

The darshan of Saints, realized Masters and holy sites activates the soul like a spiritual yeast—it makes possible great spiritual leaps. To attain the final goal one must have the Grace that comes from Realized Souls—who are conduits for God's ultimate blessings.

Yogacharya David Hickenbottom

I will seek the Kingdom of God first, and make sure of my actual contact with God, and then, if it is His will, all things—wisdom, abundance, and health—will be added unto me as part of my divine birthright, since He made me in His image.

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

The charm and glory of life manifests when it is turned within and merged in the universal Self who pervades all forms, objects and things. The Soul which is imprisoned within the toils of individualism now attains the bliss of perfect freedom.

Swami Ramdas



David, Underneath Papa's Banyan Tree in Front of Bhajan Hall

# The Cross and The Lotus Journal



March 2007, Vol. 8 No. 1

*Dedicated to the Realization of God and Service to Him in All Forms*



Swami Satchidananda and Mother Hamilton (1977)



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The cross and lotus symbolizes the unity between East and West. The lotus is the sign of illumined consciousness, the thousand petal lotus of the crown chakra. The cross is the symbol of the body surrendered to the will of God. Following the way of the cross results in the resurrection of illumined consciousness.

*The Cross and the Lotus, symbol of man.  
East and West blended, join hand in hand.  
Marching toward the infinite light and life divine.  
Lift up your eyes and see the star,  
descending from heaven where eier you are.*

*Be filled with the peace and ecstasy of Godis almighty love.  
Om-Amen.*

The Reverend Yogacharya Mother Hamilton

© 2007 The Cross and The Lotus Publishing is dedicated to the publication of materials that promote God Realization. Our spiritual lineage begins with Jesus Christ and Babaji and flows down to us through Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, Paramhansa Yogananda and Yogacharya Mother Hamilton.

The Reverend Yogacharya David Hickenbottom continues this lineage with the help and support of many sincere devotees. We are dedicated to realizing God and serving devotees of every race, color, creed and religion.

Mother Hamilton often said she was the product of two fully illumined Masters, her own Guru, Paramhansa Yogananda, and Swami Ramdas. We therefore feature articles about Swami Ramdas and Anandashram. We bow to the feet of Saints and realized Masters of all religions.



## Calendar of Events

March	7	Paramhansa Yogananda's Mahasamadhi (1952)
	9	Swami Sri Yukteswar's Mahasamadhi (1936)
	20	Spring Equinox (5:06 p.m. PDT)
April	2	Swami Ramdas' Birthday (Hindu Calendar) (1884)
		Hanuman's Birthday
	8	Easter (Seattle Sunrise: 6:34 a.m. PDT)
May	10	Swami Sri Yukteswar's Birthday (1855)
	13	Mother's Day
	28	Memorial Day
June	17	Father's Day
	21	Summer Solstice (11:08 a.m. PDT)

Journal Editors: Larry & Cate Koler

**Swamiji:** Parting brings much sorrow.

Yes, this parting done without a commitment of there being another meeting in the physical, yes, this provokes a deep sorrow.

The time has come, I feel it, yet am I loathe to leave.

**David:** My deepest love Swamiji.

**Swamiji:** My deepest, deepest, deepest, deepest, deepest, deepest love.

Oh treasure of treasures. Words like a healing balm and like a twist of a knife in the heart simultaneously.

Swamiji pronams. I take his hands in pronams in return. All in our party take turns pronaming at Swamiji's feet. I take a rare opportunity and touch my forehead lightly to each one of his feet. I back up to the porch door and pronam again to the floor as he watches me back up out of his room—he is pronaming all along. Part way through the Centenary Hall, I pronam to the ground again as all devotees attending leave an open avenue between Swamiji and me. Now his right hand, palm open is lifted in benediction. “Oh my heart, can you stand the strain?” Yes, it has to.

I pronam again at the steps to the Centenary Hall. Swamiji's hand still lifted in blessing. Finally I turn the corner and he is out of sight.

Oh time and space; Oh death! Cruel you are to hide our beloved ones. You tear the heart unto pieces, leaving nothing in this world to hang on to.

Goodbye my dear,  
My beloved  
Holder of my heart  
Keeper of a sacred trust  
Knower of deepest wisdom  
God made manifest  
Love personified  
Fulfiller of my dreams  
Guide to my fallen soul  
Illuminator of my Soul  
Goodbye my dear one,  
My own.



Dear Friends, Namaste,

I am writing this while at Anandashram, founded by Swami Ramdas, in the south-west of India.

What a wonderful pilgrimage we have been enjoying here! I came without any expectations of what should happen other than to bring certain friends here. Each day has proven to unfold its own gifts of surprises and revelations.



Pilgrimage, when properly embarked upon, includes its share of adversities, culminating in God giving His darshan, a vision of Himself. This adversity and darshan can be within or without the aspirant. There is a saying, “Wherever you go, there you are!” During a pilgrimage we intensely face ourselves—that is to say, the ego-mind.

“Why then,” one might ask, “go anywhere for pilgrimage?” First of all one should feel drawn or inspired to go. Secondly, the place of pilgrimage should be charged with spiritual vibrancy. Anandashram, with Swami Satchidananda, certainly matches the second criteria, tenfold!

Swami Satchidananda effortlessly awakens Divine Love in all who meet him. Gentle, unassuming, fragrant with sweet, divine emanations, this “reluctant” spiritual guide has been the perfect example of what a spiritual aspirant should be.

From his arrival here at the Ashram Swamiji did every service (what may be called low jobs, as well as high service), packing visitors' suitcases around, scribe-work for Papa and Mataji, helping wherever and whenever it was needed.

