

[Ananda Ashram Awakens To Christian Dharma](#)

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While RK Mission sought non-Hindu minority status in the East, an unrelated parallel was unfolding in the West. The Ananda Ashram in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California announced in a recent newsletter that it's dropping its association with Hinduism and becoming a universalist community with strong Christian leanings. Accompanying this announcement is the news that its founder and president, Sri (formerly Swami) Kriyananda, on the advice of an Italian Christian mystic, is getting married for the second time.

Ananda Ashram is one of the two organizations in the West who represent the teaching of the great Yogi, Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), who came to America in 1920 and founded the Self-Realization Fellowship which is active today. Since its inception, the Fellowship has had strong ties to the Christian world. One of its formal "Aims & Ideals" is "to reveal the complete harmony and basic oneness of original Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ and original Yoga as taught by Bhagavan Krishna."

Kriyananda, raised as a Presbyterian, was originally trained by Yogananda and served in the SRF for some years, leaving in 1962 to found his own organization. Commenting on his original aims and his present direction, he states: "I wanted to provide people with a life where their energies could all be directed toward chanting and meditation. But American society today is not disposed to support people in such a calling. I wanted to create a hermitage. But no hermits arrived. What God has helped us to create at Ananda is a new and, in the modern era at least, more universally meaningful kind of monastery—one in which people live normal lives, but yet lives dedicated wholly to God."

He goes on to state, "in recent years [there] has been an acceptance among ourselves of who we really are: not people inspired by the teachings of India to the extent of assuming Indian dress and attitudes, but Americans inspired by India, yes, but trying, as Yogananda did, to spiritualize America, not to Indianize it."

To this end, Ananda has a choir called "Joy Singers" who go around to various Christian Churches, sing devotional Christian songs and preach universalist Christianity.

This interesting development parallels the recent declaration by the Ramakrishna Mission to be non-Hindu. The Guru of Yogananda, Sri Yukteswar, was unquestionably Hindu. His Hindu disciple, Yogananda, followed the route of appeasement in America-teaching his Hindu philosophy and practices to Christians and Jews but not requiring them to change their faith. Now the latest generation in this line has shed its neo-Hindu identity and become nearly indistinguishable from such liberal Christian Churches as the Unitarians.