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# THE FRANKLIN MERRELL-WOLFF FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER

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Fall 2013

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The Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship is a publicly supported, non-profit corporation whose mission is to educate the public about the twentieth-century American philosopher Franklin Merrell-Wolff through his writings, audio recordings, teachings, and life. Our activities include publishing and distributing his works, and the sponsorship of forums and events to study and discuss the life and work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff, as well as to explore the connection between Wolff's teachings and those of other traditions.

## A Message from the Chair

Charles C. Post

## In this Issue

Robert Holland

Dear Fellows:

It is still fall, but not by much, and getting this newsletter out late in the year reminds me of the passage of time—and the fact that we are all a little older. Maybe we are all a trifle wiser...? Let's hope.

Franklin Merrell-Wolff was ahead of his time, observed John Lilly, MD, who helped Franklin to get his manuscript, *Pathways Through to Space*, republished in 1973. Dr. Lilly notes (in the preface to this edition of the book), that he reasoned with the publisher as follows:

I presented the point of view that literally hundreds of thousands of young adults were now ready for the ideas, experiences, and philosophy expressed therein, and emphasized the fact that there are thousands of people where there were only a few hundred in 1944 who are in need of confirmation of their own experience...

If we extrapolate Lilly's line of reasoning to today, how many more people are ready to receive the wisdom of Franklin Merrell-Wolff? Your Fellowship is working hard to make sure that individuals who are ready and in need of this wisdom, worldwide, can find it.

The mission of the Fellowship includes making the work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff accessible to as many people as possible, and we are attempting to do so in a manner that adheres to Wolff's directive that no charge should be made for the fruit of his spiritual labor. This is only possible if we get enough members to help support us in this effort.

So, in this issue of the Fellowship's newsletter, we are reaching out to you to ask for your support. On p. 6 of the newsletter you will find our annual appeal for funds, which spells out both our need for funds and the activities that your donations help support. On the page that follows this request, you will find a Donation Form that you may use to contribute to the Fellowship. Or, simply visit the home page of our website [www.merrell-wolff.org](http://www.merrell-wolff.org) and click on the Donate button. Please remember that as public charity, we need your contributions to continue our mission.

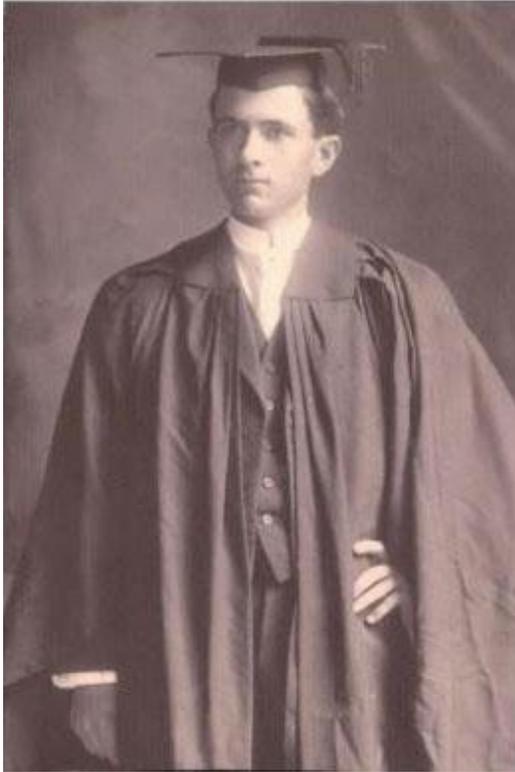
We begin this issue of our Fall Newsletter with an interview with Swami Satyananda Giri, a Hindu monk whose work has been deeply influenced by Franklin Merrell-Wolff. In this interview, Satyananda Giri explains how he happened upon the work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff, and how Wolff's work has influenced his own labors. The interview concludes with some words of advice for students of Franklin Merrell-Wolff.

Our Fall Newsletter serves to announce the Fellowship's plans for the coming year, and on p. 4, you will find a list of our objectives for 2014. Principal among these goals is the processing of the Wolff Archive, which we are currently inventorying and cataloging; we have already scanned or transcribed the bulk of this material. Beginning next year, we will post this material on our website, both in original form and when appropriate, with a "clean" copy. This project has been labor intensive, but it has been a labor of love.

Finally, the Fellowship would like to wish all of its members a happy holiday season and to extend our best wishes for the New Year.

