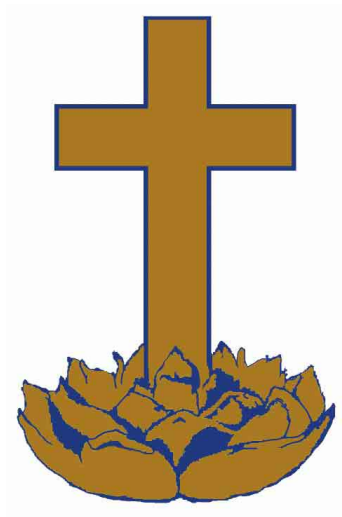


# **The Cross and The Lotus Journal**



**Spring Edition**

**March 2003, Vol. 4 No. 1**

# **The Cross and The Lotus Journal**

is published by

The Cross and The Lotus Publishing  
PO Box 16717  
Seattle, WA 98116

Website: [www.crossandlotus.com](http://www.crossandlotus.com)



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.

Dear Friends,

The year was 1925 when Mother Hamilton first met Swami Yogananda in Seattle Washington. When Mother was invited to meet the Swami, she had never heard of yoga before nor knew what a swami was.

Today what twenty year old would not have heard of the term yoga? The world has changed in so many ways in seventy eight years and a major part of that change has been the influence of Eastern thought here in the West.

The words *karma* and *guru* are in common usage, the Dalai Lama is a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and one of the most recognized personalities in the world. This movement of yoga and Eastern thought into the West was predicted as early as the eighteen hundreds by the great avatar, Babaji.

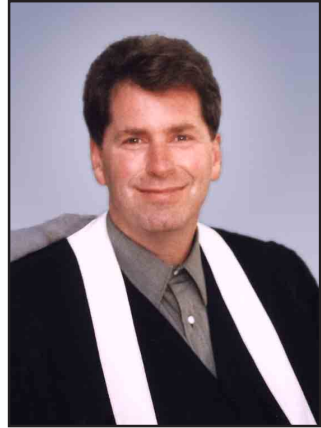
In the month of March we mark the *mahasamadhis* of the great spiritual masters, Swami Sri Yukteswar and Paramhansa Yogananda; March 9th and 7th respectively. These two realized yogis were the direct instruments in carrying out Babaji's will that Kriya Yoga be brought to the West.

Babaji had said there were souls in the West desirous for the soul-awakening methods, such as Kriya Yoga, long practiced in India, the cradle of world religions. In selecting Master, Paramhansa Yogananda, Babaji had a powerful representative for the yogic ideals he embodied. Master had the passion of a *Bhakta* (a lover of God), the lyrical expression of a poet and the experimental genius of a great scientist.

Yogananda's great love of God was refined into profound wisdom in the fire of Sri Yukteswar's tutelage and discipline. Brooking no lapses in attention or surrender Sri Yukteswar helped mold Yogananda into a fit instrument for bringing these teachings to the West; for strength, wisdom and courage would be needed in abundance for the one taking on that role.

Master came, he persevered and he won the West with his heart beating to God's tune, his mind broad enough to embrace all mankind and his unshakable will unbroken by the terrific strains placed upon it.

Yogananda was met by overflowing crowds as he toured the United States, people waiting in long lines for hours in city after city to hear him



speak. He was also subjected to abuse rooted in racism and narrow sectarianism. These indignities, however, never left a stain of bitterness on this great man of God. He had rocks and rotten fruit thrown at him; he was arrested for a crime he did not commit due to the color of his skin. Master fashioned an original motor home to sleep in, as he was not allowed entrance to many of the hotels, again, due to the color of his skin.

Yet Master's love and greatness of soul shone through all these adversities. He knew man's nature that led to such narrow-minded acts; he also knew man's nature that made the infinite Light of God an inherent feature in the heart and soul of every man.

The effect of Master's work changed not only the lives of thousands of devotees but changed mainstream culture in the West. The *Autobiography of A Yogi* has been a spiritual classic for the past sixty years; yoga and Eastern philosophy are now well known in the West; the implications of modern physics confirming metaphysical thought as pioneered by Master have many adherents; pop culture is full of references to yoga-- including Master and his lineage pictured on the Beatle's famous Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band album cover; yoga and meditation teachers abound throughout the land. In addition, great philosophers and thinkers of the twentieth century such as Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell and many others have studied and been influenced by the teachings of the East and yoga.

These changes in the West have resulted in a great change of consciousness. It has penetrated deeply into our collective psyche and continues to uplift the world as a whole. Today, each of us, as devotees of this lineage, has been personally touched by the lives and teachings of these great masters. It is the custom in the East to honor those teachers who make it possible for us to be making spiritual progress now. Reflecting on the lives of Master and Sri Yukteswar at this time of year is fitting.

