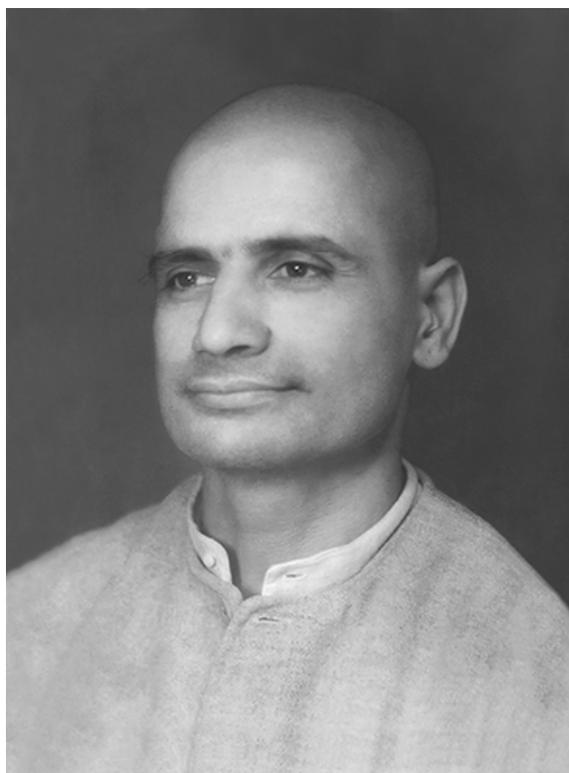


# Swami Narayanananda

## Biography Highlights



Swami Narayanananda (1951)

Sri Swami Narayanananda is one of the brightest representatives of the ancient yogic science of spiritual liberation. He was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1902, on Friday, in a pious and respected family in the hill country of Coorg in South India. His fellow villagers remembered Nanjappa, this is how his parents called him, as a one-of-a-kind child who, for many reasons, was in the public eye in the village. He had a beautiful and strong physique. His charming eyes perfectly revealed his cheerful and friendly disposition. Long before he was born, Nanjappa's father and mother spent many years fasting and praying, and made regular offerings to their gods and goddesses. The parents were very attached to their child; however, when he turned five, they had to send him away to school. When the boy was ten years old his father passed away, which truly shocked the child. It became a turning point in his life.

At school, he proved to be a many-sided student who could easily cope with the curriculum. Tireless and cheerful as he was, he also

really enjoyed sports and boasted a good physique. It is therefore not surprising that he would always be among the first at competitions at the high school.

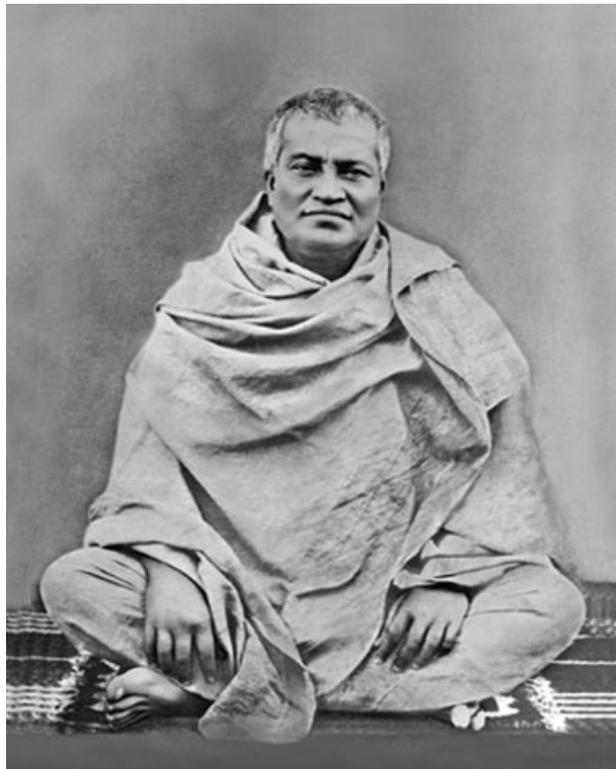
Yet despite his great vigor and love for games and sports, he used to regularly, in the morning and in the evening, indulge in a half-hour contemplation of the divine which helped him develop the capacity for deep mental concentration. This innate tendency to meditation and regular practice made it possible for him to experience a trance state already during the school time. He certainly did not meet any *sannyasi* (monk) or guru, nor did he belong to any religious order. In fact, there was no one to become his master in those early years.

After finishing his studies, Nanjappa refused to take a wife and at the age of twenty-seven he renounced the world to become a *sannyasi*. His renunciation was full. In *purva ashram* (in life at home), he had everything that brings a normal human being happiness. He had no need of anything. Troubles and misfortunes stayed away from him. Once, before the renunciation he, as usual, tuned his mind to contemplation and fell into a state of deep concentration that lasted more than an hour. When his mind came down from the higher levels of consciousness, an inner voice prompted him to renounce the world and become a monk. Without delay, he made a decision to immediately carry out his plan.

