

MULLAH NASRUDDIN



Troops & Weapons

A conqueror headquartered in Nasruddin's city was looking for ways to put an end to a rebellion that had started in one of the nearby towns he ruled. The people have risen against the governor, one of his officials explained. "They say they have had enough of his oppressive rule." "We should send troops and weapons to quell disorder," added a military general. Nasruddin, who was in court at the time, remarked to the conqueror, "Actually, all of that is not necessary. In fact, I know a way you can end the revolt with just one special weapon." "What?" asked the conqueror with great curiosity. Nasruddin replied, "One person who will replace the oppressive governor."



Black Or Grey

One day, a barber was trimming the mayor's beard at the village palace. After he finished, he remarked, "Your beard is starting to turn grey." The mayor, enraged to hear this, ordered that the barber be put in jail for one year. He then turned to a court attendant and asked, "Do you see any grey in my beard?" "Almost none at all," the man replied. "What do you mean 'almost'?" the mayor yelled. "Guards, take this man to jail — and keep him there for two years!" He then turned to another attendant and asked the same question. "Sir, your beard is exquisite, and is completely black," the man replied. "You liar!" the mayor shouted. "Guards — give this man 10 lashes on the back, and put him in jail for three years." Finally, he turned to Nasruddin and said, "Mullah, what colour is my beard?" "Your Excellency," Nasruddin replied, "I'm colour blind, and cannot answer that question."



Fallen Off

One day, as Nasruddin rode his donkey, he spotted a ripe peach hanging over the wall of someone's orchard. He positioned his donkey underneath it, stood up and reached for the peach with his other hand. As he did this, however, a noise startled his donkey and caused it to run off, leaving Nasruddin hanging from the tree. Seconds later, the guard spotted Nasruddin and yelled, "Thief!" "What are you talking about?" said Nasruddin. "I am not stealing. Can't you tell by the way I'm hanging here that I have simply fallen off my donkey?" — rodneyohebsion.com

# A Blissful Partnership

Nayaswamis JYOTISH and DEVI NOVAK, spiritual directors of Ananda worldwide, converse with NARAYANI GANESH at Ananda Village, California, on living an organic life in a community

Since Swami Kriyananda's passing away in April 2013, you and Devi are functioning as spiritual directors of Ananda worldwide. What kind of challenges do you face in fulfilling the mission?

**Jyotish:** I do see us as taking the work forward. There is one significant difference — Swami Kriyananda was absolutely unique in that he was a direct disciple of Yogananda and he was by and large a generation older than those of us who came and helped establish Ananda. He was looked upon as a spiritual father by most of us. Devi and I grew up with a larger group of his spiritual children; we are probably looked upon by our peers more as siblings rather than as parents.

It is almost as if when Swami started, he had to do it alone, whereas we have a larger group of people — leaders in different communities around the world, maybe 70-100 people directly trained by Swamiji. So we don't carry the same responsibility of having to do all of this on our own. We are able to delegate work to many more people since the community has grown.

**Devi:** Also, Swamiji would say when someone asked Yogananda, is there a blueprint for communities to follow, he replied that the blueprint is in the ether — at a subtle level — and people have to tune into it. When Swamiji met Yogananda in his youth, he was very motivated and what Swamiji did was to draw the blueprint out of the ether. And we worked under him as many others did for 25-30 years and so we know his thinking in so many different areas. The last year before he passed away, he took up a lot of initiatives. I don't want to say we are running the old pattern as it will never be like that — the community in Pune and the one in Assisi, Italy, are all different in some ways. We have one full community in India at Pune and centres in Gurgaon, Delhi, Noida, Bangalore and Chennai. More are expected in Kolkata and other places.

Apart from Ananda Village in California near Nevada City, we have communities at Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon. The ashram at Los Angeles will soon evolve into a community.

Isn't LA the headquarters of the Self-realisation Fellowship (SRF)



DEVI AND JYOTISH NOVAK IN THE KITCHEN AT THEIR HOME IN ANANDA VILLAGE, CALIFORNIA

## Simple Living, High Thinking

When Swami Kriyananda (Donald Walters), a direct disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda broke away from the Self-realisation Fellowship established by his guru to propagate his teachings, it was for a noble mission: to fulfil the yogi's vision of creating small communities of brotherhood, practising the philosophy of a hallowed lineage of masters beginning from Mahavatar Babaji, his disciple Lahiri Mahasaya and his chela, Yogananda. And Jesus Christ. Ananda Village

was born in 1969, built up with devotion and love by a band of loyal followers at the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains near Nevada City, California. In 2009, Swamiji created a new order, the Nayaswamis, saying it would be "A new model based on positive aspects of renunciation — rather than the traditional world-negating approach. It is intended for people from all walks of life, married or single, who are committed to finding God, and is open to people of every religious affiliation."

## established by Yogananda? Do you work in sync with them?

**Jyotish:** We are separate but would like to have more cooperation with them as we propagate the same teachings.

**Devi:** Swami Kriyananda was a member of SRF but he was a creative individual and it was hard for us to keep up with him even when he was 70 or 80 years old.

He became a thorn in their side; you see they were more classical in their approach, whereas Swamiji was more adaptive and inclusive. We have lot of online members, people who are resident in various communities and around one thousand residents in various communities. Those who draw from our teachings and participate in our satsangs number perhaps 10,000. And we have online classes and satsangs.

## As a spiritual team and long-time couple, do you find it difficult to share this kind of responsibility?

**Jyotish:** Our work overlaps a great deal but it is very organic; we teach together, work together (and of course live together). I probably do a lot more organising and Devi does more in terms of working individually with people and counselling them but we do both.