Some ways I have kept remembrance of these Masters are by reading the *Autobiography of A Yogi* each spring for many years; meditating each day until I make Divine contact through deepened Kriya mediation; making my work a service to the Gurus; making every effort to live according to the injunctions of the Gurus. When I fall short of these lofty goals I also honor them by picking myself back up and I continue to follow the path cut by them through the wilderness of delusion. One of my greatest aspirations is to live my life in such a way that when it is over the Masters of this lineage will find something of value in it and will show a smile of joy at what has been done.

The world today needs yogis, seekers of Truth and Divinity, now more than ever. Let us join together and manifest such a Light that the awakening foreseen by Babaji and initiated by our great line of Masters continues the transformation of this world.

In Divine Awakening,

David

From *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter entitled "I Go To America":

The eve of my departure for the United States found me in Sri Yukteswar's presence.

"Forget you were born a Hindu, and don't be an American. Take the best of them both," Master said in his calm way of wisdom. "Be your true self, a child of God. Seek and incorporate into your being the best qualities of all your brothers, scattered over the earth in various races."

Then he blessed me: "All those who come to you with faith, seeking God, will be helped. As you look at them, the spiritual current emanating from your eyes will enter into their brains and change their material habits, making them more God-conscious."

He went on, "Your lot to attract sincere souls is very good. Everywhere you go, even in a wilderness, you will find friends."

Both of his blessings have been amply demonstrated. I came alone to America, into a wilderness without a single friend, but there I found thousands ready to receive the time-tested soul-teachings.

Mother Hamilton describing her first meeting with the great Master, Swami Yogananda, in 1925:

As he brought his message of eternal Truth to a close, he [Yogananda] said that he would like to shake hands with everyone there. Not a person moved from his seat until the Master walked down the aisle and stood at the door. Then, quietly, one by one we stood and waited in line for the blessed privilege. As I moved closer to him, it seemed as though I must fall at his feet so overpowering were the emotions which shook me. Suddenly, I was before him and as he looked into my eyes and held my hand, my soul dissolved into light, and wave after wave of electricity coursed through every atom of my being. In that moment, Master and disciple met to be linked together for all eternity. [From Talk No. 800616]



## **Explore the Cavern of Your Heart**

**A Talk Given by Mother Hamilton  
in Seattle, Washington  
on December 15, 1976**

I'd like to read to you from Swami Ramdas's writings tonight. This one is entitled "Man's Supreme Quest".

Man's supreme quest lies in his researches into the realm of the soul, spirit and God. Deeper he dives into the abyss of truth, more wonderful grows his experience. He finds worlds are involved in worlds and, as he progresses inward, subtler and subtler are the plains of existence he meets.

As he passes through them he beholds supernatural visions of divine forms, hears the sweetest strains of celestial music, senses the intoxicating fragrance of heavenly aroma, is dazzled with the flashes of immortal radiance, experiences an unutterable rapture of pure bliss. And at last reaching the utmost confines of the soul and the inner worlds, plunges into the infinite expanse of a static silence and immutable peace wherein everything is not, wherefrom everything emanates.

Further journey ceases here because now the traveler and the destination have resolved into one as the river merges into the ocean. This transcendent experience makes the soul realize not merely an inner unity of all life and existence but also the absolute oneness of all visible and invisible worlds of manifestation. Now he feels both his physical and psychical being in all its aspects is utterly divine as also the vast phenomena of nature before him.

The ecstasy and light of the divine fill every pore of his body and every atom of his physical frame responds to the thrills of delight, originating from his immortal spirit which is now one with the cosmic soul and the great basic ultimate godhead who is all-inclusive, and all-transcendent. Love now blossoms in his heart like a full-blown flower. The world is a playground of his liberated spirit. His bliss and freedom passeth all description. Childlike innocence pervades his entire being. Divine splendor illumines his face. He rolls in ineffable ecstasy. He knows he is immortal.

I'd like to read to you tonight from Romans, Chapter 10 beginning with verse 1.

1. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.
2. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge,
3. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves into the righteousness of God.
4. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.
5. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.
6. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*.)
7. Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)
8. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

9. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,

11. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

12. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

13. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15. And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

I would like to talk to you tonight about exploring the cavern of your hearts. This is a tremendous enterprise. You know so many times and most of the time we are filled with impulses and our lives are governed and led by these impulses. We never, or seldom ever, sit down and consciously think things out, decide where we stand in life; what is in our in our consciousness, what is in our heart. We don't do that. But rather we just go on buffeted about by the winds, and these winds are of impulse. We have to take the reigns of government in our own hands. We have to use the reason, the intelligence that we were given, the discrimination and make them count for us.

Now when we put our feet upon the spiritual path, we don't know exactly where the journey is going to lead us. We only know that there is a tremendous urge within us to seek something that we haven't had before. We have indulged in all of the things of the senses and we have found them wanting, at least to the degree where we are unhappy about our lives and we want to do something to improve them. And so we start searching. Many times we will go to this church or that church, to some lecturer or other, to hear this teacher or that teacher. Then we come to a minister, a priest, a rabbi perhaps and gradually as we go step by step, the consciousness expands and the cavern of the heart opens. Now there are many people

who come to me and I'm sure they do to many other teachers and tell me that they feel a dryness within themselves, that with everything they have they want to love God. And they ask me to put that love in their hearts for them. I can only pray that God Himself will reveal that which is already within them, if they would open all the channels of their beings and let it come forth. The channels of my love of my heart are open at all times, pouring forth to all who come before me. I give of myself and everything I have every moment of my life.