September 5, 1929 Nanjappa worshiped Ganesha (*puja* and *homa*) and gave food to many assembled villagers. In his mind, he took a vow of celibacy and swore to always tell the truth. He also decided that he would not touch money ever again. Then he took a monastic robe of the color of ocher from his beloved mother's hands and fell down on his knees paying honor to all the senior people who were there with him. He shaved his head and gave away to lay people all his personal belongings, to the last rupee. Having addressed the villagers with a short speech about the purpose of life and explaining the reason for his decision to renounce the world, he left his house and home.

Nanjappa traveled thousands of miles in search of a guru. After the long exhausting journey was over, the young monk arrived, finally, to Calcutta. Providence led him to Belur Math, the main

center of the Ramakrishna Mission – a religious, philanthropic and volunteer organization established in 1897 by Vivekananda. The monks of this monastery put Nanjappa through his paces during the three days before they introduced him to the Mission President, Honourable Sri Swami Shivananda Mahapurushji, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna\*, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1929. As soon as the young *sannyasi* saw the great man, he reverently threw himself flat in front of Shivananda and surrendered to him. This is how he met his *guru*, whom he loved throughout his entire life. The *guru* himself loved Nanjappa from the bottom of his heart and was sincerely attached to him. Later Nanjappa received initiation into *brahmacharya* (*brahmacharya diksha*) and was given a new name – brahmachari Narayan Chaitanya. From that moment on he would be renowned as Narayana.



Swami Shivananda (1854–1934)

The following few years, Narayana developed a powerful desire for God-realization. All his thoughts and sentiments were then focused exclusively on achieving that goal. A passionate need for privacy, which would let him dive into *sadhana* (spiritual practice), was the leading motive of his life. However, it turned out to be impossible within the walls of the monastery with its strict rules. Narayana's intention did not go unnoticed by his *guru* who well understood and shared his beloved disciple's cherished

beliefs. But there was a long way to go before that predestined intention saw its realization. Finally, on the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1932 with the blessing of his *guru* Narayana left the Belur monastery and headed towards the Himalayas for *tapasya* (penance) and to attain *nirvikalpa samadhi* (transcendental state).

Narayana faced the rigorous penance with the sincerity inherent in him and went face-to-face with the mighty snow-clad and awe-inspiring ranges of the Himalayas.

While living in a small hut (*kutir*) in the jungle where there were no basic conveniences, he began to work relentlessly on meditation and did *japa-yoga* for twelve to sixteen hours a day. He placed himself under a rigid schedule and steadily followed it, day by day. Narayana would sleep from 8 to 10 pm, and then sat in meditation that lasted until 9 o'clock in the morning. After a half-hour break, he would go to a nearby shrine to take a couple of flatbreads and some fruit there (*kshetra*). Usually, at the same time, he performed ablution. At 2 pm Narayana would return to meditate until 8 pm. Often, he would sit day and night without rest or repose in his hut. As a result of such an intense *sadhana*, Narayana, in a very short time, attained a unique spiritual experience – *nirvikalpa-samadhi*.

This happened in February 1933, on the night of Shivaratri, the great night of worshipping Shiva in India. Narayana, as usual, sat at midnight in meditation. His mind had reached the highest level of concentration, and at that moment, he experienced a complete rising of the *Kundalini-shakti* into *Sahasrara*. His heart and breathing stopped reflexively (*kevala kumbhaka*). The notion of the body was completely gone, he felt his mind get absorbed by the Infinite, and his individual consciousness merged with the Ocean of Consciousness by Itself. Mind, ego, intellect, and *chitta* (mental substance), i.e. all those things a human being as a personality identifies himself with, dissolved in the ecstasy of the Universal Being. That was an experience of the formless aspect of God. That was the experience of the Self as the All-pervading Consciousness.

Narayana remained in the state of *nirvikalpa samadhi* for a long time. Then his mind, still remaining in the highest planes of the Beyond Reality, slowly descended to the level of relative consciousness. But his vision of the world had changed dramatically. The veil of ignorance went totally away, and he, being spiritually enlightened, already became aware that the One

Divine Spirit (*Atman*) is everywhere and in everything. So he realized the Divine unity in all its universal diversity.

A truly modest person as he was, Narayana would keep his grand spiritual realization in secret. He lived a simple and secluded life in the Himalayas as he used to do earlier. He would not accept any disciples nor did he care about money or physical comfort. Undisturbed by the outer world, he devoted himself completely to the pioneering study of mental processes: attention, memory, will, sensations, emotions, etc., monitoring the very moments they would originate and their subtle manifestations all the way to discovering their hidden causes and he used his own purified and one-pointed mind as the perfect tool for the study. He did not plan to write any books when he began to record his unique discoveries in psychology and philosophy. With splendid ease, in volume after volume full of light and comprehensible narration, he revealed the unique supreme knowledge that he experienced in his personal mental laboratory and saved the manuscripts unnoticed in the world until better times.

In 1947, when India was divided into two countries, India and Pakistan, Narayana witnessed horrific inhuman bloodshed committed 'in the name of God and Religion' by a fanatical crowd of Muslims and Hindus. Seeing the massacres, arson, robbery and kidnapping of innocent girls and young women, he was filled with great compassion for the people and decided to devote the rest of his earthly life to helping them; thus, he had to interrupt his seclusion and began to accept disciples.

