy Ganges River. Since 1990, she has traveled the world, sharing truth. Her message is simple, firm, and direct, and her words seem to flow from a deep source. She is well loved by those who attend her events.

From Gangaji:

"You are not who you believe yourself to be. Who you are cannot be devised. Who you are cannot be imagined. Who you are is before, during, and after all thoughts. Stop for a moment and realize who you are."

"Growth, progress, and evolution are inventions of the ego. Being is our True state. Denial of our true state doesn't change it one iota."

"There are many stories of difficulty. Be aware that they are stories to avoid the absolute ease of being. Nothing can be easier than being nothing."

"This is an invitation to shift your allegiance from the activities of your mind to the eternal presence of your Being."

"If you are willing to experience anything directly and immediately, whether good or bad, joyous or hateful, you will recognize that what you are running from does not exist, and what you are running toward is already here."

"I promise you there is undreamed of support for true and lasting fulfillment. All that is waiting is the YES from your mind to your heart."

"Any truth will be misused. All we have to do is look at history to see this. Every religion has been used so that the founders must be rolling over in their graves. The nature of mind is to take it, consume it, and own it. But we live in very interesting times, and it is critical that ordinary people wake up to their true nature, which is actually under that dark, ugly, evil creature that is kept hidden. The willingness to meet that, without indulging it, without following it, without worshiping it, welcomes all creatures home."

"The path you've been directed to isn't the path—there is no path. Give it up and be that which you already are."

"There is a great secret that beings throughout time have announced, the secret of an extraordinary treasure, the treasure of the nectar of eternal life. It is the nectar of pure beingness, recognizing itself as consciousness and overflowing in the love of that recognition. If you imagine yourself to be located in a body, then you will move that body from place to place, searching for this treasure of nectar. But, if you will stop all searching right now and tell the truth to yourself, you will know what is known in the core of your bones. You will know what these great beings knew and attempted to describe. You will know it with no image of it, no concept of it, no thought of it. You will know it as that which has eternally been here. And you will know it as yourself."

"When I say 'Be still,' if you hear that as a teaching, then you get busy learning how to be still. It is an attempt to imitate how we learn the things that must be learned and can be learned. Words, most sublime, most profound, most simple can be easily co-opted by the mind, by egoic thought."

How To Pick (Or Not Pick) A Spiritual Teacher

This section is written by Christine Breese, D.D., Ph.D.

Some of the statements below are excerpts from her forthcoming book:

Integrity Handbook For Spiritual Teachers, Leaders, Healers And Students

The question of how to pick a spiritual teacher is a pressing issue in this era. Spiritual teachers are everywhere, and many of them are not very enlightened at all. However, even if a spiritual teacher is not completely enlightened it is still possible to gain assistance and guidance from them. The guidelines I am going to give you on this subject are given in order to help you pick which of the spiritual teachers can be of best use to you on your spiritual path.

Keep in mind the true master rarely calls himself or herself a true master. A spiritual teacher is quite aware that enlightenment is a lifelong process, and that mastery of life and consciousness takes vigilance and diligence until the day one dies. The only difference that might be apparent between a spiritual teacher who has a certain level of mastery and a spiritual aspirant who has not quite realized the self yet is that the spiritual teacher notices more quickly when he or she has fallen off balance, or the mind has begun to move again. How quickly can one realize when one has fallen asleep back into the human condition? For the teacher, it should be fairly soon upon falling asleep. For the student, it may have not happened yet, or there have only been brief glimpses of what it is like to not be sleepwalking in the dream of being human. This is all that separates the student from the teacher.

I advise that if someone tells you that he or she is the embodiment of pure masterfulness, is a reincarnation of such-and-such master, requires your utter and exclusive devotion, tells you that if you meet certain criteria or behave well then he or she will bestow enlightenment on you when you are ready for initiation, wants to have sex with you, or asks that you pay a lot of money or sign away your life savings—*run the other direction as fast as you can!* This is proof that he or she is not a true spiritual teacher. This is proof that this teacher is not egoless and has personal gains in mind. Although a true spiritual teacher is quite human, and might well exhibit human faults that are unavoidable even for a master, there is a certain level of integrity that is present and unquestionable, no matter what. The above mentioned characteristics would not be present in a teacher who is acting with integrity, even if he or she does not have a perfected human state.

