



## GURUDEV SHRI AMRITJI

The historical origin of Vedanta and Yoga in North America started with the arrival of great Yogi's such as H.H. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) followed by H.H. Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952). Amritji (b.1932) followed in the footsteps of these great beings and was the first Yoga Guru to bring his inner dimension to the practice of Hatha yoga in the West. In 1980 in New Delhi, India, The World Religious Parliament founded by Swami Vivekananda (1894) honored Shri Amritji with the esteemed title of Jagadacharya (World Teacher). This title is considered the equivalent to Jagadaguru Shankaracharya.

Gurudev Shri Amritji is one of a handful of Gurus who came to America in the early 1960's pioneering a Yoga craze that has grown into the massive worldwide yoga practices we have today. He is the last living Guru from this initial wave.

**Smithsonian Publications, 2014, *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, page 100:** *"The sixties brought an infusion of Indian gurus to the U.S. including Swami Muktananda... and Amrit Desai (b.1932), who established the Yoga Society of Pennsylvania and Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health, named for his guru, Swami Kripalvanandji."*

Over the past 57 years he founded some of the largest non-profit yoga centers in North America. The seeds of yoga he planted grew into the Yoga Society of Pennsylvania, founded in 1966. It became the largest of its kind by 1970. He started training yoga teachers in the early 1960's and today there are more than 10,000 certified Yoga and Yoga Nidra teachers trained in his Inner Dimension of Yoga teaching in more than 40 countries around the world.

**State University of New York, published in 'Homegrown Gurus' 2013:** *"... (sic) Desai's most noted innovation is that he was the first Indian-born ancient "American Yogi" to introduce systematic teachings and techniques on Prana in the U.S. Desai remains at the forefront of the English-speaking Yoga Revolution in America for almost four decades. He also exports his teaching of Yoga to more than*

*40 countries and has acquired thousands of worldwide adherents...he has arguably been one of the most influential and sought-after figures in the development of Hatha Yoga in America over the last 40 years.”*

Amritji founded two non-profit Kripalu Yoga ashrams and program centers, one in Sumneytown, PA in 1971, with a resident staff of fifty that expanded into a second center at Summit Station, PA in 1976, with a resident staff of 150. By 1983, the Kripalu Yoga Center founded in Massachusetts grew to be the largest Yoga and Health Center in North America. It became a thriving International Yoga Center with 350 full time resident and volunteer staff that accommodated more than 300 guests. Under Amritji’s guidance, those disciples committed to the Lineage and its teachings became his acharyas, qualified to lead his programs and Yoga Teacher Trainings at Kripalu and internationally.

**Dr. Deepak Chopra**, author of 85 books on Ayurveda, Yoga and Integrative Medicine, some of which became New York Times best-selling books said, *“Yogi Amrit Desai is a pioneer in introducing Yoga to the West, but more significantly through his unique style, his method of teaching draws upon the original spiritual depth that is missing in the popular practice of Hatha Yoga.”*

In 1994 Amritji returned to the original Kripalu Ashram in Sumneytown, Pennsylvania and refined his teachings into what is now known as The Integrative Amrit Method: *I AM Yoga, Yoga Nidra, Yoga Therapy, and Quantum Breath Meditation*. In 2001, Amritji founded the Amrit Yoga Institute (AYI) in Salt Springs, Florida which has become a thriving International Yoga and Ayurveda Center where he presently resides and teaches. He co-founded the International University of Yoga and Ayurveda in 2014.

**Gurudev Shri Amritji** is the carrier of the Lord Lakulish and Kripalu Shaktipat Lineage to the West. Over the years his charismatic presence and powerful teachings of this Lineage of Prana have spread worldwide. His teachings through this Shaktipat Lineage ignited the fire that began the initial renaissance of the *Inner Dimension* of Yoga in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Amritji’s 1970 Kundalini awakening experience revealed to him that Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras are not just meant to be the philosophy of Yoga but a manual for the practice of Ashtanga Yoga. Patanjali says, “Yoga means witnessing the modifications of the mind.” Patanjali’s Eight Limb Ashtanga Yoga is the simultaneous holistic practice of Hatha and Raja Yoga. This is why the Integrated Amrit Method (I AM Yoga) is called Meditation in Motion. As a result, the inner dimension of Yoga creates powerful

therapeutic and transformative benefits that are missing in the mainstream approach to the practice of Hatha Yoga.