## Devi, you hold retreats for women. How are those different from other retreats?

**Devi:** We do the usual chanting, meditating and learning of postures, but we also thought why not focus on women's issues such as family, children, marriage and career. However, the feedback we got was that more than focusing on

women's issues they just enjoyed being with other women; they felt so comfortable. I think women enjoy sharing a lot more than men do. Men like to ask questions and then they're done. Women like to talk. Women feel more comfortable admitting mistakes and seeking solutions. Women are more introspective. Men often find it difficult to look at problematic issues.

We have one son and I too had to balance raising a son and doing my work in the community. I think women are able to process things at a different level. When men get together, they say, "Hi, how are you?" And that's it! With women, it is different.

What does marriage mean to the two of you? You are a couple, you have a son, and you are now

# I Want To Break Free

Dropping excess baggage helps in finding bliss, writes DHRUVA BHARGAVA

The nature of bondage is such that a person in bondage is unaware of it. He is oblivious of how and when he got into it. A person who finds himself in shackles finds it difficult to abandon thoughts of being in bondage.

He is afraid to discard it for he fears losing his own identity and the self. He, therefore, finds bondage convenient and safe. Such a person is unable to attain freedom and remains deprived of the bliss to which he is entitled to since birth.

Bondage is a mental disposition and baggage that we carry throughout our lives because of our deep identification with the external world. We can spend our entire life in it. Bondage happens when we intimately identify ourselves with the body-mind complex and its attributes, with which we grow up. Our mind is an instrument of experiencing the world 'out there'. However, it's able to process

and present only a fractional reality and not the whole. It also creates certain attributes that are otherwise absent in the external reality; for instance, colours and sounds are qualities created by the mind and are not out there in the external world. There exists only pressure waves and electromagnetic spectrum and this is what creates and projects the world that we perceive.

The external reality comprises numerous mental constructs and we intensely identify with them along with pleasure and pain and carry them as baggage throughout our lives.

As bondage is a state, so is freedom. Our efforts are always towards realising this freedom. To attain liberation, a shift of understanding is required that comes through right knowledge of what bondage is. To know light, one should know darkness; to know liberty, one should know slavery. A person who understands these well, invariably understands light and liberty, too.

Right knowledge of what constitutes bondage is vital and once bondage is truly known, it just drops and freedom emerges. Nature of bondage is that it simply drops once its compositional truth is known and understood.

Unsatiated desires, limiting beliefs and traits of jealousy, hate, prejudices, biases, and possessiveness are merely created by the mind and are absent in physical reality. They result from incomplete processing of reality by a mind that projects only partial truths. These attributes are then vented out through a regular display of abnormal behaviours by transforming into a compulsive need to prevail, control and subjugate others or manifests as an extreme display of possessiveness in relationships, an intense need to acquire, achieve and own more and more. We remain ignorant of the fact that they are created by our mind and have little or no significance.

With the right understanding of the mind, its functions and limitations, we gain awareness of its true nature. This enables us to precisely know what bondage is; how it arose and helps us to let go the limiting attributes of the mind. While doing so, we are being good to ourselves more than to others. As we let go, we grant freedom to none but ourselves and create an inner space for joy and bliss. This is true liberation. ■

## Tune Into Your Breath

Awareness of our breath returns us to our body and to the rhythms of the universe. Our typical state of affairs is to be lost in our thoughts — ruminating about plans for the future, replaying past events, and judging the value and worthiness of ourselves and others. We chase after or seek to possess people or things that we have judged to be pleasant and we try to stay away from or shed that which we have judged to be unpleasant. We spend so much time playing the tapes and movies about who we are, what we want, and how we will acquire things, people or status that we become accustomed to our mind's ability to occupy and entertain us....

As we tune into our breathing, the overwhelming nature of our different stories lessen because we see the narratives for what they are — stories. We sense that we have more to us than the trauma that we have suffered, the negative ideas we have about ourselves, the difficult events that are weighing in on us, the fears we have about the future, and the critical things that people have said to us. All of these elements are no longer solid truths...but are passing waves of thoughts. ■

— Andrew Bein, The Zen Of Helping

Do you know 5 things you do as parents (unknowingly, of course) to sabotage your child's confidence and self-esteem? Learn practical communication tools for conscious and joyful parenting with International Parenting coach Dr. Saloni Singh

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Parents of 11 - 19 year Olds : 12th April

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**Healing with Mudras**  
with Siddhi Maa  
6 April

Access your entire Nervous System using the healing energy of the hands

- Remove blockages in the body & increase energy
- Relieve fatigue & prevent heart diseases
- Lower/prevent high blood pressure

Siddhi Maa, Teacher-Trainer of Kundalini and Nam Yoga, founder of the Organ Cleanse and the Brain Cleanse, leads Healing Programs around the world. She lives in Santa Barbara California.

**Pulsing - Tibetan Tantric Healing**  
explore the hidden mysteries of the kundalini  
8 - 13 April

- Get in touch with the 24 organs of the body which are the repositories of the unconscious
- Release issues surrounding sexual, emotional and relational life
- Connect with your inner divinity

1st time in India, Barbara Bianchi from Switzerland, trained in Polarity Therapy, Somatic Experiencing and Tantra will lead the workshop along with Sanjay who has been living and teaching Tibetan Pulsing in Australia, Japan, Europe, Russia and India together with his Japanese partner Yashu for the past 14 years.

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