Some may imagine that in an ashram all goes smoothly, even blissfully all the time. This fairy tale image does not take human nature into account



or the fact that mentally and emotionally unbalanced people are oftentimes attracted to ashrams. Swamiji has had to face any situation life might have in store for any householder or worker in the world.

Swamiji has met and exceeded every test given him, even those hard knocks given at times by Mataji. As a result of his courageous patience, every rough edge, every scrap that does not belong to the Divine, has been broken away. What stands now is the Divine Image itself, every cell saturated in sacred permeations.

What he will say, if you ask him, is that he is not realized. I recently said to him, “Swamiji, in your form I see Papa, Mataji, and Swamiji all as one.” He said, “No, Papa and Mataji are like mountains, I am down here,” placing his palms downward indicating low down. I replied, “Swamiji, I agree with you in everything, but in this I cannot agree with you.” In fact Swamiji was once asked by an interviewer who he was, and he said, “I am That.” Now, how do you account for this apparent contradiction?

Every realized Master portrays through his teachings and example some particular element of the path to realization, or of realization itself. Papa revealed the universal vision in all he said and wrote. Mataji was the ideal disciple of Papa. Master, Paramhansa Yogananda, was the embodiment of the perfect disciple of Sri Yukteswar (notice in his autobiography how the narrative leaves off with his Master helping him gain faculty with the English language on the steamer to America and then picks the story back up with Sri Yukteswar calling him back to India, with barely a nod to his years as an acknowledged spiritual master in America). Mother’s whole emphasis in her life and teachings was following the universal Christ and going the way of the cross and through the mystical crucifixion.

In Swamiji’s case he has come to represent the ideal aspirant: humble, devoted, ever striving for perfection. He stands as a silent sentinel to one and all for attaining, uncompromisingly, the highest Consciousness. Undoubtedly in his case the river has met the sea; the aspirant has merged into the Divine. Yet he continually points out to all not to be satisfied with partial realization only.

There are many aspirants who rise up in consciousness, indeed they may rise very high. But there are few indeed who attain the supernal region of complete Realization—beyond all constraints of human limitation.

Pause

**Swamiji:** Come again.

Pause

**David to Swamiji:** When I come again, will you be here?

**Swamiji:** Not likely. Not in the body.

**David:** But you will always be here?

**Swamiji:** Yes—I will always be here.

As the import of what he said sank in, a wrenching feeling is in my heart—tears streamed down the face. I hold the hands of this great Master, will I ever hold those hands again? Thoughts of how I once held Mother’s hands as well—now that is no more. Tears flowed freely.

**Swamiji:** I have prasad for you—distribute however you like—20 packets. Swamiji gave me a large box full of prasad.

**David to Swamiji:** This is water from the Ganges, from Gangotri.

I hand Swamiji a silver container filled with holy Ganges water brought to us by Phyllis. Swamiji poured water into his own hand then drank it and touched his hand to the top of his head. He then poured some of the sacred drink into my cupped right hand and I did the same—it was cool, clear and fresh.

**David to Swamiji:** You can of course say no, but you said you would give me a cloth of yours (the one material thing I had asked from him).

Swamiji spoke to Ramdas, who went and returned with a package filled with orange. Swamiji checked it over—spoke some more to Ramdas and some additional item was added.

**David to Swamiji:** My one regret is not seeing Mansi and Venkata Lakshmi receiving their orange cloth [becoming Swamis Maitreya and Chandra, respectively].

**Swamiji:** Yes, the cloth has not arrived yet [from Hyderabad].

Oh precious treasure, holding my dear Swamiji’s hands and looking into his eyes. He notices the tears running down my cheeks.



Gandhiji. They said a devotee can use two measures for gauging spiritual progress:

- That each day one should experience an ever-expanding circle of love.
- That at the end of the day, one should assess whether you treated those around you better than you did on the previous day.

Our expanding circle of love grows daily. Our lives become simpler. Our service to God in all forms deepens and grows.

Love fosters more love and spiritual growth. †

Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram. Hari Om.

## David's Diary Notes

Last Day at Ashram, February 27, 2007, Tuesday: 9:30am

Swamiji is waiting on the porch in his wheelchair for us to come. I approach and prostrate at his feet—fully aware this is the last I will see him for sometime. He has effortless control over my heart, and my heart is pouring out its love. Love, for me, is not a sentimental notion—rather it is the state of love itself that manifest in my heart center. Now my love flows like a magnificent river—without beginning or end.

I hand Swamiji some items I have brought for him; Carla hands Swamiji a blank book in which she has written Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram on every square inch of every page, front and back; he examines several pages, “Is it complete?” “Yes Swamiji”. He touches it to his forehead. Chad has a photo of the sunset—Swamiji had once expressed the desire to see the sunset on the horizon but has not been physically able to go. Chad’s sun is setting on the Arabian Sea. Swamiji looks at it, “Thank you for your pictures.” Christine hands Swamiji a donation—all are filled with love and gratitude for all we have received.

**David to Swamiji:** You said yesterday that you will never give me permission to leave Anandashram; may I have your blessings to leave? [Both Carla and I agreed that if Swamiji did not give us leave we would not go.]

**Swamiji:** I give you my blessing.

Ah, such a mixed blessing—granting what I asked for—what I am called to do and what I don’t want to do all at the same time.

**David to Swamiji:** My heart is very full with love and gratitude, and it is very heavy at the thought of leaving all at the same time.

The goal of Purushottama is to realize the Infinite Spirit, formless, beginningless and endless, and also that it is God alone who has manifested as the relativistic universe of duality; within and without, above and below, and beyond the beyond!

The aspirant should be restless until this supreme vision has been attained. If one goes to the sea, one should not come away with a cupful, or even a bucketful, but one should dive in completely and be absorbed in the sea itself, the very origin of the self from the beginning.