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Wolff as a Stanford graduate (May 1911)

## An Interview with Swami Satyananda Giri

By Charles C. Post

Swami Satyananda Giri is a sannyasin belonging to Sri Gnanananda Tapovanam, an ashram located on the northern bank of the river South Pennar, three kilometers from Tirukoilur, South India. He has written extensively on Indian history and philosophy, and is the author of numerous books, including *Shyambala* (1999), *In the Twirling of a Lotus* (2004), *Akbar* (2009), *Kant* (2010) and *Naropa* (2011). His latest work, *Men of Straw*, details a troubled period in India's history—the crucial two years of India's independence and partition. He has also written an article on the political philosophy of Franklin Merrell-Wolff. Titled “The Vertical Thought Movement of Franklin Merrell-Wolff,” this essay may be found on the Forums page of the Fellowship's website under ‘Member Essays’ (<http://www.merrell-wolff.org/node/37>).

In the interview below, Satyananda Giri discusses his background, explains how he came across the work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff, and how this work has influenced his own labors. The interview concludes with some words of advice for students of Franklin Merrell-Wolff.

**Post: What is your own background? Specifically, what religious/philosophical tradition have you followed?**

I am a descendant of Sri Apayya Dikshitar and Nilakanta Dikshitar. Apayya Dikshitar was in the first half of his life, prime minister of the Vijayanagar Empire. After the destruction of Vijayanagar by the Muslims, the family shifted further south. I come in the philosophical tradition of Shankara's advaita. It was natural that I should turn to Dr. Wolff who carries the advaitic tradition further and reconciles Vedanta with Buddhism.

I was educated in St. Thomas convent school (Mary Provincius, SJ, headmistress), Madras Christian College School (Kuruville Jacob, headmaster), Madras Christian College, Presidency College, Madras (BGL Swamy, Harvard botanist, principal). I was a student of Afzal al ulama Syed Azamatullah sahib who taught me Islamic history and culture. I worked for a time in *The Hindu*, one of the biggest newspapers of the world. Because of this varied background—Roman Catholic, Scottish Enlightenment and Sufi Islam, I became more liberal in outlook than many traditional Brahmins. I was about 18 when I first came into contact with Shankara's philosophy. I reckoned it a brilliant piece of intellectual enquiry. I never thought that such states of consciousness really existed. It was only three or four years later that I came to the realization that Shankara was describing actual states of consciousness.

**How did you first contact the writings of Franklin Merrell-Wolff?**

I had an uncle who was a professor of mathematics in California. This uncle was a great admirer of Edgar Casey, the psychic healer. He used to send me books on this subject. I was not much interested in these siddhis. One day, I received a book called *Pathways Through to Space* with an introduction by John C. Lilly. I saw immediately that this person, Franklin Merrell-Wolff, had successfully employed Shankara's method of introception and gained the Bliss of the Self. Thirty-three days later, he attained to Enlightenment. I was very much excited by the methods chalked out and worked in detail by Dr. Franklin Merrell-Wolff. I wrote to my uncle and asked who this Dr. Wolff was? How was it that so great a spiritual master was relatively unknown? I received the reply he was an American mathematician, educated at Harvard and Stanford and well-known in mathematical circles.

I was then attached to Sri Ramanashramam. Sri Ramana, like Shankara gives a philosophic explanation in terms of a universal Self. In the chapter on the High Indifference in *Pathways through to Space*, Dr. Wolff was speaking of a level of consciousness transcending Nirvana

as completely as Nirvana transcended sangsara. Many Wolffian students found it difficult to reconcile this final insight with the practices set forth in the text. The practices are Vedantic but the insight is Buddhist. At that time, I didn't know of the twofold egolessness of the *Prajnaparamita* texts. Dr. Wolff shows us a method of reconciling these varied approaches. This completed my severance with any traditional school of philosophical interpretation. I also learnt to admire Dr. Wolff's writing style, his calm and detached view of problems and his deeply moving and helpful compassion.

Later I came to know of [Wolff's first and second wives] Sherifa and Gertrude. They seem to have possessed extraordinary siddhis. This staunching of blood-flow from the fontanel was a siddhi possessed by some ancient Egyptian devotees of Isis. Many thousands of years later, here was Gertrude having it. She probably extended Wolff's life.