I've been reading some things with regard to my Master's life lately that have come to my attention and I find it very interesting to find that in many cases our lives have been parallel. Apparently his body went through a great deal of illness, a great deal of pain constantly. He worked out the pain for many in his own body. And many times the disciples would come to him and say to him, as many of you have done to me, "Master, why don't you pray to God to heal you?" And he, like I, have said, "I cannot pray for myself." And this is the truth. Because, if you are totally surrendered to God, if your faith in Him is whole, if you have realized your Oneness with Him, you cannot pray to Him; you would but be praying to yourself. Now when someone else comes and says, "Mother, will you pray for me?" That I can do and that it also said that he did. And in all that I read in this excerpt from his life, our lives were identically parallel. This is not strange.

I don't know that I ever told you or not, but one time I had a student who was very deeply interested in astrology and they were especially interested in mine and so without any help from me or advice about it, they undertook to cast my horoscope. And so then they went a step further and they couldn't find the exact hour of Master's birth but they did find where he was born and the year and the date. And then having made up Master's chart, they put the two together and he said that it was the only time in his life that he had found two charts that indicated a perfect marriage. Now there was never anything personal in our relationship and yet, for all of the years of his life, and of all the years since, I have been glued to God in my Guru. And that love affair, that romance, was so tremendous that it took me to the depths and it took me to the heights. It gave me inspiration, it gave me incentive, it gave me the will and the desire to go forth and to pattern my life after his. I could not seem to rest until I had reached the high pinnacle on which he found himself. Just imagine what this man did with his life! He attained his own God Realization and as a result of all that he went through in the spiritual sense, he is even today (and he passed on in 1952) changing the lives of countless thousands all over the world. And

as he himself said, if only one soul goes all the way to God, twenty-five generations will follow after him. What a tremendous thing that is!

Sunday afternoon we had beautiful entertainment from all of the gifted people in our group. And I'm very grateful to them for putting forth this effort and giving us the privilege of listening to them put forth from the great gifts which God has given to them. Everybody worked hard and it was an absolutely perfect performance. And it is beautiful to see all of this love and this service to God in these forms. And we had a beautiful turn-out and I'm sorry that some there were who missed it because--I'm sure there must have been good excuses-but it was really something to remember and I shall remember it all the days of my life. But as I sat there and looked around me, I thought of something which perhaps to some might be ego, but I didn't mean it in that sense at all. I looked around and I saw this tremendous gathering and I saw the work that had gone into it by all of these wonderful souls to make this a perfect entertainment and dedication to Christ at this particular season, and I thought, "this is all because I, one little kid, loved God enough to go all the way and find Him within myself." And as a result of that, He sends all of these beautiful, wonderful souls before me.

And we are growing; we are gathering more and more all the time. And I'm seeing the truth of what Master says because right in this group now we have three generations. It's a wonderful thing. I hope I see four or five before I leave. But it is beautiful to watch. And just think if each and every one of you put forth that same amount of effort, somehow got within yourself that inspiration, that incentive, that will to go all the way no matter what the cost, then each one of you could be a candle on a hilltop, lighting the way for others to find that light and that peace and that glory within themselves. That is what life is all about, that is our purpose for being here, to be the way-showers.

But before you can show the way you must have gone the way. Before you can be what you should be in God, you must have done that which is necessary in order that you might be the example. There is no holding back. And what is it you would keep for yourself? What is it? Nothing. Because each of us came into the world empty handed and each one of us is going to go out the same way. The only thing you take with you, you see, is that which you have gained in the spirit. Now some people don't gain, you see, by the time they have left. They have gone backward. And you think with sorrow about such ones because you know that because the law is what it is that sometime or other, whether it be in the next incarnation or

the one following or the one following, that somehow they are going to have to pay a price and they're going to have to work their way back. Because there is no getting away from the fact that each and every soul in this universe must one day turn its face toward God and must find union with the Lord.

So, why do we hesitate? Why do we continue to punish ourselves and to go through all the ups and the downs and the joys and the sorrows when we could release ourselves from all of that and sit on top of the mountain and be totally free, totally lacking in responsibility? Now you see we are taught to pray, we are taught to meditate, but actually instead of teaching us to pray, we always pray for **things**, you see, of some kind or another, even if it be for the realization of God Himself. We make ourselves beggars. Why do we not carry on conversations with God? It is a beautiful, a wonderful thing to carry on a conversation with God and to actually hear Him answering you. It doesn't always mean that you hear a voice, but you see His is the still small voice, and when it says "still", it means exactly that. It is a thing of feeling and knowledge combined; you feel something when you speak to God and He is answering you. And there comes a specific and definite "knowing" that He is speaking to you; He is giving you instruction. He is guiding you, He is protecting you, He is warning you or He is letting you know of glad tidings.