Swamiji is that ideal aspirant. He stands as a shining beacon; shaming all lesser lights into humility. One story shall illustrate this. In his early days of sadhana Swamiji went to Rishikesh to practice Ramnam continuously. He says he failed to be able to accomplish his sadhana. It is only upon hearing rarely-given details you come to know he was constantly repeating God’s name with devotion for 22 hours a day—not the 24 hours a day he had aimed for!

Let us find inspiration from Swamiji’s noble life. Let us strive to be “perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Do not despair; God’s Grace is ever ready to lift you into His Divine Perfection and reveal all that has been your Truth since the foundation of this world.

Peace and Blessings from our beloved Anandashram, the abode of Bliss, and I know that Swamiji would join me in saying Pronams—I bow to the light within you and Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram—Victory to God, Victory to the Light. †

*Yogacharya David* (How Swamiji refers to me)

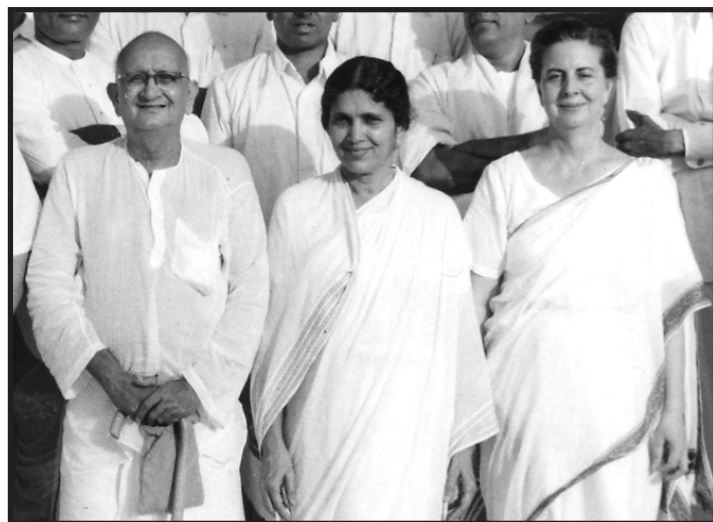
Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel  
thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and  
hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy  
and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine.  
Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

From “Gitanjali” by Rabindranath Tagore



Papa, Mataji and Mother in 1957  
On Mother's Arrival At Anandashram

## How Long, O Lord, How Long?

Excerpt from the talk, "The Power of Love" given in Seattle  
by Mother Hamilton on December 5, 1976

I want to read a poem to you which I wrote when I was in India the first time. As I've told you I went through the Mystical Crucifixion and it was more than mystical—it was actual—because the suffering that I endured was very, very great. I didn't realize at the time I was there that I was going through just the first part of the tremendous experience that would take me 15 years to complete. But because I had been through so much—the consciousness was being released from the physical body—I expected that I was going to have bliss right now; that I was going to have a total upliftment and sit at the right hand of the Father. It didn't work out that way. I looked like nothing human when I came out of that—I was down to 102 pounds—I was very emaciated looking. I had been through everything even unto the point of the experience of death.

And so because Swami Ramdas had put me through this and in some of the experiences which I'd had, he was shown to me as the Father God because he was so universal, so one with God, so tremendous in God in every way that this is the way he appeared to me at that time—and still

Today is Adam's last day. He will be stopping at Papa's cave on the way to the airport, God and driver willing. Chad is intensely compiling a CD of pictures for Adam to take home with him. Janice and George leave tomorrow. They have a little matter of a British Air strike to contend with. Lots of time on hold calling airlines and travel agents.

Breakfast was upma (cream of wheat) and chai today. They have a special pot with no sugar chai. All the wonderful servers from Baskaram and the others know our preferences for the amount of rice and the spicy-ness that we each can tolerate. Balakrishna, our "coffee-tea" man is the hardest working man I've met. He does any job anywhere and very quickly.

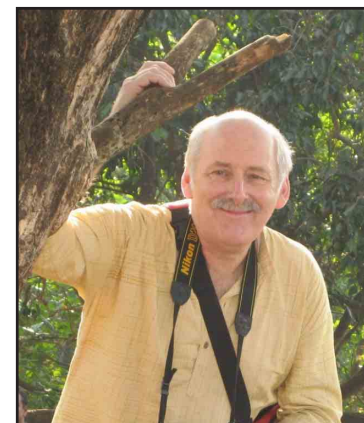
The pronams have increased as our circle of love expands. The light of God beams out from the hearts of swamis, staff (inmates), and humble sweepers and washer women and cow hands.

Two of the most wonderful shining lights are our sisters, Mansi and Lakshmi. They run the kitchen and feed Swamiji and David's devotees and the other pilgrims with divine food and love. I pronam to them whenever I get the chance. They give all credit to God. The harder they work, the more service they are able to give Papa, Mataji, and Ram. They are great examples of sadhana. They dress meticulously in wonderful saris and remind me constantly of the service to God provided by the sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

The ashram is full of love. I find myself walking slowly and reverently from place to place listening to the crows and other birds in the trees. And speaking softly to the poor dogs and cats that have a much more difficult life here, than our cat, Chuck, back home.

I'm finding myself wanting to meditate and chant Ramnam more and more each day. I understand the devotion for this sacred place that Cate and Larry-ji and David and Carla have expressed so deeply to us over the last few months.

We interviewed some nice elderly couples in their 80s about Mahatma



Bruce Stevenson (or Hanuman?)



produce so much light and peace in me.

The backwaters cruise was another wondrous adventure. The lives of the people who live along the backwaters didn't appear to have much material wealth—no cars, no electricity, but they had simplicity and beauty all around them. And later at the beach, we played in the soft waves of the Arabian Sea and then watched a magical sunset of ever-deepening hues that had us so enthralled that our guides had to coax us away.