A false spiritual teacher can be quite detrimental to you on your spiritual path. It is not uncommon to encounter spiritual aspirants who have had extremely negative experiences with spiritual teachers who were not acting from a place of integrity. Many of these negative experiences have to do with teachers being greedy about money, asking high prices for their workshops, their retreats, their products, and initiations into enlightenment. The business of being a spiritual teacher has become increasingly marketable and has become a profitable business.

Some seedy structures for spiritual teachings come in the form of pyramid schemes where once you are initiated for a large price, you then initiate others for a large price with a cut for the previous one who initiated you. There are some who simply charge exorbitant prices for their teachings and make it unavailable to those without money. There are many spiritual teachers who are living lives of luxury and wealth, having achieved this level of financial abundance on the backs of spiritual seekers. You will also notice that they don't share very much of their wealth with others for charitable purposes, and will offer to pray for your charitable organization, but won't support it with money. Some of these teachers may as well be oil tycoons for they are operating under the same beliefs and energy around money that those in uncaring corporate businesses do.

If you are wondering if a spiritual teacher has integrity around money, find out if he or she has created a non-profit organization where the chances for personal greed and financial gain are diminished. If the spiritual teacher is not operating a large business and only teaches a few classes or workshops here and there, ask him or her what he or she feels about money and its purposes, and see what is said. A spiritual teacher should offer sliding scale fees, work trades, and full or partial scholarships for those who don't have very much money but are avid spiritual seekers. It is important that those without money are not left behind by those who would use spirituality as a vehicle for amassing wealth. This may well be the mistake that was made in Atlantis, for it is believed that in Atlantis only the wealthy were privy to spiritual knowledge and opportunities for enlightenment.

Keep in mind, however, that money is a necessary thing, even for a spiritual teacher. It costs money to rent the facilities where he or she holds gatherings. It costs money to advertise and promote events. Keep in mind that your teacher is human and has human needs. It costs money to take care of basic needs like shelter and food, so realize that there is nothing wrong with your spiritual teacher making money doing what he or she does. It is

only the fact that some live in extreme luxury and are unwilling to share, or are in it to make a lot of money as a goal, that is inappropriate in a world where people are starving.

The following are a few quotes from the web site www.sentient.org/index.html:

"The true guru knows you need nothing, not even him." —Nisargadatta Maharaj

"When asked about those he sent to teach, Papaji said that the purpose was to have them point the way, not to pose as awakened teachers. When asked further about these people, Papaji said that none of them were enlightened or even temporarily enlightened. Papaji said that many can fool others into thinking they are liberated but they are the false coin. When asked about the experiences that so many people had in Lucknow, he said they were false experiences. Papaji said he met only two Jnani's in his lifetime. One was Ramana Maharshi. The other was a man who appeared from out of the jungle into the town of Krishnagiri." —Poonja, quoted from the book *Nothing Ever Happened* by David Goodman

"It is common to demand entry into Enlightenment through someone else. This renders it needful to make clear that NOBODY, not even the best of gurus, can bestow final and lasting realization. A glimpse is the most he can possibly pass on and there are not many with even that capacity. Even in such cases, his disciples must work diligently and win it themselves." —Paul Brunton, quoted from *The Guru-Disciple Relationship*

What about religions, teachers, gurus? *"If they can help in the quest of the Self. But can they help? Can religion, which teaches you to look outside yourself, which promises a heaven and a reward outside yourself, can this help you? It is only by diving deep into the Spiritual Heart that one can find the Self."* —Ramana Maharshi, quoted from *Here Lies The Heart* by Mercedes De Acosta

"Real enlightenment definitely is not on sale at the corner store, it doesn't contain preservatives, and isn't wrapped in plastic. Absolute surrender to God, or the Universe, is the greatest gift, the "pearl of great price," and it will never be cheap [and this has nothing to do with money]. That is why one should question the ersatz gems that pseudo-spiritualists so readily sell in their fancy packages. If one wants the real thing, one must learn about counterfeits; otherwise, one is showing off a rhinestone to God, convinced it is the Hope Diamond." —Mariana Caplan