I have had loads of these conversations with God and as I have told you my experience with Him is totally intimate. I don't stand in awe of Him constantly. And this doesn't mean that I am disrespectful to Him at all, but He is my father. I respect Him with everything I have. Yet I have fun with Him. I know He understands me; why should He not? He made me the way I am. And if He doesn't like the results, it's up to Him, you know? And if we'd sometimes think about that and stop worrying so much about things; as long as we do the very best we can in assuming our responsibility to God and to society, that's all our Father expects of you. And when you do that part of it, you can afford to relax and leave the rest up to Him. Because if you want to carry the whole burden, if you want to constantly be worried that you haven't done enough, that you're not doing this right or something else, you're going to be in a sorry state. And that's a pure ego-trip, because still it is this ego which is sitting on the throne of God, telling itself it is God that has to do everything.

But there is a time for prayer. There is a time for conversation. And then, above all, there comes a time for surrender. And that is what I have just been talking about. Because after you have prayed to God (and some-

times all of your prayers aren't answered because God in his wisdom keeps us sometimes from being burned in the fire of our own desires) and we don't get our prayers answered just the way we would want. Do you want to know why? Because we're asking for something that would gratify us in the human sense, gratify our human senses. And God in His infinite wisdom knows that this isn't going to be good for us, so He keeps us from getting our prayer answered. This is true. He keeps us from getting our prayers answered. And yet, as we look back as time goes on, we see how very wise He was, not only wise but kind in the fact that He kept us from having that particular prayer answered. He was being very gracious to us. He was protecting us. The love affair with God is the greatest thing in all the world. And after you've prayed to Him, after you've had the conversation with Him, then you go into the silence of your soul and you surrender yourself and everything you have to Him.

In the beginning, as all of you know, you sit on a straight chair with a woolen blanket underneath you. The spine must be perfectly straight, the chin out this way and the hands right here at the juncture between the hips and the thighs. Now you don't want any strain on your back because that is going to again put you in body consciousness. You want to be free from all that, you want to be free to put your full attention upon Him. And then fix your full attention at the point between the eyebrows. This is the point that we call the *Christ Center*; in India they call it the *Krishna Center*. It is the seat of the spiritual eye and after you've done this, gradually swing this current (which you will feel and see and experience as light) up to the top of the head. And when you have it in that high position, which is the center of the lotus, then with everything you've got repeat the word of God.

Now there are many words of God that can be used, but the greatest one is the word *Om*. This is the word that comes forth from the heart of God. It is that power, that force, that sound which comes from the depths of His Being. And when you repeat that word *Om* ... (Ramdas' chant was *Om Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram*). As probably many of you know, his father was the one whom he took as his guru, because he gave him the chant, the *mantram* that took him all the way to God. But in the beginning he just gave him *Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram* and so Ramdas was wise enough to put the word *Om* first, so it is at the beginning and at the end of this chant at all times. So you chant the name of God, until you become one with it, until you feel and see some of the things that were described in this article of his which I read you tonight. And then you repeat His attributes;

think of the wonder and the beauty of God, His power, His love, His infinite compassion and mercy. And then go deeper; go deeper still, until you come into the silence of your soul, until you are face to face with the ocean of Infinity. And then dive in, go beyond all duality and feel yourself merge with that One who is all in everything.

The religion that takes you only to the realization of the self within and doesn't go any farther is very, very limiting. Because you cannot deny a superior intelligence at all; you cannot possibly do it. And you see, what you do is to come face to face with the infinite spark, which is your part of God. Then, after you have done that, you must try to go beyond that to higher and higher realms until you realize that that spark is becoming a part of that tremendous flame of light which controls, governs, creates every part of this universe and all of the universes beyond. Go into the stillness of your soul and realize your oneness with Him. It is very difficult to come out of such a state, but if you make the effort you can. And when you do, you will find that the change that has taken place when you have had this tremendous experience, is beyond your ability to describe, because you see only the light of God everywhere, in every soul that you meet. Now you say, "how is it possible for such a one, who has had such an experience to come out and to teach on the human level?" You have to come down out of the higher realms of consciousness and meet each individual at their own level of consciousness in order to work with them. And so as I have told you before, you play whatever part is necessary—not for you, but for them in order to test them, in order to train them, in order to change them and gradually mold them from the human to the divine.

This has to be done and it has to be done by one who knows what they're doing. One who has themselves gone the way and been through the fire, paid the price because otherwise it is the blind leading the blind. I teach neither Hinduism nor Christianity and yet I teach both. But what I teach is a way of life, a science of being, that not only encompasses everything within you... I try to help each and every one of you who come to me in this connection to broaden every aspect of your life. To help you to reach and become the highest of which you are capable of reaching and becoming. But also, then envelops to blend yourself in with all of God's creation because "no man is an island", no man can separate himself from the whole. He cannot isolate himself. Because he is part and parcel of this tremendous force, this tremendous intelligence which all came from the great part of God.