When it came time for me to leave the ashram, I gave my farewell pronam to Swamiji, who, when I asked if there was anything else I should do to improve my sadhana, responded with the tone of a concerned parent, "Do more Ramnam." Minutes later, I said my goodbyes to everyone and felt so much emotion when hugging David that I could barely stay on my feet.

I have, hopefully, taken a precious seed from The Abode of Bliss home with me, and now I shall do my best to let its bliss take root in my soul.



Group at Beach during Backwater Boat Trip

## Diary Notes

by Bruce Stevenson

### Ashram in the rain, January 28th, 2007

After Mandir and before flower offering, it started to rain. A gentle little cleansing rain. A thickening of tiny droplets. Purifying and christening all of us as we walk to the Bhajan Hall for the flower ceremony.

does. So I decided I would write him a poem and tell him just how I felt about everything. Because one day when he came in, and I been suffering a great deal, he blessed my body and he promised that I would have a new body in Christ as it says in the Bible. Because I asked him, he said yes. So this is what I wrote to him:

With bleeding heart and weary feet  
 I came to Thee, O Shepherd of souls,  
 Seeking to prove the truth of God  
 Which transcends human understanding.  
 Skillfully you probed into my soul  
 Revealing thoughts as yet limited,  
 Vision as yet bound.  
 Master craftsman that You are,  
 You parried my every thrust  
 Designed to wrest the eternal secrets from Your grasp.  
 Like duelists we fought—in turn, advancing and retreating,  
 Intoxicated with the joy of battle,  
 Each seeking to do only the will of God.  
 With what infinite patience You widened the channel of my  
 understanding  
 Until my heart found sanctuary in the Universal Vision  
 Enabling me to offer myself as a fit sacrifice at the feet of God.  
 Willingly, gladly, I surrendered myself to Thee in full measure  
 That the world within might be redeemed.  
 The cost was great, greater still the suffering;  
 But I count it naught, compared with my love for Thee.  
 How can I thank thee for saving my life which is already Thine?  
 Like the Christ I can say, *But for this cause came I unto this  
 hour*; [John 12:27]  
 But—what now, O Lord, what now?  
 Where is the fulfillment of the promise:  
*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my  
 voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup  
 with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant  
 to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am  
 set down with my Father in his throne.* [Rev. 3:20-21]

And further—

*For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* [Phil. 3:20-21]

As you gazed at me in pity, you promised me this,  
Even blessing my body that it might be renewed in Christ.

My faith was complete and you agreed that  
“TO GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.”

This I know beyond all doubt—

I have seen your power in operation,  
I have experienced it within my being.  
I speak to God within you, not His servant,  
Although I know that they are not different.  
The door of heaven is still locked,  
The banquet table empty,  
The throne unoccupied,  
The soul still wears its old garment.  
How long, O Lord, how long?

Do you think to test me further,  
I who given all, who am empty of self?  
Know this, then—

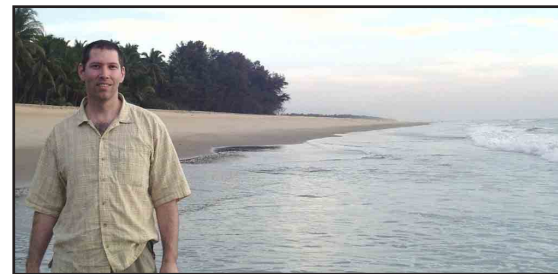
I shall never turn back.  
I shall stand before the door forever,  
Turned into a pillar of stone,  
Mute testimony, that all may see  
My eternal love for Thee.  
Perhaps an angel passing by and seeing my pitiable plight  
Will shed a tear and, in compassion,  
Remind Thee that I still wait without.  
Perhaps, then in Thy mercy—remembering,  
Thou shalt open the door and lift me up  
And I shall be held in Thy arms of everlasting bliss forevermore.  
How long, O Lord, how long? †

[This poem was first printed in “The Vision” Magazine, November, 1960.]

## Taking a Seed of Bliss

by Adam Shinn

Sometime late last summer it came to me in a flash of inspiration—I can go to India in early January. The doors are open. And, when I told David about my



thought of visiting Anandashram in January, he replied that they already had the reservations. God is truly amazing!

I arrived in Mumbai a day earlier than the rest of the group and spent most of the day witnessing the noise, chaos, colors and smells of the city. My heart was so filled with gratitude for finally having my lifelong dream of being in India fulfilled that I savored everything, the noxious and the sweet.

It wasn't long after our arrival at Anandashram that we had the honor of meeting Swami Satchidananda, our Swamiji. As soon as his eyes struck mine, a light seem to shoot right through me. In future meetings with him before making eye contact, I always felt a little hesitation, as one would before jumping into a cold lake on a hot day, but the rewards were well worth the dip. Everyday at 5 pm and 9 pm, we would wait for Swamiji's Darshan. He was not always physically there, but even when we only sat outside his door, the powerful presence kept us company. The gratitude that I felt so deeply upon arrival in India grew much stronger at Anandashram to the point where simply gazing at the photos of Papa and Mataji could bring up tears of joy. Even though I stayed at the ashram a mere 15 days, the experience was an entire lifetime—so different from my everyday reality and full of spiritual lessons, and, of course, Ramnam.