"I know that no spiritual teacher leads to enlightenment because there is no leading to enlightenment. There is no teaching of enlightenment. Hence the inevitable outcome we see all around us - everyone's grooving on the gurus and everyone's getting more and more spiritual, but nobody's waking up." —Jed McKenna

"Teaching is a tricky thing. It can ensnare both teacher and student within invisible walls of reassurance. It is not at all difficult to convince thirsty people that you have water. Especially if you have first convinced yourself. And often a loop can occur - wherein the teacher convinces the student who convinces the teacher who convinces the student and so on. A dynamic occurs where both are convinced of the rightness of what is being said and both reassure one another that they are uncovering truth." —Peter

"What is the difference between you and me? If you say that there is no difference between us, why are you sitting up there, and why am I sitting down here? If I sat in your chair, nobody would listen to me, or believe me. [Answer:] 'No differences. All differences are imaginary. If you imagine that there are differences, you belong on the floor. If you have no doubts or thoughts about imaginary differences, you belong on the chair.'"

So, the first thing to realize is that no one can teach you anything. All a spiritual teacher can do for you is remind you of what you already are and what you already know. This is what you are searching for. It is only the mind that tells you that you do not know. However, until the mind can be made to be still, a spiritual teacher might be useful in assisting with this. The teacher can help you stop the mind, or at least tell you how, but the teacher cannot do it for you. It is very important to realize this.

In my own sojourns as a spiritual teacher, and it took me quite a while before I called myself such, I began class series by saying first and foremost that I am no different from anyone else in the room. I begin by stating that we are all made of the same stuff, the same substance, the same being called God. It is all one being having many lives. Therefore, I am no one's teacher, and no one is my student, and I definitely discourage any sort of devotion or adoration. All I can do in service to the so-called students is help them realize their true nature and that they are eternal consciousness just like me. I can give them clues on how to stop the mind, but I cannot stop the mind for them. They must find out that the eternal self, God, is within them, that it is them. I also let them know that I do not consider myself a guru, master, avatar or any other sort of superhuman. I let them know right away that I am constantly challenged to practice still-mind, just like they are, and will be for the rest of my life. Even great masters are constantly challenged. The only difference between the great masters and

students is that they are more proficient at catching themselves when they are not being still and at peace in the eternal self. I make sure new students realize that perfection of the human condition is not what this is about. It is only about realizing who one really is, which is eternal consciousness that never dies, never changes and always remains the same, no matter what is happening in the moment. It is about being this instead of the human called (fill in your name here). It is about being awake in the dream, and meeting the challenge of staying lucid and present in every moment—and a great challenge it is in the beginning! It gets easier as time goes on and this new mental habit of being still becomes more ingrained, but the challenges get bigger as well.

If a spiritual teacher is *not* encouraging you to look within for your support, pointing out the wisdom you already have, or encouraging you to become the eternal self that you already are, then this one has nothing to offer you. Guru literally means “one who dispels darkness.” It does not mean one who enlightens you, or one who wakes you up, one you must focus on for liberation, or one who saves you. It is one who can help you see the Truth that exists in you, that *is* you. This is the point. The guru, or spiritual teacher, helps you realize that darkness never existed in the first place, that it is just another product of consciousness. Erroneous thoughts that there is a state of un-enlightenment must be removed from the mind. Then the enlightenment that is already here in the eternal self can shine forth and live life fully in an awakened state.

The most reliable way to know if you are in the presence of a true teacher is by the way you feel in your heart. If you feel weird, judged or uncertain, this is an indication that this one might not be a good teacher for you. Keep in mind that these feelings, including suspicions and judgments of your own, might be projections that are not about the teacher himself or herself, but may instead be related to your own beliefs that no spiritual teachers can be trusted in general. This is quite common, especially for those who have been burned by a spiritual teacher previously. Also keep in mind that if the spiritual teacher challenges your personality or ego self, and this is inevitable sooner or later, you may simply be having a personality-preservation-reaction. In that case, the teacher has not failed you at all, but is instead helping you find your true self.