Now, when you are practicing these various techniques, have your full attention not upon the technique, not upon time. Forget time and fix your full attention upon the Lord, not upon anything else. Then, concentrate on your heart, explore the cavern of your heart. Open wide the doors and you will feel then... the union between love, which is feeling, in the heart and the conscious intelligence which you experience at the Christ center and the two working together, you see, make a perfect whole.

We are always exploring the cavern of our heart in the human sense. We're looking for human love. All the girls look for a knight that's going to come on a white charger. And the men look for the perfect ideal in the women. Although this, on both sides, is not as it used to be and it is too bad because it's a beautiful, beautiful concept. And people lose something very sacred, very mystical, very precious when they don't look for that type of thing, but rather that they indulge in the things of the senses before they have had the tremendous union which marriage itself brings. It is a shame that this happens.

But if you have this divine romance with God it extends beyond all human feeling and each experience which comes to you, in the human sense, brings perhaps some joy, but it also brings sorrow. But through the experience which comes from each incident in your life you will find the expansion of the heart. You will find additional knowledge learned and gradually you will find that more and more you are able to control yourself, be master of yourself, and either accept the situation or give it up immediately. It doesn't make any difference which. Why? Because your love for God has superseded every other aspect of human love. Not that you don't love, but your love for that one has been so great that it is extended to the many and there is no longer the personal need for possessiveness, for feeling "this is mine." Because **all** are yours then. But above all you have that union with that one Great Infinite Beloved. That One who is there right in the cavern of your heart, waiting for you to open the door.

When you find Him it isn't necessary anymore to come to me or to anybody and say "Mother, pray that I may find love for God in my heart." Because that love will automatically come. Maybe your mind is uppermost in the beginning, but the day will come if you keep at it and you practice loving God that's how everything comes into perfection, through practice. If you don't experience it, visualize it. Visualize how you think it will be and one day it will open the doors of your heart and that love will pour forth like a flood gate. Open and the ocean comes forth.

And when it does, everyone you come in contact with is touched by it. No matter where I go, I observe the reaction of people to God in this form. Not from any sense of ego at all, but from the sense of the service that my love for God is doing for Him. And I see that love pouring forth to me so greatly that sometimes I could sit down and cry, I am so filled with joy but I am also filled with a deep humility. And I say, “Why I, God? How can You have done this with me? What have I ever done to deserve it?” And, you know, the only thing I’ve ever done is to love God and my guru with all my heart and my mind, my soul and my strength. And to serve them with every part of my being.

I have told you before and I tell you again and I will probably tell you many times in the future that there is nothing that He would ask of me that I would not do. Because I belong to Him with everything I’ve got. You see, I do anyway, as you do but I have realized that I do. And I know that before when I thought I did not belong to Him that this was just a dream. Because He brought this whole creation into being and all of the creatures in it and I was one of those creatures even as you are. And I came from that great Heart and that great Love and I cannot be separated from it. But in the beginning we think we are. We think we’re something special. We think we have so far to go. Or we think the other fellow isn’t as far as we do. And it’s all pure delusion.

Who is it that thinks this? It certainly isn’t God within yourself, because He knows. It is that human ego which lives in the sin of separation. And through that one sin of thinking that is separate from God, all the rest of the so-called sins are committed. And keep people in bondage. We need freedom but we don’t need freedom in the sense that we misuse that power of freedom. We need freedom to worship. We need freedom to be ourselves, but our God-selves. Not the little self which, in truth, doesn’t exist. But the God Self. And if you will go in the cavern of your heart, if you will explore the depths of your soul and go to the deepest corner of your mind and clear it out of everything but your consciousness of Him, your longing and yearning and love for Him, you will find that there’s only One everywhere. And that He resides on the throne of your consciousness and the altar of your heart.

---

Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,  
The men below and saints above;  
For love is heaven and heaven is love.

[From *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* by Sir Walter Scott]

## St. John of the Cross

by John Durkin\*

In the 1530's in the Old Castile area of Spain the son of a wealthy silk merchant family, whose ancestors had been forced to convert to Christianity from Judaism, was traveling in his family business and fell in love with a beautiful weaver in one of the nearby towns. You know the rest, right out of Hol-



lywood; God has been writing this stuff since the beginning of time. The woman probably was of Moorish heritage and the rich family could not accept her because accepting her into the family might open the whole issue of their own background. As a result the new family constantly was forced to live on the verge of starvation. They had three sons but the father and middle son would soon die as a result of malnutrition, overwork, and disease. Their youngest son, from Jewish and Moorish ancestors, was born on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1542 and named Juan de Yepes y Alvarez. He was to become one of the most recognized mystics in the world, St. John of the Cross.