Among the early disciples of Swamiji were four young orphans who, by mere chance, escaped the massacre. After they had read the notes and manuscripts made by Swamiji and understood how unique those manuscripts were, they volunteered to help with publishing them. But Swamiji had no money and neither did the young brothers and sisters, who had lost all their possessions in Pakistan; so, there was almost no hope to have the books published. Despite this, the girls still had some gold jewelry that they willingly parted with to get money to start launching the publication of the treasured manuscripts.

At that time, Swamiji faced violent attacks made by groups of people who, with evil intent, tried to stop him from continuing the noble work he had begun. Without even the weakest support or any encouragement from the surrounding people, Swamiji alone had to resist disgusting scandals and defamation those hooligans

spread. It all came to a head when people rejected Swamiji; moreover, he even lost his kutir. Yet the campaign had no power over Swamiji's inner state. Quite the contrary. The worthless fuss spread by his foes hardened his character even more. After some time, the attacks stopped and the hooligans were brought to account for their shameful deeds. The work on the books went on, and they were printed and distributed one after another throughout the world without any publicity or advertising, merely thanks to their merits.

Early on, Swami Narayanananda did not welcome the idea of establishing an organization or *ashrams*. As a monk, he would never take money as offerings from people or disciples. He lived a simple, truly modest life and tried to avoid publicity and community—activities. Yet over time, establishing a spiritual organization turned out to become a necessity due to his large number of followers. In 1967, the Narayanananda Universal Yoga Trust was founded with centers in India, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. It was a time when the West witnessed an exuberant blossoming of a new subculture of hippies. (“Make love, not war”). India with its diverse, unprejudiced culture, traditional religious tolerance and mystical exotica, became a home to many followers of the movement. God works in mysterious ways, and through one of those ways, somehow, the hippies from the West, especially from Denmark, learned about Swami Narayanananda and would visit him in India and ask for his help and advice. There came social rejects like drug addicts and dirty vagabonds who were at the very bottom of the social ladder, and Swamiji was able to understand them, accept them as his disciples and soon bring them onto the spiritual path.

Many of those young people would go back to Denmark and become monks and nuns at the Narayanananda Universal Yoga Ashrama in Gylling, also founded at that time. In those early years, Gylling was an old farm with 70 acres of land (28.33 hectares, or 283280.2 sq. meters), and its residents had to work hard to establish an ashram there. To do this, young people had to get jobs at outside plant nurseries. It was well worth it! When Swamiji saw their sincere desire and persistence with which they got things done, he accepted an invitation to go to Denmark and help develop the *ashram*.

Thus, in 1971 Swami Narayanananda arrived in the West and visited Denmark for the first time. He lived at the Gylling Ashram

for five months and held the first Free Spiritual Training Camp. It was there where spiritual seekers, who lived in tents, could meet the Guru, clarify doubts and take part in the daily training program. The camp went on for three months, and several thousand people participated.

Since 1971, Swami Narayanananda visited Denmark every year as well as other Western countries which opened his centers. Throughout the summer, from June to September, he managed the Free Spiritual Training Camp. To all those sincere seekers of truth he would grant *mantra* initiation (*mantra-diksha*) and would carefully supervise thousands of students worldwide. Swami Narayanananda's relationship with his disciples grew from this deep personal contact. Due to his supreme authority and influence, their hidden talents would see the light, and made it possible for them to continue in live independently. The fruitfulness of his guidance is too abundant and serious to make public.

Swami Narayanananda's disciples earned their living the same way all other members of the community did but, at the same time, they adhered to strict ethical principles and sought to be independent and unselfish people. Most of the monks and nuns lived in *ashrams*, many of which were self-sustaining farms with shops and other businesses which ensured the residents' high standard of living. The author of this article and his wife were invited to the Gylling Ashram in 1989 and had a chance to witness this during their visit.

Over many years a large dairy farm and other agricultural producing units, along with the publishing activity (Narayana Press), were the preferred growth options for the material base of the Ashram and the organization in general. There was also a separate maintenance and construction team that dealt with constructing new buildings. Hatha yoga classes were conducted on an expert level. The practice of *japa* and meditation had their special hours, in the morning and evening. On Sundays and public holidays, ashramites and members of the organization from other locations would meet for group meditation and chanting accompanied by a kirtan band. All the centers worked closely with each other and the Organization showed a well-balanced support of the unity of its members worldwide.

Soon after Revered Sri Swami Narayanananda departed peacefully in 1988 with the sacred sound OM on his lips, in his South Indian

ashram in Mysore, the situation at Narayanananda Universal Yoga Trust and Ashrama changed. The following years, the Gylling Center first limited and later almost fully ceased communication with the outside world as well as with members outside the very Ashram. Narayana Press has developed into a well respected printing press in Scandinavia.

Vladimir Afanasyev  
April 2015

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\*Swami Narayanananda shares his touching memories about his life in the monastery of Belur of the Ramakrishna Mission in his *Autobiography of Swami Narayanananda*, Part One (Childhood, Youth and Renunciation), N.U.Yoga Trust, Denmark, 1988.