If you find yourself feeling quieted and calm in the presence of this person, this can be an indication that this one can help you on your path, at least for a little while until you have outgrown this one. You might find yourself going through a few teachers before you have finally outgrown the need for teachers at all. Eventually, you will outgrow the need for a teacher, and most likely you will be in the position of being a spiritual teacher yourself, even if only in your own town. Each teacher can be of use to you as you go along. Do not try to find a teacher that will serve you throughout your growth, for you will be passing through many levels of awareness until you surpass the idea and concept that there are any levels in the first place.

There is no proof of whether this one or that one is a true spiritual teacher. The only real defining characteristic of a spiritual teacher is his or her ability to exhibit an open heart and a quiet mind. No credentials, words, or practices are qualifications for being a spiritual teacher. Not even the swami schools in India qualify one to be a spiritual teacher, for I have met some of these and they are not all that impressive. They are mostly businessmen from the higher classes who have been taught spiritual text and interpretation of it, trained to talk a certain way, and happen to be good public speakers. Many of them are not developed in the heart at all, and have no particular skills in handling students with unusual circumstances. Knowledge is not the qualification of a spiritual teacher, not even great intelligence is necessary. Only the teacher’s ability in the area of the heart is the qualifying factor. This cannot be gained with an education. It can only be attained by opening to the true nature of the self.

The truest of all teachers is life itself. Life is your guru, and has the most to teach you about yourself and who you are, including what your faults and strengths are or how you are sleepwalking through life. Everyone who crosses your path, even the drunkard in the street, is a little Buddha sent to teach you something about yourself. When you see someone acting inappropriately, or has been drunk for a decade, what comes up for you? What are your judgments? How do you react or not react? Does your heart open to this person or does it close? When you see a young person panhandling who is perfectly capable of working and getting a job but doesn’t because he or she is simply too lazy, how do you react? This is a fine example of life as your guru. When you have a fight with a family member or a friend, what can you learn from this? How would it have turned out differently if you had a still mind in that moment, instead of reacting from the human condition, the human habit? This is how you can use life as the guru. It can reach deeper into your being than any human teacher can.

Many ask if it is absolutely necessary to connect with an enlightened spiritual teacher in order to experience enlightenment oneself. Some say yes, and some say no. Personally, I feel that if it is possible to bring the mind to a complete stand-still, keep it that way, and find the place of nothingness that one comes from and

resides in always, then enlightenment is possible without the teacher. However, this challenge of making the mind sit still seems to require teachers for direction, reassurance and guidance in this process. If nothing else, you can at least get some guidance on meditation techniques and exercises, even if only on audio tapes or CDs. Again the teacher can only point you to the door. You are the one who must walk through the door—alone. The teacher will never be able to do it for you.

Some people ask if it is necessary to move to India, or some other country, in order to find an enlightened master. The answer to this is definitely no. The only thing that is necessary is a burning desire for freedom and realization of the self. Besides, all the teachings are now available in every bookstore that carries self-help and spiritual books. There are no mysteries about enlightenment anymore, and it does not take another person to give enlightenment to you. It *does* help, if you are experiencing “monkey mind,” to be in the presence of someone who has mastered still-mind consciousness and realizes the self as infinite eternity, but it is not required. If you still feel that the available teachings are not enough, and you want to sit in the presence of an enlightened being, then by all means attend the gatherings of various teachers until you find one that resonates with you. You do not have to travel far and abroad to do this. Begin with the ones that are near you and reside in your own country, perhaps even your own town. There are many masterful teachers who are teaching small classes and holding gatherings in little towns. Your spiritual teacher does not have to be a famous or well-known person. Spiritual teachers who can be useful to you are everywhere.