**You have written a book about Immanuel Kant. Where does Kant fit into your own worldview?**

By the end of the 1970s, I had come to accept Wolff's world view completely. I had not yet come across his aphorisms on Consciousness-without-an-object. [I did so only after Wolff's] books *Transformations in Consciousness* and *Experience and Philosophy* were sent to me by Jeff Baker and Tom Kelley. Dr. Wolff himself gave a talk [in which he discussed] the "deeps beyond Shankara" [and] in which the idea of the Great Space is clearly explained. [You may find this discussion in Wolff's February 16, 1969 recording, "Epistemology and Realization."]

In the ancient Indian text, *Yogavashishtam*, the approach to the Transcendent is made through a consideration of Space and its interactions with matter, ideation and finally hyperspace as it is in itself. Corresponding to Wolff's world containing space and spatial void are the *bhutakasha* (space in relation to matter; an Einsteinian kind of space) and *chidakasha* (space of consciousness). In between, Vashishta introduces a category called *chit-akasha*, roughly the same as cyber space or virtual space. The whole *sadhana* is reduced by Vashishta to this. You must regard all spaces as interlinked and one.

I made a list of the books quoted in *Pathways Through to Space*. I obtained many of these books and read them. This brought me into contact with German idealism and Kant. The Platonic ideas were reduced by Kant to epistemological predeterminates. To that extent, Kant helped in the expansion of Consciousness. In the section,

the "Transcendent Aesthetic," which forms the first portion of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant introduces the idea that space and time are not objective realities but subjective ways of regarding experience. They are subjective, a priori projections within which we see the whole gamut of phenomena as our own representations. Either phenomenal objects get in in this manner or not at all. That is how we are structured. We can see events in a spatio-temporal sequence or not at all. The projection of space and time, if withdrawn, would lead to what? This kind of approach to transcendence has been there for thousands of years in India. I wrote the book on Kant to clarify the various aspects of Kantian idealism. Though the a priori projection of space is considered for about seventeen pages in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, this is the most important portion of the Kantian philosophy. More than 5000 books have been written on this subject. Dr. Wolff also uses the symbol of the Great Space for Transcendent Consciousness. Space is the greatest deity man can conceive of. Beyond that lies impenetrable darkness and death.

It seems that Wolff, Krishnamurti, and Theosophy all have some roots in the Vedanta.

**What makes Franklin Merrell-Wolff's insights different from the others?**

Pupul Jaykar is one of the biographers of Jiddu Krishnamurti. She came from a Brahminic background. Mary Lutyens was from the Theosophical Society itself. Jayakar says that in his conversation in *Talks*, Krishnamurti took care never to identify the Transcendent Consciousness with any Universal Self. He was quite deft in this. Jiddu Krishnamurti does not induce God or the Universal Self as an in between reality. Mary Lutyens echoes this point of view in the well-known three volume biography of the masters.

On the other hand, Mrs Besant seems to have believed in the Self and her approach was remarkably Vedantic. In the *Prajnaparamita* texts, the approach is through a twofold egolessness. The *Pudgala Atman* is brought in by Vasubandhu as a kind of counter-poise to *sangsara*. It is in its turn refuted. This slant is there in Wolff and many Buddhists and theosophists. It does not appear to have been used at all by Jiddu Krishnamurti. If we take the Aphorisms on Consciousness-without-an-object, that would roughly be the same as the approach of Krishnamurti. Krishnamurti is far less intellectual. Milarepa appears to have slipped into the Universal Self and remained there for a month. Being a Buddhist, he did not think much of this state of Consciousness. In Wolff

also, at the end of 33 days, he passes from Nirvana to Shunyata. This was an unexpected development and one that left Dr. Wolff flabbergasted. The explanation as given by Shankara is not very much accepted by the Buddhists.

I remember once posting a question in the Google discussions group whether it was necessary to go via the Universal Self into Shunyata. I received no reply. Krishnamurti describes his essential insight as being one of choiceless awareness. This unchanging awareness is not identified with the *Atman* or *Iswara*.