Through an incredible series of circumstances John graduated as a top student from one of the best universities in the world. He was ordained as a priest in 1567 and in that year met a dynamic nun who changed his whole life as he did hers. She was St. Teresa of Avila (more about her in the next edition of this journal), about 27 years older than John, and already involved in the reform of the Carmelite order. She convinced him to join her movement, resulting in an unfolding drama that engulfed both of them for the rest of their lives. They were completely different in temperament and approach to issues but were united in their commitment to union with Christ and reform of the Carmelite order.

The contradictions and drama that God built into John's life in the beginning continued through his life and beyond his death. John wanted nothing more than to be a simple monk; God was having none of this however and filled almost all of his life with leadership and administrative duties. John was seen by those in his care as a gentle and supportive man but was

---

\* Center Leader, Victoria, British Columbia

arrested by those who opposed him and subjected to physical and psychological abuse meant to curb his headstrong ways. While he was imprisoned he wrote the first 31 stanzas of a poem called *The Spiritual Canticle* as well as three shorter poems. Soon after he escaped from his captors, he completed other works including his most famous poem, "Dark Night."

At the end of his life John was attacked by officials within his own reformed movement and stripped of all administrative duties. Attempts were made to discredit his position, to have him removed from the fold, and to accuse him of inappropriate behavior. While these maneuvers were going on John developed an infection and a sore on his foot; soon ulcers appeared on other parts of his body. On his deathbed John asked his fellow monks to read the *Song of Songs* (Canticle of Canticles) from the Bible. At midnight the bell of matins rang. John's dry wit came through with, "I will say matins in heaven"; he died about midnight on December 14, 1591.

The surrounding population immediately swarmed the priory to receive the blessing of someone they knew to be a saint. They tore pieces from his clothes, his bandages, and even bits from his body. Even in death the introvert who preferred to meditate hidden in the outdoors became part of a huge public spectacle. The process of beatification started 20 years after his death, soon enough that even his older brother could testify as to the events of his life. He was beatified in 1675, canonized in 1725 and declared a Doctor or great teacher of the Catholic Church in 1926. Now you can type his name in any search engine and get thousands of "hits."

God's final twist is that St. John of the Cross, the man who loved everything and everyone and who wrote poems of such ecstasy and joy, has come to be associated with something kind of spooky and painful, the so-called "Dark Night of the Soul." Our spiritual Essence may travel through dark nights but is always Divine. Perhaps it is just another case of God's hiding the truth in plain sight.

My edition of his collected works is a 737 page translation by Kavanaugh and Rodriguez. John probably considered his commentaries to be his most important contribution; indeed his poetry occupies only 36 pages in his collected works. God doesn't agree apparently, as John is most honored in his country for his poetry. One small sketch called *Christ Crucified* survives; Salvador Dali used this drawing as the basis of his painting of the same name. This painting is by far the most sold print of Dali's works. John's sketch also has been the basis of innumerable sculptures, jewelry, and religious artifacts.

St. John recognized that God was involved in his life and maintained an attitude of equanimity despite apparent contradictions, difficulties and setbacks. God's plan does not arise from, nor can it be understood by, the intellect. Still he must have been bemused by the directions his life took and would have been startled to find that God had arranged for his life and writings to become known throughout the world.

The "Dark Night" is one of St. John's most famous poems.

One dark night,  
 Fired with love's urgent longings  
 -Ah, the sheer grace!-  
 I went out unseen,  
 My house being now all stilled.

In darkness, and secure,  
 By the secret ladder, disguised,  
 -Ah, the sheer grace!-  
 In darkness and concealment,  
 My house being now all stilled;

On that glad night,  
 In secret, for no one saw me,  
 Nor did I look at anything,  
 With no other light or guide  
 Than the one that burned in my heart;

This guided me  
 More surely than the light of noon  
 To where He waited for me  
 -Him I knew so well-  
 In a place where no one else appeared.

O guiding night!  
 O night more lovely than the dawn!  
 O night that has united  
 The Lover with His beloved,  
 Transforming the beloved in her Lover.

Upon my flowering breast  
 Which I kept wholly for Him alone,  
 There He lay sleeping,  
 And I caressing Him  
 There in a breeze from the fanning cedars.

**When the breeze blew from the turret  
Parting His hair,  
He wounded my neck  
With His gentle hand,  
Suspending all my senses.**

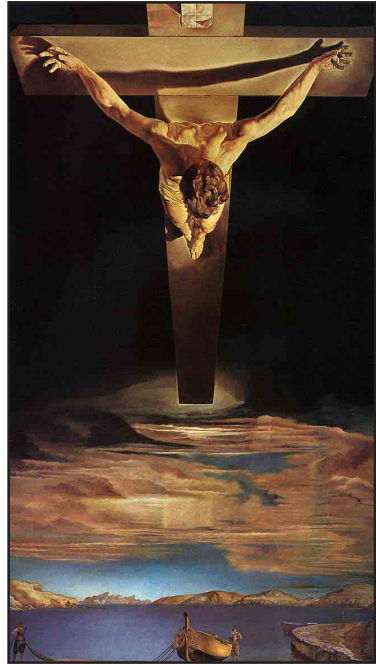
**I abandoned and forgot myself,  
Laying my face on my Beloved;  
All things ceased; I went out from myself,  
Leaving my cares  
Forgotten among the lilies.**