Here are a few pointers that I found circulating anonymously on the internet, and I think these are some good pointers to go by:

Characteristics Of A Spiritual Master *(anonymous)*

- * A Master expresses and is sensitive to beauty in all forms.
- * A Master never directs attention to himself/herself. S/He is egoless.
- * A Master has respect for all members of the Nature kingdoms.
- * A Master’s very presence radiates lovingness and benevolence, even if s/he might be a little stern.
- * Unconditional love is a basic quality of a Master. A Master never judges, is detached and yet compassionate.
- * A true Master is a Master of Wisdom. Her/His understanding of life and Cosmic laws far exceed those of the average person.
- * A Master, though possessing some or all spiritual and psychic powers renounces their use except for emergencies and urgencies. S/He therefore will hardly ever reveal to anyone that s/he has them.
- * A Master never commands, s/he simply suggests, s/he never instills fear but awakens courage. S/He never makes you feel bad about yourself; on the contrary, s/he helps you build self-esteem.
- * As a rule, a Master never predicts a person’s future and s/he never flatters the human ego.
- * A Master will always lead and direct you to the ultimate goal. Though s/he may teach the lower laws, truths and forces applicable to the improvement of mundane life, s/he will not place too much emphasis upon them, instructing that the phenomenal world is nothing but a dream and is illusory from the absolute perspective.
- * A Master seldom speaks of her/his past, herself/himself, her/his background, unless it is pertinent and useful as illustrations in the conveyance of spiritual teachings to others.
- * A Master is universal and non-sectarian in her/his attitudes. S/He sees all humans as an expression of the Supreme, regardless of their religious leanings, their color, race, sex, etc.
- * A true Master is creatively original. Being enlightened by her/his own divine essence, a Master would teach or even write books directly from her/his heart and own experience. S/He would never plagiarize the work of another or teach things that are outmoded.
- * Masters do not argue. They know that no amount of argument would convince the skeptic, and to those who are true seekers no argument would be necessary.
- * A Master tries her/his best to embody most, if not all, of the divine virtues.
- * Although compassionate, a Master never sympathizes with the feelings of the human ego for s/he does not recognize imperfection. S/He is simply aware of the perfection of God in-dwelling in the divine spark within microcosmic man.
- * A Master has no longer any egoic desires, s/he no longer functions from the personality level; s/he has long given up her/his human will in favor of the expression of the Divine Will of God.
- * A true Master does not hasten a student’s psychic growth prematurely by any “transference” of power. S/He

always predominately concentrates upon raising the consciousness, improving character, spirituality, and increasing the wisdom and the understanding of her/his students.

- * A Master never judges the outer person of others but looks into the depths of their souls for value.
- * A Master never makes others feel guilty in any way.
- * Although detached, impersonal, sometimes seemingly aloof, a Master is full of affection for her/his students.
- * A Master appreciates every small service offered to her/him and the work of manifesting the Divine Plan.
- * Perhaps one of the most outstanding and admirable characteristics of Spiritual Masters is that they do not consider themselves Masters. This is their humility. They know that they still have a considerable amount of things to master and learn. They are so aware that they are still undergoing the learning process that they are embarrassed to call themselves "Masters" or have anyone else call them that. In performing their divine and spiritual duties, Spiritual Masters declare: "It is not I that works but the 'Father' within me."

It is often said that when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. This does not mean that one should sit at home and expect the teacher to appear, although in this day and age of television and radio perhaps it is quite possible! Rather, it is best to learn from whatever sources you can, even if this is only to begin with books, tapes, videos, workshops, retreats, and meditation. There is no one who has had a true desire to find God, freedom, self-realization, and peace, whose prayers for guidance have gone unanswered. If you persevere on the spiritual path, learning what you can as it is presented to you, and if you still need a teacher after all, one will show up in your life. It may be that you must become "ripe" first, and reach a certain level of awareness before a teacher is really able to help you, before you can even understand what he or she is saying. Do not despair if a life-long teacher has not appeared to you. This may or may not be your path. There are more spiritual seekers than there are gurus to go around, so being your own guru is the best thing to do. The veils around enlightenment have been lifted, and even an ordinary person who has not had years of spiritual training can awaken in an instant. Learn from the teachers who are available to you, even if only in books and tapes, and move on if you outgrow them without being upset with them for not being able to "take you all the way there." Remember, the teacher cannot make you enlightened. All he or she can do is hold a space for you to do it yourself. It may take more than one teacher to get you to the point where you can finally let go, relax, and realize yourself as Oneself, Godself, the container that all these dreams appear and disappear in.