**What spiritual practices do you believe would benefit modern people in today's world? Do you have any other comments or advice for Wolff's students?**

Wolff's students can daily read the "Aphorisms on Consciousness-without-an-object." They can recite the famous *Hridaya Sutra*. Once a week they can practice meditation. In this meditation, they can focus on the Emptiness which is the alkahest which turns base metal into gold. In their contacts with other seekers, they can be more friendly and compassionate. In the troubled *Kali Yuga*, a spiritually dark age, it would be better if spiritual aspirants kept together. They can read philosophic tomes like the writings of Shankara, Shankara's commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, Plato's Dialogues, the Sermons of Meister Eckhart and *The Critique of Pure Reason* of Immanuel Kant. They should exercise sufficient caution to see they are not drawn into weird and fantastic occult groups. In strange situations it is better to exercise common sense. They can daily recite the Lord's Prayer if they are Christians or Vishnu *Sahasranamam* if they are Hindus. It would be better not to avoid temptation but face it until it is mastered. This may sometimes take strange forms like addiction to drink, opium and so on. The five great vows of the Buddha are abstention from: 1.) Falsehood; 2.) Killing; 3.) Sexual misconduct; 4.) Theft; and, 5.) Intoxicants. "Decay is inherent in all compounded things. Work out your salvation with diligence." *Vayadhamma sankhara apamadana sampadita*. Those were the last words of the Buddha. He also said, "No one ever became a Buddha by staring at the Bodhi tree."

## Fellowship Plans for 2014

The Board of Directors of the Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship held its autumn meeting via teleconference on December 7<sup>th</sup>. The primary purpose of this meeting is to finalize the Fellowship's projects for the upcoming year and to approve a budget that encompasses these plans.

Highlights of our plans for 2014 are listed below:

1. **Wolff Archive.** The Fellowship is engaged in the process of inventorying and cataloging the Wolff Archive, the bulk of which has also been scanned. We will begin to post the archival files on our website beginning in 2014, as well as new catalogs of this material.
2. **Audio recordings.** We continue to transcribe the audio recordings in Wolff's archive, and we are posting them on our website as we get them transcribed.
3. **Book of Quotes.** We have setup up a "wiki-quote" page on our website where members may submit their favorite quotes of Franklin Merrell-Wolff. We will continue to collect quotes until we have enough to compile in book form. The quotes in this book will be sorted by subject, and the book itself will be distributed to our membership. Please submit your quotes today!
4. **Outreach.** The Fellowship will continue to seek affiliations with other organizations that may be interested in Franklin Merrell-Wolff.
5. **The Pearl Beyond Price.** In 1970, Franklin Merrell-Wolff made an audio recording titled "The Pearl Beyond Price." In this recording, Wolff discusses two different orientations toward the realization of the ultimate value: first, an orientation to the psychological, autochthonic factor, and, second, to the philosophical, transcendent factor. He characterizes the first approach as being exemplified by Christ, and as concerned with the problems of vital physical man; he portrays the second approach as exemplified by Shankara, and as appealing to elite mental man. In this recording Wolff quotes a lengthy passage from Jung's *Psychological Types* to give a picture of how the redeeming value of the autochthonic factor, representing the repressed inferior function, is received by those to whom it is made known; and then he reads his own "The Parable of the Jewels" to suggest how an orientation to transcendent consciousness contrasts with the autochthonous approach through the psychological unconscious.

The Fellowship plans to publish this parable in the form of an illustrated children's book (with "old-time" illustrations à la the Watty Piper books). We are excited about this project, and will be sure to keep you informed on our progress.



## A Poetic Interlude

by Franklin Merrell-Wolff

Am I a man? Yet also I am a god,  
For I am that which comprehends both gods and men.  
I move among men in the form of a man,  
Fallible, more or less good, like the rest.  
Yet, also I shine with the gods in Glory.  
I compress Myself in the mineral,  
Inert and long-enduring.  
Ceaselessly I grow as a plant,  
And am driven by desire as animal.  
I am in all, yet ever Beyond all.  
A flame am I that nowhere remains;  
I consume all.

As I write I am sitting on a pavement of cement.  
A tree grows near, its roots, soft and brittle, beneath the  
pavement.

Ceaselessly, slowly, but inevitably, those roots expand.  
The cement gives way, its resistance impotent.  
So, too, I expand, inevitably, remorselessly, in this world,  
Before Me no crystallization can stand.  
In the end, all other powers fail;  
My own, once more, return to Me.

What matters health, sickness or death,  
Passing modes in the endless Stream of Life?  
In health I go forth, perchance to forget;  
In sickness I look within and remember.  
Which is the greater blessing?  
I know not.  
Men seek health. I seek not at all.  
I give health and accept the blessing of sickness  
Yet, beyond all these, AM – Unbound.  
Do I look for faults in men? Then surely I will find them;  
Dishonesty, lust, greed, hatred, and all the rest.  
All these come with immense fecundity.

