



Self-Realization Fellowship

Founded in 1920 by Paramahansa Yogananda

SRF's Perspective on Marriage and Same-Sex Unions

In keeping with the universal nature of Paramahansa Yogananda's teachings, Self-Realization Fellowship has always welcomed persons of any gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religious background to study the SRF Lessons, become SRF members, learn all the SRF techniques of meditation, and attend our temple services in a spirit of divine friendship, harmony, and seeking God together.

Self-Realization Fellowship's emphasis is on helping souls in their search for God by encouraging them in their practice of meditation and the SRF teachings of love and right action. SRF does not participate in debates on political or social issues; what is most important in our teachings is a person's sincere efforts to realize God. Following Paramahansa Yogananda's guidance and example, we carefully state the spiritual principles pertinent to a specific issue, and encourage individuals to follow their conscience, especially as it becomes awakened and refined by meditation, in applying these principles to the best of their ability in their own lives.

Marriage Vows Formulated by Paramahansa Yogananda

Self-Realization Fellowship's primary focus as an organization is to offer our assistance and support to all souls who are in earnest about achieving direct, personal experience of God through the attainment of higher consciousness. Though that is our main purpose, rather than to perform weddings, Paramahansa Yogananda did write spiritual marriage vows, which are integral with his teachings on the metaphysical objective of marriage. SRF ministers perform only the wedding ceremony originated by our founder, which is specifically for the union of a man and a woman. However, there is no requirement that SRF members who wish to marry do so in an SRF ceremony.

It was for a divine purpose, Paramahansaji told us, that God created man and woman, and the differences between them. As this is a subject that can best be understood from the perspective of the deep metaphysical truths in Paramahansa Yogananda's teachings, we hope that the following excerpts from his book *The Second Coming of Christ: The Resurrection of the Christ Within You* (Discourse 62), will be helpful.

Excerpts from Paramahansa Yogananda's Writings on Spiritual Marriage

“Before the beginning of creation the Spirit was One: ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. But He thought within Himself: 'Verily, I am Joy; but there is none to enjoy Me.' As

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he thought this, He became divided into Creator and created, Transcendent Spirit and Cosmic Vibratory Nature. By cloaking a portion of His unmanifested consciousness with the illusion of difference, or particulars, Spirit manifested finite objects, using the law of duality and relativity to differentiate His One Consciousness and Cosmic Energy into countless pairs of polarized forces and forms: positive and negative elements, male and female, man and woman.”

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“The universal everything is made of the singular consciousness of God. When a spark of that consciousness is individualized by God, it becomes a soul, capable of ultimately expressing the God-image in which it is made. In essence, the soul is perfect and complete, an exact reflection of God’s ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new bliss. But when incarnate, it takes on the dualistic nature of creation, outwardly expressing primarily either a masculine or feminine, positive or negative, half of its essence.

“This is why it is said in Oriental scriptures that when God reflected His consciousness in created forms, they became ‘half-souls’ by taking on through identification the qualities of the manifested units of creation — positive or negative, reason- or feeling-impregnated, male or female. These dual qualities are ‘soul mates’ of each other to be eventually reunited — ‘they twain shall be one flesh’ in order for the fully expressing soul to find liberation in Spirit.”

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“When God divided Himself as man and woman, both dualities expressed the same unified consciousness, rather than the differentiation or polarity necessary to sustain the illusion of individuality in the manifested world. So He conceived a clever plan, a trick to keep man and woman different from each other and separate from Himself: He created superficial distinctions in their bodies and minds. When He made man, He used reason and feeling and cosmic energy, keeping reason uppermost and feeling hidden; that is why man’s features manifest dispassionate reason. God made woman by using feeling, reason, and cosmic energy, keeping feeling uppermost and reason hidden; that is why her features express softness and call forth feeling.”

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“The ideal spiritual union between man and woman was ordained that man might bring out the hidden reason in woman, and that the woman might help man uncover his hidden feeling. By so aiding each other to develop a perfect balance of these pure divine soul qualities, they would transcend their delusive differentiation as man and woman and realize their true nature as inviolate souls. Liberation was to be accomplished by their becoming united first to each other in divine friendship, the purest expression of God’s love shared between two individuals; and then, thus perfected, ready for the ultimate union with God.”

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“Thus man and woman are the two natures of God — reason (knowledge) and feeling (consciousness, emotional reaction) — expressed on the material plane in differentiated bodies. God gave the first human beings the power to commune with Him in spite of this delusion-imposed dual consciousness. He placed them in paradise — the unified consciousness of the soul

manifesting in the awakened spiritual eye and the pure divine expression of the causal-astral body. In the original plan of creation, man and woman, ideal soul mates, were to lead a heavenly life by keeping their minds in the divine region of Bliss-Will in the forehead. Spiritual marriage consisted in the feminine force or feeling uniting with the masculine force or reason and thus becoming whole in oneness with God. The souls that went out of God were to be brought back to God by the process of harmony in body, mind, and soul.

“The harmonious balance of reason and feeling leads to intuitive perception and the ability to know what is Truth.”

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“Essentially, therefore, we are all the brides of God. He is the Divine Lover perpetually wed to every soul, never forsaking any soul though it forsake Him in its adulterous roaming in delusion. God as the Perfect Lover pursues each soul through incarnations until it returns to Him. Of all the love that has ever been promised, pure love, love that is eternal, is found at last in God. He is all the love of all the lovers that ever loved. When the soul meets Him, it knows He is the One it was waiting to meet.”

As Paramahansaji has stated above, in the ultimate sense the goal of life is not union with another human being, but with the One who is the supreme love of our souls. Each one of us is meant to attain that divine union. It is our privilege and blessing in SRF to serve every soul who comes to us for support in that spiritual journey.

Love, Respect, and Spiritual Service for All Sincere Seekers

Every human being is in essence a soul, made in the image of God; and earnest seekers, regardless of race, religious background or sexual orientation are welcome in Self-Realization Fellowship. All are warmly received as children of God who are striving to attune their lives with the Divine Spirit.

We especially want to emphasize that the most sacred blessing of the SRF path — initiation into Kriya Yoga and the guru-disciple relationship — is open to all who are drawn to make that inner commitment. As the society founded by Paramahansa Yogananda to carry on his spiritual mission, we strive to serve all who come to us, in the spirit expressed by our revered Guru when he said, “When I am gone, only love can take my place.” In his divine love and friendship, we welcome each one — regardless of individual differences — who earnestly wishes to seek God through this path. We pray that you deeply feel God and Guru’s blessings and love ever guiding and sustaining you.