One of our day trips was to Swami Nithyananda's ashram. It started as a predawn journey through a coconut forest, across a shallow lake, squeezing by cows on their way to graze, and up to an almost deserted complex of buildings. After receiving blessings from the monks there, David and I crawled into a cave that had been dug by Nithyananda's own hands. How strange it was that this little dark and dank cave could





Tom Knott



Phyllis Victory



Jonni Anderson and Janice Stevenson



*This is a poem that Swami Muktananda reads every day at the 3:30 p.m. reading at Anandashram. Through daily repetition, this poem took on a deep meaning for us all. Even now we can hear Swami Muktananda's deep resonant voice reciting these verses. David*

## The Sun Shines For Others

The sun shines for others,  
the trees bear fruit for others,  
the rivers flow for the good of others,  
the cows yield milk for others.

Human birth is, likewise,  
meant for doing good to others.

Love gave us willing, caring hands,  
to perform some helpful deed.

Love gave us sympathetic words,  
to answer someone's need.

Love gave us soft hearts,  
to aid another along the way.

Love gave us smiles and laughter,  
to brighten someone's day.

Love gave us all these treasured gifts,  
for helping one another.

Love works through us all,  
so that we care for each other!

[Author Unknown]

## GOD GUIDES

by Swami Satchidananda

**Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram**

**O Beloved Papa, my Gurudev, guide me to correctly note down how you have been guiding me from childhood to mould my life in such a way as to work out your will through this body, making it as your vehicle. I am blessed that you chose to take me unto your fold, guided me and protected me when in body and continued to do so even after you dropped your physical body.**

**You made me feel your presence constantly and thus became my all-in-all. May you absorb me unto Your Eternal Being. I call You God, I call You Papa. As I started calling You God even before I saw You as Papa, I shall stick to calling You 'GOD'.**

GOD was guiding my life from childhood even without my knowledge. It must be only with the purpose of working out His will through His vehicle and mould me for that purpose to what I am today.

GOD made me take birth in a good, cultured, devout but not rich family where I got all love and affection in the human level. God took away my mother—my earthly mother—when I was only six years old so that I should even at that age learn the transitoriness of life. God made my



Christine Baldigara, David, and Jill Hough



Adam Shinn, David, Chad Hickenbottom, Bruce Stevenson, George Baldigara



## Transformation

By Carla Hickenbottom



While at Anandashram, David had asked the group there if we wanted to write an article for the upcoming Journal. I wasn't sure how I could begin to describe the experiences there and what had been given to me, both in terms of inner and outer gifts. I prayed to God that if He wanted me to write something, that He

“show me the way.” Soon thereafter, as I was reading the passages of Mother Hamilton's visit to Anandashram in 1957 in *The Gospel of Swami Ramdas*, the story below summed up my experiences with Swami Sat-chidananda and what it meant to be in his presence. Unless he is telling stories, I can count on my fingers the number of words he spoke to me, but his look brought indescribable peace, bliss, and most of all, love.

*“There is an insect called bhramara. Its work is to transform some other kind of insect into its likeness. It catches hold of some stray insect and places it before it and gives a sting. Then it intently gazes and gazes at the insect. The insect also gazes at the bhramara as it is frightened by the sting. So they go on looking at each other. When the insect turns its gaze away, the bhramara gives it another sting and makes it gaze again. The result of this process is that the other insect changes into bhramara itself.*

*“Sometimes it so happens that the bhramara picks up a wrong insect and so fails to convert it and throws it away. Only the right type of insects are converted. This process of conversion of the insect to the nature of bhramara is known as Bhramara Keeta Nyaya. Such should be the relationship between guru and disciple. The guru gazes at the disciple, pours his grace on him and converts him into his own likeness. That is the type of transformation that takes place in the disciple by the contact of the guru.”*

How wonderful to be able to sit at the feet of beloved Swamiji and to have the ongoing transformation by contact with my own guru, David. †

Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram

father marry again and when I came to know of it, I felt that human love was such that everyone is for oneself, interested in one's own happiness, more than in the happiness of others however closely related.

GOD made me remain detached from home and relatives and I was a stranger there. God made me a good student and made all the teachers specially love me. God gave me first class in almost all the classes and also first class and first in the school in the SSLC exam. God made others in the house promise that I would be sent for higher studies if I came out in first class. God made them also break that promise to teach me that I should not depend on anybody but myself—I did not know then that it was God Himself who was making me and others do everything. God perhaps did not will that I should have higher studies for reasons known to Him only. He found employment through an uncle in his office, when God through him called me to help him, as he was not in good health. God prompted his boss to appoint me as a typist in the office with one year's increment in the salary though I was a beginner and had no experience in the work.

GOD later made me disgusted with the routine work and life and the selfishness of people around. God prompted me to search for a job far, far away from home. He made me apply for a job in the Army. God got me selected as a sepoy-clerk in IA&C. God made me pass through new and varied experiences in life to make my vision wider. Exposed to the new surroundings, friends and discipline, I could learn new lessons of value. God made me understand and also witness certain instances to show how human[s] can stoop themselves to animal nature.

Due to all these and the heavy work, I was passing through a period of depression, which resulted in nervous breakdown. God made my well-wisher officers decide to take me to a psychiatrist without my knowledge. Suddenly I found myself standing before a captain asking me many questions and finally wrote the remark, ‘No mental derangement yet’ and suggested or recommended I should be sent on leave for a change. I was given two months' leave and I went home. On my way back after the leave period, I met my eldest brother at Madras and explained to him the then mental condition of mine. He said he himself had passed through such moods and found that ‘Prayer is the only way to mental peace. So take to Prayer. All will be well with you.’ That advice struck me and



immediately we got some prayer books and a copy of Bhagavad Gita. After I returned to HQ at Chittagong, God made a different person of me. Early morning at about 4:00, I would take cold bath, read Bhagavad Gita, chant Gayatri and other Mantras. My life pattern changed. I had also by then started feeling the presence of Lord VISHNU in the heart.