**Dr. David Frawley**, (Padma Bhushan) author of 30 books on Yoga and Ayurveda and Indian culture stated: *“Yogi Desai revived the ancient teachings of the millennial old Shaivite Yoga, rooted in the Lakulish tradition from Kayavarohan in Gujarat, one of the greatest centers of India’s older Yoga practices... Yogi Desai made these secret teachings once more alive and relevant to the entire world. He has left an indelible influence on modern Yoga ... Yogi Desai has demonstrated a Prana Siddhi in which he can allow Universal Prana to move not only through his mind and body but also through his environment and into the audience around him, awakening their own inner Prana and spiritual intelligence.”*

A globally revered spiritual leader, Amritji has reached millions through his personal and online presence at international conferences, seminars, workshops and trainings as well as his peace missions to Russia (1990) and Israel (1995). He was invited to teach an advanced training (1982-1986) in Zinal, Switzerland for the European Union of National Yoga Federations, including 1500 Yoga teachers from 23 European countries. During this seminar, he was interviewed by the European Journal **Yoga Today**, *‘The Yoga that Yogi Desai developed is both very old and very new. It is old because it restores Yoga to its original depth of unity, uniting Raja and Hatha Yoga. It is new because of the conscious use of Prana in the practice of Yoga from the very beginning.’*

**Amritji has been repeatedly honored by prestigious organizations and world-renowned authorities from the East and West some of which are listed below:**

- **International Yoga Grand Master, 2013, by Padma Shri** his H.H. Jagat Guru Amrit Suryanandaji in recognition of the global impact in the field of Yoga. This award has been previously given only to Padma Shri Dr. Nagendra of SVYASA University Bangalore and B.K.S. Iyengar.
- **Maharishi Sandipani Award, 2013**, the Ujjain Yog Life Society International at the 4th International Yog conference, held January 2014 in Ujjain, M.P. India.
- **Inaugural Fellow, Council for Yoga Accreditation International (CYAI), 2012**, the council recognized four inaugural Fellows who have demonstrated extraordinary achievement and contribution in the field of Yoga.

- **Patanjali Award, 2010**, for Excellence in Yogic Research and Teachings from the Association of Ayurvedic Professionals of North America (AAPNA).
- **Padma Vibhushan, 1992**, the late prime minister of India, Shri Chandra Shekhar wrote to India's then prime minister, Shri Narasinha Rao: *'During my recent visit to America I was deeply impressed by the dedication of the Yogacharya (Shri Amritji) in his programs by which teachings are being disseminated ... (he is an internationally renowned authority in the field of Yoga and an exponent of the spiritual heritage ... for spreading the ancient wisdom of India and universal teachings throughout the world. I feel Yogacharya Shri Amritji deserves honors of this work, therefore, I recommend "Padma Vibhushan" for him as a special case.'* This request received a positive response from Prime Minister Rao.
- **Vishwa Yoga Ratna, 1987**, by the World Development Parliament of India, **presented by the President of India** in recognition of life long dedication and service in the field of Yoga to 10 world renowned teachers from 10 countries.
- **Maharishi, 1986**, by 105-year-old H.H. Sadguru Swami Gangeshwaramandji Maharaj, Udasin, chancellor of Udasin Sanskrit University, Benares, founder of 12 ashrams in India and 600 Ved Mandirs.
- **Yogacharya, 1980**, by H.H. Swami Shri Kripalvanandji, Amritji's guru and founder of Kayavarohan Tirtha Shiva Temple, Malav, Ashram, and Lord Lakulish Yoga Institute, in honor of years of intensive study, teachings and practice of philosophy and spiritual principles of Yoga.
- **Doctor of Yoga Science, 1974**, by H.H. Jagadaguru Shankaracharya Maharaj, Dwarka, spiritual leader of Hinduism, for outstanding contributions to humanity.

#### **Publications and Book Awards:**

His many publications include Kripalu Yoga: Meditation in Motion, Amrit Yoga: Explore, Expand, Experience *the Spiritual Depth of Yoga* and Amrit Yoga and the Yoga Sutras.

His recent books *Ancient Wisdom, Modern Master: Meditations on the Art of Living (2012)*, *Love and Bliss: A Collection of Inspired Poetry (2014)* and *The Yoga of Relationships: A Practical Guide for Loving Yourself and Others (2015)* have earned a total of fifteen literary awards from esteemed book festivals held in London, Paris, New York, Southern California, Hollywood, CA, Florida, etc.