St. John used two books to comment on the first two stanzas of this poem so I will not attempt to explain it in a few lines. There are two nights referred to in the poem; each of these nights has active and passive aspects. The first stanza denotes the night of the senses where the spiritual aspirant gradually learns to control inordinate attachments

in order to find what the heart really wants. Sometimes people get confused and think that austerities and control are the point, going even to the extreme of making it a kind of contest to see who can have the greatest control. The point is getting to a feeling of detachment from our desires without falling into the greater trap of adding the desire for no desires.

Sometimes St. John is presented incorrectly as a model of negation and deprivation. Mother Hamilton said that she tried the path of negation and abandoned it in favor of a path of seeing everything as God. At the same time she entreated us to keep our attention only on God. St. John saw the path of detachment not as negation but as a freeing of the soul from inappropriate energy loss, to use modern terminology, so we could keep our attention on God. Both Mother and Papa Ramdas entreated us again and again to abandon everything but the direct knowledge of our oneness with God.

The second stanza refers to the night of the spirit. In the active sense this night refers to making appropriate decisions that lead to more likelihood of union with God. During the passive night of the spirit God acts on us to prepare us for our union with the Bridegroom, with Christ, with Universal Consciousness or whatever term you feel denotes the same prin-



ciple. God acting on us may very well feel like we have been abandoned or are being punished. Indeed children may feel this way when parents leave them at school for the first day or make them act in particular ways. But the parents are demonstrating love and indeed also may be suffering when they see their children suffering. It still has to be done. Detachment from our own desires and acceptance of the reality of God's grace and love are the necessary approaches to this second night.

The word "secret" in the poem needs a brief comment. "Secret" does not refer to some technique or path that some know but that is hidden from others. The secret is God's secret and can not be learned by the intellect or guaranteed by some particular group of behaviors.

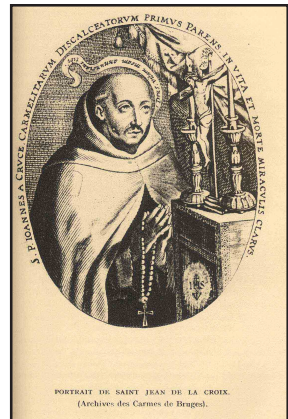
The final stanzas of the poem describe the joy and the ecstasy of union with the Divine. St. John used images, including bride and bridegroom, from the *Song of Songs* in the Bible as the basis for his poem. However, "Dark Night" carries its wonderful message even for those who have not read the *Song of Songs*.

In "Dark Night," as in all of John's poetry, the primacy of God's love for us is the essential message. God's reaching out to us leads to our union with the Divine, if we are receptive. We aid this process by controlling inappropriate desires and by accepting the reality of God's great love even during times when we might feel abandoned. The message of St. John of the Cross reaches from sixteenth century Spain to join that of the great spiritual leaders from all backgrounds to show us the way to the continued joy and ecstasy of realizing our true nature.

## More on *The Song of Songs*

by John Durkin

Solomon's *Song of Songs* or *Canticle of Canticles* from the Hebrew Bible is a complete and sometimes scandalous enigma to most people. *The Song* has given rise to a rich plurality of uses and interpretations: over the millennia it has been treated as an oriental love poem, as a piece of wisdom literature, as a work of erotica, as the impetus for worship and mystical expression, and



as a resource for lyric poetry in the western tradition. Perhaps no other book in the biblical canon has been approached from as many perspectives. The poem's passionate images have been seen as God's blessing of the love between individuals while also being an allegory of the relationship between God and Israel and between Christ and the soul. Because *The Song of Songs* defies simplistic interpretations, its allegories and symbols have provided a rich source for mystical theology and asceticism.

The poem traditionally has three voices, a female lover or bride, a male lover or bridegroom, and a chorus.

## Chapter 5, King James Version

### **Bridegroom:**

1 I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

### **Bride:**

2 I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

3 I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.

5 I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

7 The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.

**Chorus:**

9 What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

**Bride:**

10 My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

11 His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.

12 His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.

13 His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.

14 His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

15 His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

16 His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

## Lahiri Mahasaya

From the book, *Yogiraj Shama Charan*

by Dr. Ashoke Kumar Chatterjee

Yogiraj expounded – The action which causes an union with God is karma and to remain united with that karma incessantly is *Karmayoga*. Others are all inactions. God is not an Object Who has descended from the sky, this is a state. This is the still state of Prana. Still Prana in a living being deriving vibration has assumed the forms of intelligence, mind, senses etc. and remains enchanted by this. This is a living being's deviated state from his original form or else this is the state of declension from still Prana to dynamic Prana. Stillness is a living being's original form. Dynamism represents a living being and stillness represents Siva. Therefore the action which terminates that dynamism and reverts a living being again to stillness or the action that causes a living being's state to be extinct and elevates him to the state of Siva, is known as *Karmayoga*.

