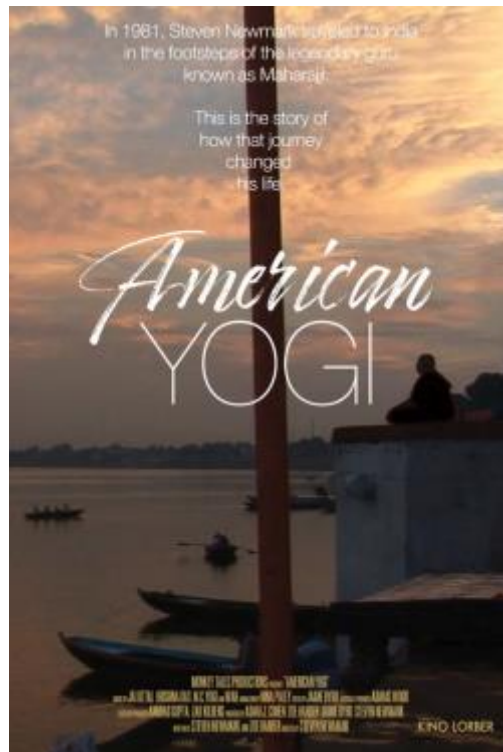


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AMERICAN YOGI

A film by Steven Newmark

Running Time: 79 minutes

Documentary / 2017 / Color / 1.85:1 / USA / English

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CREW

Director – Steven Newmark

Writers – Steven Newmark and Zoe Harber

Editor – Jamie Byrd

Animation – Nina Paley

Score – Jai Uttal

Assistant Editor – Adams Wood

Executive Producer – Anurag Gupta

Producers – Steven Newmark, Zoe Harber, Adam J. Cohen, Jaime Byrd

Additional music by Krishna Das, M.C. Yogi, Wah! And Ben Leinbach

Colorist – Joseph Nilo

Music editing, sound mixing and design – Adam Johnson

Additional camera and voice over recording – Paul Schattel

Story consultants – Jaime Byrd, Joe Beshenkovsky and Mike Wollaeger

Footage from “Fierce Grace” by Mickey Lemle

Interview with Ram Dass from “Ecstatic States” by John Coroneos

Footage of Ram Dass taken on his family farm courtesy of the film “Sunseed” by Amertat Cohn

LOGLINE

A young man travels to India and has to decide between the miracles he sees and life as he knew it.

SYNOPSIS

American Yogi is a documentary film about love and enlightenment that offers insight into the wisdom traditions of the east. It tells the story of Steven, a young man of the sixties, and his adventures after he encounters Ram Dass, author of *Be Here Now*. This book about the Indian saint Maharajji (Neem Karoli Baba) influenced an entire generation and transformed the lives of Steve Jobs and Marc Zuckerberg.

Inspired by Ram Dass, Steven travels to India, visits the temples that impacted Jobs and Zuckerberg, and comes face to face with the miraculous, mind-altering world of ancient India. *American Yogi* delves into the stories and teachings of Maharajji as told by his students and devotees. It weaves you through the miracles of India and the joys and difficulties of walking the spiritual path in America.

The movie features a world music soundtrack by grammy nominees Jai Uttal and Krishna Das, also devotees of Maharajji. It was filmed in India and produced in Asheville, North Carolina.

QUOTES

"American Yogi" is an inspiration."

– Ram Dass

"A deeply inspired film! About what the Western mind calls fiction – and the East calls reality."

– Shankar Mohan, Director of the International Film Festival of India

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DIRECTORS STATEMENT

Today many Americans are losing faith in religion, capitalism, our political system and even, gasp, the American dream. As a culture, we are beginning to look for answers and perspective outside the traditional western paradigms.

The allure of the East has always prompted westerners to look to it's wisdom for inner peace, but it's philosophy has often seemed enigmatic. In 1971, the book *Be Here Now*, explained the sometimes abstruse philosophy of India in a way that was easily understood. As a result, this landmark book sold over two million copies and is still popular today among young people.

Like *Be Here Now*, *American Yogi* makes the wisdom of the East accessible to a wider audience because it explores Hinduism in a way that is hip, entertaining, fast moving and personal. This film is arriving at a time in the history of this country when we are more open to hear something new.