It may also be mentioned here that I had absolutely no devotion till then. I had, of course, the practice of

going to temples during examination time and pray for success. The other times, I went to temples, were when there were interesting programmes like Harikatha<sup>1</sup> after which a good quantity of Prasad was always distributed. The Prasad was more attractive. At the same time I cannot say I was against devotion. I only felt there was no need yet for it.

The greatest gift that God gave me from these experiences was intense vairagya and a firm decision to entirely devote the future life for the service of God. God mercifully arranged exactly at this time to come in contact with a friend who proved to be a real seeker and helpful for me. He had read many religious books. By his company, God made me read the life of saint Kabirdas, and also made my determination stronger. God made me even boldly say, 'I will realize God in this life itself.'

The presence of God—the form of Lord Vishnu with Conch<sup>2</sup>, Disc<sup>3</sup>, Gade<sup>4</sup>, Lotus flower<sup>5</sup>, Kirita<sup>6</sup>, Kundala<sup>7</sup>, Lotus-eyes, Vanamala<sup>8</sup>,



Vishnu, Preserver of the Universe

by Lakshmi

After a very small and quick breakfast—for now I had no appetite—I returned to my room to pray about the question, to go or not to go. Finally after an hour I was able to calm my emotions down and meditate with an even and observing mind. Immediately a loud and clear voice sounded within, “Go on the boat-trip—something tremendous is going to happen.” I meditated for several minutes more, thanking God and Gurus for that experience and the new found sense of peace on the subject. Coming out of meditation I had the thought, “Today will be a test on patient expectation.”

The day passed and we were all safely on the boat. Beautiful! India seems like a wonderful, alien and yet familiar land. Soon we were on the beach, our feet soaking in the soft sand and warm water of the Arabian Sea. We were all watching the sky turn the most beautiful and bright swami orange. Some broke out in Ram Nam, others laughing and taking pictures. I was silently taking pictures, indrawn, patiently waiting for my tremendous experience.

We made our way back to the boat for dinner. Before it was served I felt a strong pull to meditate on the top deck alone. Sitting in meditation I reflected how peaceful and joyous the day had been—not at all emotional about not being at the Ashram or anxious about any coming experience. It wasn't long before I heard David say my name which I understood to mean, “Time to come down.” No experience before dinner, maybe after.

Before I knew it the boat was docked and we were cramming into the jeep. Though night-time driving in India at 100 Kph is quite an experience, I didn't think that was what God had in mind. Time, it seemed, was running short, but still I felt peace.

The Ashram gates were welcoming yet somewhat confusing for no tremendous experience had happened. Once we all managed to step out of the jeep we slowly made our way back to our rooms. I was thinking about the oversight on God's part when suddenly that same voice was singing in my inner ear once again, “Don't you see? When you do My Will you will always be perfectly at peace and joyous.” I suddenly realized that the tremendous experience was happening from the moment I surrendered to God's Will. †

Victory to God, Victory to the Gurus. Hari Om Tat Sat  
Namaste

## Something Tremendous

by Chad Hickenbottom

When Davidji asked if Jill, Christine, or I would like to write anything for the journal this story came to mind instantly; however, I had no desire or inner direction to write it. I didn't give the story a second thought. Later that night I picked up *Swami Ramdas on Himself* and read in the publisher's note, "Utter joyous resignation to the Divine Will." Now I am already finished writing the introduction to my story!

A backwater trip was planned and, although tentatively, I was counted among the boating tourists. The day came and I found myself in emotional turmoil—go with my own Guru or stay with the one whom I travelled half way around the world to be with, beloved Swami Satchidanandaji.



No sooner had I entered the canteen than Mansi, a wonderful and loving Ma of the Ashram, approached. "Today is the backwater trip; why do you go when Swamiji has given your group special time with him?" (Swamiji, only two nights ago, had given us permission for darshan with him every night at 9:00 p.m.)

I thought I would outwit Mansi with a clever answer. "If my own Guru was not going I would stay."

"Yes but the Guru will sometimes test us to see if we are more interested in pretty sunsets or God!"

So much for that plan! What is one to do against such quick minds? Thankfully some welcome distraction occurred; I was saved a response. I quickly found a spot to eat, as well hidden as possible. What I thought was emotional unrest before, was but a pale reflection compared to the emotional onslaught experienced now.

Kausthuba<sup>9</sup> on the chest, wearing Pitambara<sup>10</sup>, standing on a red lotus flower was felt almost throughout the day and this kept me blissful. All the anxiety had gone and I was buoyant.

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Recently, a mother asked me how I look upon her. I replied that I see her as the center of the universe. If anything happens anywhere, it is felt that it is happening in the universal manifestation i.e. Prakriti and Purusha is activating it.

When I look at anybody, I try to see through the body, to be conscious of the Divine pervading it. When I see someone committing a crime like stabbing or theft, I feel that it is not the individual or the body responsible for that crime as the act is committed by the power of the Divine motivating the body. In short, no individual is responsible for what is done through that body. It is the Divine Power—Divine will.

When I think of a person very often, I consider the person only as a part of the universe as all other forms are. My thought goes to that person often because that person in form must be thinking of this form often. If that form is considered as only part of the universe, there is no chance of attachment.

Attachment is affection given to [a] particular individual limiting it to the body and not taking it as a part of the universe.

When I drink anything I look upon that liquid as God Himself, I am drinking God in that form. When I eat something, I am eating God. When I touch something, I am touching God. When I am thinking of anybody, I am thinking of God as she or he is the part of the manifestation of God. Thus I live, move and have my Being in God though yet to be established in that all the time.

