



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

August 2016 Contemplation:  
Yoga & Spirituality #8

## Inspired by Great Beings

By Swami Nirmalananda & Rukmini Abbruzzi

Rukmini says, “I was surprised when Swami Nirmalananda said that my great-grandma is a saint. Maria Theresa Abbruzzi is not officially canonized, but she was able to pray away our illnesses. Some of my earliest memories are of this tiny Italian woman in black, a force of nature, with rosary beads always in her hands. I grew up with her as my role model for passionate and wholehearted devotion to God and to family.”

Who do you look at, to figure out who you want to be and what you want to accomplish? Perhaps someone in your family inspires you or maybe someone you work with. Society admires Hollywood royalty, politicians, sports stars and pop star Twitter queens. Your mind is constantly comparing yourself to others: the people around you in real life, on social platforms and in the media.

Use your mind’s constant comparing by focusing on great beings, shining examples of people who live to their highest potential, those who serve and uplift others. What does such a being look like? Arjuna asked this question in the Bhagavadgita, while learning from Krishna about how to face life without need, greed and fear. Arjuna couldn’t conceive how to live and act from such a pure, powerful, steady spiritual state, so he asked:

Sthitadhii.h ki.m prabhaa.seta kim aasiita vrajeta kim

How does one who is established in Self-Knowingness speak?

How does he sit? How does he move? — Bhagavadgita 2.54<sup>1</sup>

These are important questions to have answered, because mere theory about your Self is not enough. You need living, breathing examples for you to see your own spiritual greatness in your future. Because the sages gave us yoga, a powerful and scientific system of spiritual development, India is brimming with ancient and modern saints, sages, mystics and ascetics. Let their greatness inspire you.

Swamiji reports that many more women came to Muktananda’s satsangs than did men, reflective of yoga in the West. “Baba responded by telling us about the great yoginis (female yogis), including Sakhubai, Mirabai, Lalleshwari and Muktabai. Some of these women were sadhus (ascetics) who lived apart from society, but some lived within their family. Baba hung beautiful paintings of these great yoginis on the women’s side of the meditation hall, so we could see and hear and know that it’s really possible to become a woman saint.”

Closer to home are many great beings in Western history. Some were inspired leaders while others were shining with spiritual greatness. In the 1300’s, Julian of Norwich, England, described her mystical visions, calling them “showings,” explaining their meanings in Revelations of Divine Love. She sounds like the Vedantic sages, who proclaimed “aham brahmaasmi,” meaning “I am The One.”

I IT AM, the Light and the Grace that is all blessed Love...

I am that maketh thee to love: I am that maketh thee to long:

I IT AM, the endless fulfilling of all true desires.<sup>2</sup>



<http://www.catholic.org>

Julian lived an ascetic life in a small room attached to a church. The room had small 3 windows: one in the wall of the church, through which she could see & hear mass, receive communion, and give spiritual advice; one to let in light; and a third that opened to the room of an assistant who took care of her physical needs, like food and water. She is honored by the Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran traditions with feast days, and considered to be one of England’s most important mystics.

Evelyn Underhill was also English, living early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She wrote about spiritual life really being part of your whole life, not something separate:

The spiritual life is not a special career, involving abstraction from the world of things. It is a part of every man’s life; and until he has realised it, he is not a complete human being, has not entered into possession of all his powers.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rendered by Swami Nirmalananda

<sup>2</sup> Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love, from Chapter 59, [www.en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Julian\\_of\\_Norwich](http://www.en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Julian_of_Norwich), accessed 7/31/2016

<sup>3</sup> Evelyn Underhill, Practical Mysticism, preface, pages 14-15, [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Evelyn\\_Underhill](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Evelyn_Underhill), accessed 7/31/2016



[www.evelynunderhill.org](http://www.evelynunderhill.org)

Mystical experiences in Evelyn’s childhood fueled her research and commitment to writing, authoring 39 books on religion and spiritual practice. She gave hundreds of lectures, becoming the first woman to lecture on theology at Oxford. Her book [Mysticism: The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness](#), widely read, included references to Sufis, Walt Whitman, William Blake, John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila and more. She said, “All mystics, said Saint-Martin, speak the same language and come from the same country.”

A well-known American, Eleanor Roosevelt said, “It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness.” She was a blazing light who worked tirelessly for justice, peace, gender, age and race-equality. First Lady for twelve years during the Great Depression and World War II, she went beyond being a figurehead to make real and personal impacts on people’s lives. For example, she gave women journalists exclusive access to her White House press conferences, to help them keep their jobs during the depression. In her monthly magazine column, “I Want You to Write to Me,” she invited the public to write to her directly. In the first year of her husband’s term, she received 300,000 letters, and devised a system so every homeless, jobless and hungry individual who wrote was referred to federal agencies, charities and wealthy individuals whom she knew could help.



She gave radio commentaries and lectures, and raised huge sums of money for charity. She advocated for the desegregation of the Armed Forces, publicly led Red Cross blood donations and made overseas trips to visit the hospital beds of U.S. servicemen. One of the first US delegates to the newly-created United Nations (and the only woman), she drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In tribute to her human rights achievements, President Harry S. Truman called her the “First Lady of the World”. She lived by her own words, “You have to accept whatever comes and the only important thing is that you meet it with courage and with the best that you have to give.”<sup>4</sup>

Three great women! Their stores are much greater than these short descriptions offer. Swamiji says, “Any of them will inspire your inherent greatness to blossom forth, so you can contribute to the world’s upliftment. You can do good in the world without becoming Self-Realized, as did Ms. Roosevelt, or you can actually tackle both. They work together, because when you uncover your spiritual greatness, you have no choice but to share. The more you live from your Self, the more everyone benefits, including you.”

How did these women become great? Julian and Evelyn wrote about their spontaneous mystical experiences which inspired their lives’ work. Yoga tells us that these spontaneous revelations occur for one out of 1,000,000,000 or more people, due to that individual’s spiritual practices in previous lifetimes. Is this your path to greatness? Are you that 1?

If you were, you would have likely experienced such revelations as a youth. If you’re still waiting, you need to do something to prime the pump. You need a system, a system that works, a spiritual system that has already produced mystics and saints, and continues to do so.

You need a role model, as the Bhagavadgita describes, someone who has used the system to attain what it promises. Someone who can prompt such Divine Revelations within you, one who is a revealer, a giver of Grace. The Sanskrit word “Guru” means “the one who reveals your own Divinity to you.” Such a master shares from their inner fullness, giving you access to the same source, that which is within you. That which IS you.



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Swami Nirmalananda is such a one. A 21<sup>st</sup> century mystic, she embodies the promise of her lineage’s teachings: that you can become Self-Realized in this lifetime. She has dedicated her life to serving others, offering spiritual upliftment to everyone who seeks it.

She has the power to awaken you to your own Divine Essence and she will support you on your path to enlightenment with humor, wisdom, love and sometimes a little fire. And you can meet her and talk to her!

Let the great beings of the past and present inspire you. Meditate! And do more yoga.

As Swamiji says, “Work the system, because the system works.”

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<sup>4</sup> Information from: [www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=33](http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=33), accessed 7/28/2016