

FORMAT FOR GROUP STUDY

Two or more Lessons students may undertake group study of the Self-Realization Lessons under the following conditions:

All those studying the *Lessons* together should be enrolled in the *Lessons* through subscription from the Mother Center and be currently studying them.

It is suggested that when the group first starts group study meetings it begin with Lesson Number 1, and take the *Lessons* in consecutive order, one *Lesson* per week until they are all completed (please see exception below for study of the Meditation Technique Lessons). The recommended frequency of the study periods is weekly. If the group meets less often, it should still study only one *Lesson* at each study period.

New members may join the group at any time, provided they are active Lessons Students or have completed the entire series. It is all right for new students to join in, even if the group is studying a Lesson that they may have not yet received through their personal subscription, simply by showing their SRF Student Membership Card. An exception would be if the group is reviewing a Lesson on one of the basic SRF Meditation Techniques (Energization Exercises, Hong-Sau Technique of Concentration, OM Technique of Meditation). Only SRF students who have received these Lessons through their personal subscription are eligible to attend these study group meetings and each individual should bring their own personal copy of the Technique Lesson being studied in order to participate. To keep matters simple we recommend that special study-group meetings be conducted once a year, apart from the regular study group meetings, in which those who have already received the basic Technique Lessons (Lessons 8, 8A, 21, 22, 23A, 29, 30, 30A) may study them together.

The suggested time for a study period is one hour. If the members of the group wish to spend more time in meditation, the session may be extended to 1 or 2 hours, with at least ½ hour to 1 hour of meditation, respectively.

The suggested format for group study is as follows:

Opening Prayer: To be led by each member of the group, on rotation basis from week to week. (The prayers may be taken from the *Lessons* being studied—from the prayer or affirmation section, or the front page.)

1. Silent Meditation: Time to be determined by the group.

Reading of the *Lesson*: This may include all parts of the *Lesson*, or just the main body—as the group may choose.

A suggested method is for the members to take turns reading, each reading just one paragraph at a time, slowly and clearly. The rest may follow visually, reading silently from their copies of the *Lesson*; or some may choose to listen with eyes closed while the others are reading. After each paragraph, there should be a few minutes pause to allow all to contemplate, absorb and digest, and underline main points if they wish. Then the next person continues with reading the following paragraph. This procedure is continued until the *Lesson* has been completed. No one attempts to give a commentary or any explanations. There are to be no discussions. If any questions arise in the minds of members of the group during the study period, they may write them down, to seek the answers later in the writings of Yoganandaji, or to write to the Mother Center if they are not able to resolve the questions on their own.

If the *Lesson* is completed before the end of the hour, the remainder of the period may be spent in silent meditation.

2. Closing Prayer.

This group study, then, is only that: a group of Self-Realization *Lessons* students studying the *Lessons* together, one *Lesson* per week, all studying the same *Lesson* together, but each one learning directly from the *Lesson* itself, hearing and reading only the words of Paramahansa Yoganandaji, without his teachings being diluted or altered by the thoughts or interpretations of others. Each one has the chance to absorb the teachings in an atmosphere of concentration and devotion, drawing from the *Lesson* that which is most meaningful and needful for himself, underlining key sentences in the *Lesson*, or making marginal notes, or comments in a notebook for his own personal application of the teachings in daily life.

Some devotees find that they can concentrate better and absorb more in this group atmosphere; and some also find that there is an advantage to listening to the words rather than just reading them in printed form. Further, being part of such a study group better guarantees that at least one hour per week will be devoted to the study of the *Lessons*, and that the *Lessons* will be systematically studied.

The suggested method of personal study of the *Lessons* indicated to all *Lessons* students in Lesson Number 1 is to first read through the entire *Lesson*, trying to grasp its main purport, and then to go through the *Lesson* again paragraph by paragraph. In keeping with this principle, it is recommended that all members of the study group first read through the entire *Lesson* for each week on their own before coming to the study period--either on the same day, or on a prior day. This would correspond to the first step in the suggested study method. Then the second step, the paragraph-by-paragraph study, would be covered in the group study.

Please let us know if you have any questions. We would be happy to be of assistance and would also be pleased to receive any comments the devotees have regarding this system of study and the results they obtain.

SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP

Center Department

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