Conclusion

This course in no way covers all the spiritual teachers that are in the world. There are countless numbers of spiritual teachers at all levels, some famous and some who are virtually unknown. We have covered a few who are famous and well known, and of course this is not a comprehensive list of all the famous teachers in the world either. They are just too numerous to list. However, we hope this has given you an idea of what the common teachings are, what the common thread is. Most of these spiritual teachers and leaders are all saying the same thing. They encourage us to look within and find what is the same in all of us, to realize that we are Godself, the divine spark. They encourage meditation and self-introspection. They encourage us to act benevolently toward our fellow inhabitants on the Earth. They encourage us to stop the mind and see what happens.

So let us follow their advice. Let us find out who we really are and discover our eternal nature, our oneness with others, and let go of the separation we have erroneously come to believe is so real. Let us become as these teachers, putting our awakened state into action and doing what we can to assist others in their awakening as well, all the while knowing that we have not reached the endless depths of self-discovery, not even as we near death in our old age. Let us realize that awakening and enlightenment never stops, that it only deepens as life goes on. Let us learn how to maintain our lucidity in life, and not fall back to sleep in the human condition. May we all be willing to meet the challenge of maintaining the awake state of enlightenment, which means "to know, to have knowledge of..." Let us not judge others who are still asleep, acting from the flawed state of the human condition, and may we be merciful on ourselves when we fall back to sleep, even after we have already experienced what it is like to be awake and enlightened. Let us awaken once again into the truth of who we really are, gracefully and without missing a beat. Let us remember that enlightenment is not about attaining something, or reaching for something that is just out of reach. Let us remember that enlightenment is what was present, and is always present, underneath human conditioning, supporting our ability to have experiences that come and go.

Let us remember that it is about forgetting what we think we know, forgetting who we think we are or have become, and being what we already were, what we already are, and always will be. Let us forget that we have been sleeping, and awaken now into the dream of life and look around us with the eyes and the love of the eternal self rather than the human we thought we were.

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Spiritual Teachers Exam Questions

Name _____ Phone # _____

Address _____

(Please supply name, phone #, and address as identifying factors for giving credit properly)

- The name of Lord Krishna's close friend and devotee was _____.
A. Kali B. Shiva C. Rama D. Prince Arjuna
- The faith that is connected with worship of Krishna is called _____.
A. Hinduism B. Hare Krishna C. Jainism D. Neither A, B or C
- Fortunetellers said that Buddha would either become a great king, or a great spiritual redeemer. **T** **F**
- Buddha's attendant was named _____.
A. Chandaka B. Radha C. Arjuna D. Neither A, B or C
- Buddha's teachings, which include the Four Noble Truths, are called the middle way. **T** **F**
- Jesus was born in Palestine during the reign of _____.
A. Ramses II B. Herod the Great C. Zoroaster D. Neither A, B or C
- Jesus was born a:
A. Jew B. Hindu C. Christian D. Muslim
- _____ was a wandering mystic who lived in the wilderness along the Jordan River. He baptized people in order to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.
A. John the Baptist B. St. Francis of Assisi C. Jesus D. Neither A, B or C
- In *The Mystic Christ* by Ethan Walker III, Walker describes Jesus as practicing _____.
A. meditation B. Wicca C. Gnosticism D. Yoga
- One of the main historical sources for the biography of Lao Tzu comes from a work by Ssu- ma Ch'ien. **T** **F**
- _____ told his students, "Birds can fly, fish can swim, animals can run, so they can all be snared or trapped. But Lao Tzu is like a flying dragon, un-trappable."
A. Lao Tzu B. Confucius C. Buddha D. The Dalai Lama
- The word Tao literally means understanding. **T** **F**
- Engaged Buddhism brings together traditional meditative practices with _____.
A. meditation B. hatha yoga C. active nonviolent civil disobedience D. chanting
- The 14th Dalai Lama formed the most influential center of Buddhist studies in Vietnam called An Quang Pagoda. **T** **F**
- Whose father is said to have recovered from a long illness on the day of his birth?
A. The 14th Dalai Lama B. Thich Naht Hahn C. Krishna D. Neither A, B or C
- The 14th Dalai Lama has said, "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." **T** **F**