At present, God has given or put me in such a position, where I have to deal with many devotees, talk to them and in some cases see them alone to discuss their problems. Before starting the conversation, I bring to my mind that it is only the Divine in one form talking to the Divine in another form seeking guidance. Mysteriously, the guidance comes spontaneously to the entire satisfaction of the person concerned and she or he goes away cheerfully. Every family has got a problem—not one problem, but many. Every one in the family has got her or his own problem. All these problems, if properly analyzed, are due to the assertion of the ego

to have its own way overriding others' opinions and views. This naturally creates friction and resentment. In such cases, they are told to have Bhajans daily and chanting of RamNam at home TOGETHER which will bring more harmony among them. They are also asked to freely and frankly discuss their problems with all others and settle the differences straightaway instead of allowing them to get accumulated in the mind like layers of dirt which if not washed away in time will create an explosion, i.e. fight and quarrel—affecting and damaging the foundation of love in the family.

It is really strange that devotees themselves are faced with problems. It is understandable if laymen feel perplexed with problems. Devotees are supposed to remember God always and know that by depending upon God, they are guided safe as children are taken care of by their mother. Surrender to the Divine means perfect faith that the Divine Mother is taking care of us and will do whatever is necessary for us, not as we want, but as He wants. The last portion of the sentence is very important. Those who have surrendered to the Divine have no more choice, no more preference. Whatever comes is joyfully accepted and [they] never ask or crave for anything. This is also the highest renunciation, to remain contented in whatever condition He has placed us. †

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#### Endnotes

1. Harikatha is a kirtan (devotional chanting) and storytelling.
2. A conch shell or Shankhya, named “Panchajanya,” held by the upper left hand, which represents creativity. The Panchajanya is the originator of the five elements or Panchabhoota—water, fire, air, earth and sky or space. The sound that evolves from blowing this conch is the primeval sound of creation.
3. The chakra, a sharp-spinning discus-like weapon, named “Sudarshana,” held by the upper right hand, which symbolizes the mind. The name Sudarshana is derived from two words—Su, which means good, and Darshan, which means vision. The chakra as a weapon thus indicates the necessity of destroying one's ego and illusory self-existence and developing the vision to identify the eternal truth. The discus has six spokes and symbolizes a lotus with six petals, thus representing the power that controls all six seasons.
4. A mace or Gada, named “Kaumodaki,” held by the lower left hand, which represents individual existence. The mace symbolizes the primeval force from which all mental and physical strength is derived.

words alone entered into my heart, but the gestures, the utterance and the accentuation. My soul was bound to his from that first evening on, and my love for him was stronger than the first love of a youth for the maiden of his choice.

Later that evening my father took me by the hand and approached the Rabbi respectfully, saying:

“Rabbi, this is my son, whom I have brought to deliver into your hands. If he has found grace in your eyes, be his father henceforth; be as he that gave him life in that you give him the Torah.”

My heart hammered so loudly in my breast, that I was sure everyone could hear it. My hands trembled, and my whole body shook with happiness and fear. The Rabbi took my hand in his, and calmed me. I remember also that he passed his hand over my hair, and it was as though the fingers of a beloved one had been lifted over me in a caress.

“My child,” said the Rabbi, “tell me thy verse.”

This was the custom among us. Every child was given a verse of the Holy Writ, and this was his verse, which was to accompany him in life.

I answered, stammering:

“L'hakshiv l'chochma hozneicha...incline thine ear unto wisdom, and turn thy heart toward wisdom.”

“And for what reason dost thou seek wisdom, my son?” the Rabbi asked.

“In order that I may serve God with an open heart, like a son of freedom, and not with a blind and unseeing heart, like a slave,” I answered, “even as you, our Rabbi, have taught us this night.”

Rabbi Nicodemon placed both hands upon my head and uttered this benediction:

“May those who are like you multiply in Israel, and may it be the will of God that you shall grow in worthiness as a son of Abraham.”

With that he charged his other pupils to receive me in their midst, saying:

“Henceforth he is your brother. Receive him as such and let him be a third with you.”

That same night I said farewell to my father. When the feast was over I gathered my clothes in a bundle and followed him who had begotten me in the Torah. †



placing salt upon it before uttering the benediction, of dipping the pieces in vinegar or honey; I observed the manner in which he ate, quietly, attentively, as though he were preparing a sacrifice before the altar. Thus indeed it was, as he later instructed me; for the table at which men sit and eat should be likened to an altar, and those assembled about it must be pure and respectful, as in a sanctuary. Moreover, when men break bread together and do not converse of the Torah they may as well be eating the flesh of corpses or the sacrifice of idols. Indeed, soon after we had begun to eat the Rabbi lifted up his voice and told the assembly the reason for his lateness.

“This year, as you all know, the Passover will coincide with a Sabbath. Whenever it happens that the first day of the festival is a Sabbath, there arises again, between the sages and the Priests, an ancient division of opinion, and the problem is this: Shall the Passover sacrifice be considered as having priority over the Sabbath, or shall it be delayed until after the passing of the Sabbath?”

...Thus, chiefly for the benefit of those who were not learned in the details of the law, Rabbi Nicodemon explained the nature of the discussions which had kept him till a late hour in the Sanhedrin.

...The guests swallowed eagerly the words of the Rabbi. Their eyes were fastened on him as he swayed back and forth, drew gently at his beard, and continued to preach:

“Our sages have ruled that we shall repeat twice daily the prayer: ‘And thou shalt serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.’ To what may this be likened? It may be likened unto a master who addresses himself thus to his slave: ‘Thou shalt serve me not for the sake of thy pay, but in love.’ But how shall the master know which of his slaves serve him for pay, and which in love? Those slaves that return to him after liberation, and cleave to him, are the ones that serve him in love. God has given unto man freedom of will, that he may choose between good and evil. For God desires that man shall come to him of his own choice, not like a slave that serves for hire, but like a son who serves his father in love.

