

Swami Kriyananda: As We Have Known Him

Asha Praver

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“Lord Krishna is depicted in legend as a boy playing his flute by the banks of the River Jumna calling his playmates away from worldly pursuits to the divine search within. All men consciously or unconsciously hear in their souls this call to divine awareness.

—*The Path: One Man's Quest On The Only Path there Is* by J. Donald Walters (Swami Kriyananda)

Asha Praver's book *Swami Kriyananda: As We Have Known Him* sweeps away any negative publicity the Ananda (Divine Joy) World Brotherhood Village and Swami Kriyananda may have gained from a series of lawsuits pertaining to copyright laws and alleged sexual abuse and exploitation. Like Jack Canfield's *Chicken Soup For The Soul* series Praver's book is anecdotal. While the *Chicken Soup* books provide inspiration from the personal stories of a variety of contributors on different subjects Swami Kriyananda is the focus of Praver's book. She provides some biographical information about Swami Kriyananda but emphasizes the testimonies of the Ananda community of how their “Swamiji” is a beloved teacher and advisor. He is a role model and they are inspired by his wisdom and spirituality.

Walters (Swami Kriyananda) is a striking figure. A disciple of the great Paramhansa Yogananda (author of the classic *Autobiography of a Yogi*) Kriyananda is known for his abundance of energy and for being artistically prolific. He is the author of eighty books and two plays. He is famous for his photography and his abilities as a vocalist and musician. He has composed more than four hundred musical pieces; including award-winning music for the harp and music he recorded with world renowned Derek Bell of *The Chieftains*. When asked about his incredible output and his artistic expression Kriyananda denies he is an artist. He has said “Nothing I have done has been to express *myself*...I am not an *artist*...I am a *disciple*. As a disciple I am *driven* by the thought of all that is needed to fulfill Master's (Paramhansa Yogananda) mission. Everywhere there is such hunger for it. When it comes to serving Master's work I feel like I am sitting on top of a volcano of creativity. It would take more energy to suppress that creative urge than simply to let it keep erupting.”

Swami Kriyananda is Praver's first book an endeavor she had been planning for a long time. The book is culled from reminiscences of her fellow Ananda citizens and her own personal experiences and it is difficult to discern whether Praver had established her own writing style or if Kriyananda's influence is so strong that he speaks through her. Readers who are curious about the Ana Village seek the “divine” guidance solace of a spiritual advisor who adds a user-friendliness to the life light of Paramhansa Yogananda's teachings in this morally ethically ambiguous century will enjoy Praver's book. *Swami Kriyananda* is more than just a simple book of memories. Praver has given the world a glimpse of Ana's core. Her book is representative of what is in the hearts souls of the Ana community when it comes to the inspiration that transforms J. Donald Walters from a simple man into a channel to God.

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