Maharajji had a huge impact on the youth culture of the United States through *Be Here Now*. In the 70's, this book was the bible for those seeking spiritual advice. At one time, it was the second fastest selling book in the US. Steve Jobs said he was transformed by reading *Be Here Now* and was so inspired that he traveled to India in 1974 to meet Maharajji. Although Maharajji died a short while before Jobs arrived in India, Jobs still spent many months in Maharajji's Kainchi temple. Jobs said this journey had a major influence on his way of thinking intuitively that inspired his many innovations. Many years later, when Facebook was going through a crisis, Jobs advised Mark Zuckerberg to visit Maharajji's Kainchi temple. This journey was a turning point in Zuckerberg's life. Google's Larry Page and Jeffrey Skoll, co-founder of eBay, have also made the pilgrimage to Kainchi. Kainchi is a focus of *American Yogi* and it is where major parts of the movie were filmed.

INDIA

India is the fastest growing economy in the world and the home of 1.3 billion people. Hinduism, the main religion of India, has over one billion followers worldwide. This means one out of five people on this planet are Hindu. Yet India and it's main religion are greatly misunderstood by most westerners. The many misconceptions and myths have created a distorted view of India. Most dismiss this country as dirty and poor, a land of idol worshipers and the uneducated. Apu, a character from the TV show *Simpsons*, exemplify Americans concept of an indian man; good for comic relief, friendly, simple, innocuous but irrelevant.

One of the main purposes of this movie is to give insight into this ancient culture at a time when we really need to know about it. Few of us understand that Indians have spent the last 5,000 years developing an inner technology that has created methods for achieving inner peace and mind expansion, while we in the West have focused our energy primarily on external technology.

One graduate of this inner technology is the focus of this movie-Neem Karoli Baba, aka Maharajji. This holy man has demonstrated his ability to perform miracles, like appearing in two places at one time, that are

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considered impossible by the West's present understanding of the world. Maharajji's wisdom was both mystical and practical, as he was an advisor to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders of India. The amazing feats that he has performed attest to the fact that we have barely touched the potential for human evolution. These saints are not anomalies, but demonstrations of the value of the ancient wisdom of India.

BIOS

Steven Newmark – Director, Co-author

Dr. Steven Newmark holds a doctorate degree in Psychology and has completed his studies at the University of Florida and the California Institute of Integral Studies. He has been a practicing psychotherapist for over thirty years.

Dr. Newmark has created many best selling educational videos that have been widely viewed in the United States, Australia and New Zealand selling over 50,000 copies. These videos have received positive reviews from the New York Times, San Francisco Examiner and the Houston Chronicle and have been featured on the Late Night with David Letterman television show.

Dr. Newmark was President of the Personal Success Institute and has produced many television programs that have featured best selling authors and motivational speakers such as Mark Victor Hansen ("Chicken Soup for the Soul") Denis Waitley ("The Psychology of Winning"), Ram Dass ("Be Here Now"), Leo Buscaglia ("Living, Loving and Learning") and Brian Tracey (The Success Code).

Dr. Newmark has been a speaker and lecturer for the past twenty five years and has spoken and taught at the Esalen Institute, the Commonwealth Club and Spirit Rock Meditation Center among other venues. He is also the author of a book about Hinduism entitled Before Becoming This. Deepak Chopra said about this book "Before Becoming This is an insightful and joyful exploration of enlightenment and spiritual practice."

Dr. Newmark has been a student of Eastern Spirituality for the last thirty years and has dived deeply into the practices of Hinduism. He has studied with Hindu masters, Shree Maa, Swami Satyananda, and K.C. Tewari, Tibetan Buddhist masters Surya Das, Chogyam Rimpoché and Kalu Rimpoché, Mindfulness teacher Joseph Goldstein, Advaita Master H.W.L. Poonja, and Shamanic master Carlos Castaneda

Zoe Harber – Co-author

Zoe Harber has been a licensed psychotherapist for the past 24 years. She graduated with honors from UC Berkeley and did her graduate work at Antioch University and Cedars Sinai hospital in Los Angeles. She is a mother of two children.

She is also an author and a poet. A literature minor at UC Berkeley, Zoe began writing early in her career to incorporate literature into her private therapies and seminars.