17. Rumi moved from studying texts about The One to seeing The One, in fact to realizing that in the depths of his being he was The One. T F
18. What was the name of Nanak's friend?
 A. Mardana B. Ibrahim C. Talwandi D. Neither A, B, or C
19. Helena Blavatsky's nurses called her Sedmitchka because _____.
 A. she was born in the 3rd month of the year
 B. she was born in the 7th month of the year
 C. it was a nickname passed down from generation to generation
 D. Neither A, B or C
20. Blavatsky's term *Theosophy* means, "wisdom of the gods". T F
21. What did the Archbishop say about Hildegard's visions?
 A. They were false C. They came from the devil
 B. They came from God D. Neither A, B, or C
22. Complete Hildegard's statement "Thus am I _____."
 A. a feather on the wings of a bird C. a feather on the breath of God
 B. a feather on the winds of God D. a breeze on the breath of God
23. How did Isreal Ben Eliezer and his young wife support themselves while they were living in the mountains?
 A. Selling spiritual teachings C. Mining clay from the mountain and selling it in the village
 B. Selling a house D. Neither A, B or C
24. The three sacred cities of refuge in Baal Shem Tov's teachings are _____.
 A. Babylon, Jerusalem, and Tiberias C. right action, conduct, and speech
 B. sacred thoughts, speech and deeds D. Neither A, B or C
25. After St. Francis' profound experience with the crucifix, while he was praying in the church, he went to the market and sold everything he owned, except his clothing and staff. T F
26. What was the object that St. Francis had touched and was given to a person who wanted to attain St. Francis' assistance for his pregnant wife, which aided in the successful birth of a child?
 A. his tunic B. a bridle C. his staff D. Neither A, B, or C
27. According to Teresa of Avila, the "*secret union*" takes place _____.
 A. in the deepest center of the soul C. at the crown chakra
 B. wherever your heart desires D. in the cosmos
28. Jesuit parish of the Sacred Heart is where Mother Teresa received her early spiritual guidance and teachings. T F
29. Rudolf Steiner said that he got his direct perceptions of the spiritual world from _____.
 A. the 3rd level of heaven C. the Akashic records
 B. astral travel D. his spirit guide
30. The word *Anthroposophy*, what Rudolf Steiner calls his world-view, means "_____."
 A. wisdom of or about earth's living creatures C. wisdom of the gods
 B. the philosophy of man D. wisdom of or about man
31. Peter Deunov's first book is called The Testament of Colors. T F

A. Ammachi

Sai Baba

Mother Teresa

D. Mirabi

50. According to Amma, the purpose of life is to _____.
- A. fulfill all of our worldly desires
B. realize who we really are
C. find freedom from stress
D. Neither A, B or C
51. Hyemeyhosts Storm's wife's name is Swan Storm. T F
52. Complete Hyemeyhosts' statement: "And that we as human beings can make a choice to destroy or to build or to _____."
- A. love or to ignore
B. keep all for ourselves
C. make enlightenment the ultimate goal
D. Neither A, B or C
53. Who, at 35 years old, became the youngest man to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize?
- A. Krishnamurti B. Martin Luther King, Jr. C. Lord Krishna D. Nelson Mandela
54. In what city did Martin Luther King Jr. give his "I Have a Dream" speech?
- A. San Francisco B. New Orleans C. Washington, D.C. D. New York
55. Complete the Peace Pilgrim's statement, "World peace can only be realized when _____."
- A. enough people attain inner peace
B. we stop causing wars
C. we find peace around us
D. Neither A, B or C
56. What was Poonjaji's answer to Andrew Cohen when he asked about making effort on the spiritual path?
- A. Love is the way
B. Practice compassion
C. Be meditative
D. You don't have to make any effort to be free