Do I look beyond to the good?  
Then what a glorious paragon is man!  
Generous, kind, and fair-dealing.  
Which of these is the real?  
Neither and both. Man reflects just what I seek.

From *Pathways Through to Space* (Chapter LIV)



## Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship

### Contact Information

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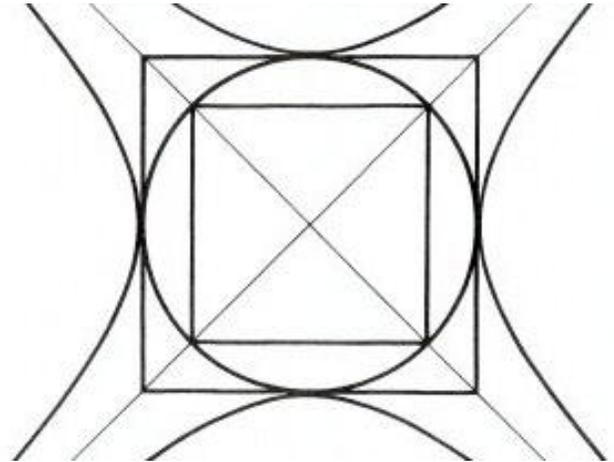
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# The Franklin Merrell-Wolff Fellowship, Inc.

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December, 2013

Dear Fellow,

The mission of the Fellowship includes making the work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff accessible to as many people as possible, and we are attempting to do so in a manner that adheres to Wolff's instructions that no charge should be made for the fruit of his spiritual labors. *This is only possible if we get enough members to help support us in this effort.*

So, we are reaching out to you to ask for your support. The contributions that you make in any amount are not only appreciated, but necessary. Some of the activities that your donations support are:

**Our website** [www.merrell-woff.org](http://www.merrell-woff.org) – this site not only informs the public about the life and work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff, but is used to publish the Wolff Archive as well as member essays about Franklin Merrell-Wolff. It is also used to facilitate other on-going Fellowship projects.

**The collection, scanning and cataloging of the Wolff Archive** – as we announced last fall, the Fellowship has been charged with the task of collecting, indexing, and copying the entire Franklin Merrell-Wolff Archive. When this task is complete, we will ship this material to Stanford University, which will safeguard the Wolff Archive for future generations in a special collection. The Wolff Archive includes all of Wolff's published and unpublished manuscripts, books, articles, audio recordings, correspondence, drafts and notes, photographs, video material, educational and student materials, as well as other material (including works and letters authored by either of Wolff's wives). In addition, the following "Related Material" will be sent to Stanford: an inventory of the books in Wolff's library, digital images of any handwritten annotations in these books, digital copies of the photos on Wolff's office walls, and an inventory (as well as photographs) of the memorabilia in his office.

**The publication of the Wolff Archive** – the entire Wolff Archive will soon be published on the Fellowship's website. In addition, we will occasionally publish special editions of his work, such as an illustrated children's version of Wolff's "The Parable of the Jewels."

**Works about Wolff** – the Fellowship encourages and supports its membership in writing and publishing books, articles, and other scholarly assessments of Wolff's life and work.

**Special projects** – from time to time the Fellowship will launch special projects designed to advance the public's knowledge of the life and work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff. Currently we have set up a page on our website where members may submit their favorite quotes of Franklin Merrell-Wolff. We will continue to collect quotes until we have enough to compile in book form. The quotes in this book will be sorted by subject, and the book itself will be distributed (as an e-book) to our membership.

**Outreach** – the Fellowship continues to seek affiliations with other organizations that may be interested in advancing the study of the life and work of Franklin Merrell-Wolff.

The Fellowship is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 503(c)(3) public charity, which means that all donations to the Fellowship are tax-deductible, and we will send you a receipt for tax purposes. The easiest way to make a donation is to visit the Fellowship's website and click on the 'Donate' button on the home page. On the Donation Page, you will find two options: Click on the PayPal button and use a credit card or your PayPal account to make a donation. If you are reading this newsletter online, the link below takes you right there! *Or, if you prefer, please use the donation form on the page following this letter and send the form to the address listed there.*

Best Wishes,

Chuck Post  
Chair

[Please Donate Today!](#)

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**The Assembly of Man Convention, 1947**