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She is a renowned poet in Asheville, North Carolina where her poems appear in the anthology “Remember Me as a Time of Day.” She won awards for her poetry in the New Zealand International Haiku competition and annual Poetry Dance competition in San Francisco.

Jaime Byrd – Editor

Jaime Byrd is a three-time Emmy award nominated director and editor and founder of Blind Lyle Films. She produced the show, TALKER, starring Jay Thomas, Tim Mattheson, and Sharon Lawrence, which won best comedy, best actor, and best directing at the LA Int’l TV awards in 2011. She wrote, directed, produced, and edited the bi-lingual web series produced in Mexico, “Luck and The Virgin”, which won a best editing award at the LA Web Fest in 2010.

Jaime has worked for almost a decade in the film, video, and editing medium. Immersing herself in what has been an ever-changing world of digital and new media, as a DP she has mastered the art of capturing the moment, while as an editor she has proven that instinct and timing is everything.

Jai Uttal – Composer

Jai Uttal is a Grammy-nominated singer and “a pioneer in the world music community with his eclectic East-meets-West sound.” He is a “sacred music composer, recording artist, multi-instrumentalist, and ecstatic vocalist, who combines influences from India with American rock and jazz to create a stimulating and exotic multicultural fusion that is truly world spirit music.

Ram Dass

Ram Dass first went to India in 1967. He was still Dr. Richard Alpert, a prominent Harvard psychologist and psychedelic pioneer with Dr. Timothy Leary. He continued his psychedelic research until that fateful Eastern trip in 1967, when he traveled to India. In India, he met his guru, Neem Karoli Baba, affectionately known as Maharajji, who gave Ram Dass his name, which means “servant of God.” Everything changed then – his intense dharmic life started, and he became a pivotal influence on a culture that has reverberated with the words “Be Here Now” ever since. Ram Dass’ spirit has been a guiding light for three generations, carrying along millions on the journey, helping to free them from their bonds as he works through his own. In 1974, Ram Dass created the Hanuman Foundation; a non-profit foundation meant to embody the spirit of service inspired his Guru.

The Hanuman Foundation developed the Prison-Ashram Project, directed by Bo and Sita Lozoff, which helped prison inmates grow spiritually during their incarceration and the Dying Project, conceived with Stephen Levine, which helped many bring awareness and compassion to the encounter with death. Also as part of the Hanuman Foundation, Dale Borglum founded and directed the Dying Center in Santa Fe, the first residential facility in the United States whose purpose was to support conscious dying. The Prison-Ashram Project, now called the Human Kindness Foundation, continues under Sita Lozoff in North Carolina and the Living/Dying Project, now a separate non-profit headed by Dale Borglum in the Bay Area, provides support for transforming the encounter with life-threatening illness into an opportunity for spiritual awakening.

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Be Here Now, Ram Dass's monumentally influential and seminal work, still stands as the highly readable centrepiece of Western articulation of Eastern philosophy, and how to live joyously a hundred per cent of the time in the present, luminous or mundane. Be Here Now continues to be the instruction manual of choice for generations of spiritual seekers. Forty years later, it's still part of the timeless present. Being here now is still being here now and has sold more than two million copies.

Other books include *The Only Dance There Is* (Anchor/ Doubleday); *Grist For The Mill* (with Stephen Levine, Celestial Arts); *Miracle of Love: Stories of Neem Karoli Baba* (Hanuman Foundation); *How Can I Help?* (with Paul Gorman, Knopf); *Compassion in Action: Setting Out on the Path of Service* (with Mirabai Bush, Bell Tower Press), *Still Here: Embracing Aging, Changing and Dying* (Riverhead Books); *One-Liners: A Mini-Manual for a Spiritual Life* (Bell Tower Press); *Paths to God: Living the Bhagavad Gita* (Harmony Books).

Ram Dass is a co-founder and advisory board member of the Seva Foundation ("seva" means "spiritual service" in Sanskrit), an international service organisation. Seva supports programs designed to help wipe out curable blindness in India and Nepal, restore the agricultural life of impoverished villagers in Guatemala, assist in primary health care for American Indians, and to bring attention to the issues of homelessness and environmental degradation in the United States, along with other nations.

Krishna Das

Krishna Das is a U.S. Grammy nominated musician known for his performances of Hindu devotional music known as kirtan. He has released eight albums since 1996. The New York Times called him the "Chant master of American Yoga."