These were the first words of the Torah which I heard from my Rabbi, and they have never departed from my mind. I stood, as I remember, behind my father, and looked breathlessly at Rabbi Nicodemon. Not the

5. A lotus flower or Padma, held by the lower right hand, which represents liberation or dispersion. The lotus symbolizes the power from which the universe emerges. It represents the concentration of truth or Satya, the originator of the rules of conduct or Dharma, and knowledge or Gyana in a single symbol.

6. Kirita is a helmet.

7. Kundala means earrings.

8. Vanamala is a garland of wild flowers.

9. Kausthuba on the chest: a celebrated jewel obtained at the churning of the ocean, and worn by Vishnu or Krishna on his bosom.

10. Pitambara: clothed in yellow garments. A name of Vishnu.

Vishnu takes form as an all-inclusive deity, known as Purusha or Mahapurusha, Paramatma [Supreme Soul], Antaryami [In-dweller], and he is the Sheshin [Totality] in whom all souls are contained. He is Bhagavat or Bhagavan, which in Sanskrit means “possessing bhaga (Divine Glory).”

Vishnu possesses six such divine glories, namely,

- Jñana-Omniscient; defined as the power to know about all beings simultaneously;
- Aishvarya-Sovereignty, which persists in unchallenged rule over all;
- Shakti-Energy, or power, which is the capacity to make the impossible possible;
- Bala-Strength, which is the capacity to support everything by his will and without any fatigue;
- Virya-Vigour, or valour which indicates the power to retain immateriality as the Supreme Spirit or Being in spite of being the material cause of mutable creations;
- Tèjas-Resplendent, or Splendour, which expresses his self-sufficiency and the capacity to overpower everything by his spiritual effulgence; cited from Bhakti Schools of Vedanta, by Swami Tapasyananda.

However, the actual number of auspicious qualities of Vishnu is countless, with the above-mentioned six qualities being the most important. Other important qualities attributed to God are Gambhira (inestimable grandeur), Audarya (generosity), and Karunya (compassion.)

O Parakshit, the Divine Glory stands beyond reason and argument. It shines by Itself, It is perfect Bliss and is far above Prakriti. Even the Upanishads fail to describe It in positive terms, and only indicate It by rejecting what It is not.

From “Brahma’s Delusion” in *Srimad Bhagavata*

## Meeting The Guru

*[From The Nazarene by Sholem Asch. This wonderful historical novel has three parts and this excerpt is from the third part and is the narrator's own story from his memories of his former lifetime at the time of the Christ. This starts with his family's pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the narrator's first meeting with the famous Rabbi, Nicodemus, called Nicodemon by Asch. This description has all the profound depth of the disciple meeting the guru, regardless of religion. We pick up the story at Simon Cyrene's home, after Simon tells the narrator's father of a prophecy he has recently heard.]*

These comforting words, and others like them, Simon poured into my father's ears. I marked how my father's eyes shone with joy and hope as he seized the hand of his friend and asked:

"Simon, tell me, I beg you, in which house of study these words were uttered, and from whose lips they issued. Blessed be the lips on which rest the message of God!"

Then Simon Cyrene lifted up his head, and he looked into the distance, while the last glimmer of sunlight shone on the nakedness of his skull, fringed with hair. "These words," he said, "I heard from the mouth of my Rabbi, Nicodemon the son of Nicodemon. He speaks to us every Sabbath, after the reading of the Torah, in the synagogue of the Cyreneans, and this is the substance of his preaching."

"Where is he, this man of God? Take me to him; I too would drink now from this well of fresh waters."

"You shall see him this evening. I have asked him to grace with his presence the feast which I have prepared in honor of your son, here, whom you have brought to Jerusalem to learn the word of God. I have invited, likewise other friends. Judah Ish-Kiriote will be there; he is a potter by trade, a God-fearing man, a seeker after God's wisdom, a Phari-



see and the son of Pharisees, one who awaits the Messiah daily. There will come also Hillel the watercarrier, the humblest of men, a saint. I mention last, in greatest love, Nicodemon ben Nicodemon, the teacher of my children. I will bring you before him that he may accept your son among his pupils."

"May God reward you for the loving kindness which you have shown to me and to my son," said my father, and bending down to me he added: "Rise, my son, and prepare yourself for your new father, the Rabbi who will be your instructor in God's ways."

"It is time for all of us to begin the preparations," said Simon Cyrene. "The women have lit the lamps in the house. I must be ready to receive my guests."

My father and Simon Cyrene washed themselves with the water in the wooden vessels which stood outside, then they anointed themselves and put on fresh garments, that they might greet their guests worthily, and not in workaday raiment. I too washed and anointed myself and put off the clothes of my journey.

...Soon the first guests arrived, two dyers clad in washed garments, with colored threads in the lobes of their ears. They were countrymen of Simon's and wore the costumes of Cyrene, tunics of violet and black, and high leather sandals; their heads, anointed with oil, were covered with olive wreaths.

...Thus we waited for the coming of the Rabbi, who arrived when night had fallen. With him came his two foremost pupils, Alexander and Rufus, the sons of Simon. They walked across the yard carrying oil lamps in front of their Rabbi, to illumine his path.

The entry of the Rabbi was the signal for all of us to stand. We waited until he had washed his hands and taken his seat at the head place, which was indicated by the adornments of tapestry and woolen cloths which overhung it. Alexander and Rufus did not sit down with the rest of us, but stationed themselves by the Rabbi, to serve him. How I envied them, that evening, the honor which was theirs to be the servitors of the Rabbi! I looked forward to the day when I too might stand by the Rabbi's side and anticipate his wishes. I did not take my eyes off him for a single moment. I marked with the utmost attention every gesture he made; I learned from him there and then the proper way of breaking bread, of