[Krishna speaking to Arjuna, *Bhagavad Gita* 5/6:]

*saṁnyāsastu mahābāho duḥkṣhamāptumyogataḥ*

Dear [Arjuna], ...The state beyond action can be termed to be true renunciation. Then actions are absent. This samnyasa or state of renunciation can be attained through action only. Nothing can be achieved without action.

Therefore Yogiraj has written on 19th June, 1873

*Ab baḍā*

*majāse bekām haye soi kām huā — yāne kuch nahi karnā ehi kām  
huā — baḍā āścarya ki bātne isime hamesā garaf rahanā cāhiye*

– implying that now with ecstasy inaction occurred, this inaction became the real action or not performing anything has now become My action. It is a peculiar fact that it is imperative to always remain in this inaction. Thus the worldly actions which ordinary men consider to be action are regarded as inaction by yogis. Common man is unaware of the transcendental state of Kriya or the state beyond action, therefore that still state is Inaction to them; but to a yogi it is the real action.

## Samuel Barber, Knoxville: Summer of 1915

By James Agee

On the rough wet grass of the back yard my father and mother have spread quilts. We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there... They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all. The stars are wide and alive, they seem very near. All my people are larger bodies than mine, ... with voices gentle and meaningless like the voices of sleeping birds. One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home. One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me. By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night. May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away.

After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her; and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home; but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.

[Compliments of Elaine Cone]

# The Life of A Bhakta

By Carla G. Hickenbottom

I wanted to write about an experience I had with my Guru. It was something that has occurred over a fairly long period of time and has given me the chance to see what it is meant by living the life of a *bhakta*.

What I have seen very clearly in David is that he lives the life of a bhakta. He lives the life of Love. Love of God, family, friends, and everything around him.

The example I want to share relates to what we all have to work with, and that's other people, other personalities in our lives that have, for some reason or another, caused us great harm, hurt, suffering, pain, sadness, anguish—the list goes on. For whatever reason, in this lifetime or some other time, a particular person comes into your life and it seems that every button that can be pushed, every negative strong emotion that you have is associated with this particular person. Sometimes it can even be a culture, religion, or any other number of things.

I was going through this experience very acutely and then quietly observed that a person that had at one time been present in David's soul's past had come back into his life. The person was not at the present time causing any difficulty but the awareness was there that at sometime the person had caused a great deal of suffering and pain in David's past life. I was also going through the similar kind of experience. However, my reaction was quite different than the one I was seeing and observing in David!

In every situation that he was involved with this person, I saw only love, kindness, humor, warmth and sincere interest. I constantly watched for any thread of resentment, anger or even caution towards this person. I never saw or felt any, whatsoever. I remember the story of Papa Ramdas. I recall reading that when Papa's daughter had passed away, a devotee watched closely for a week to notice any sign from Papa that would indicate his sadness or discomfort around this personal loss. Papa just continued to stay absorbed in his Love and Bliss for God; the connection with God never wavered, even during a time when most would be devastated when a beloved child passed away.

I watched David for any deviation from his *bhakti* way; it just never happened. I have a strong intuitive sense and can see discomfort in others very clearly. I never felt, or thought that David ever treated this person any differently than any other of God's children.

David has spoken in depth about the path of bhakti yoga and how he feels that being a bhakta is easier than a *jnani*. Loving God and seeing Him in everything is the way David lives every moment and it's the way I dedicate myself to being.

## From the Koran

(59-60)

For with God  
are the keys of the unseen;  
no one knows them  
but God.

And God knows  
what is on the land  
and in the sea;  
and not a single leaf falls  
but God knows it.

And there is not a single grain  
in the darkness of earth,  
nor anything green, or withered,  
but is in an open book.

And it is God  
who takes your souls by night,  
and knows what you have acquired by day;  
then resurrects you in it,  
that an appointed term  
may be fulfilled.

Thence your destination  
is to God,  
who will then acquaint you  
with what you have done.

[From *The Essential Koran*  
translated by Thomas Cleary]



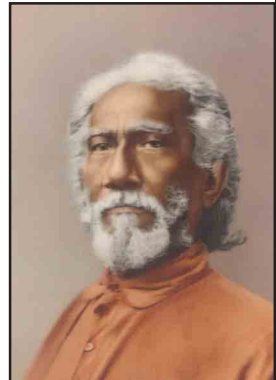
# I AM TOTALLY HE

by Swami Ramdas

In all my thoughts, acts, feelings,  
I know my Master and I are one.  
A stillness pervades my being;  
Love divine thrills my being;  
I swim in ecstasy unending.  
Am one with Him-still His child,  
A radiant part of Him,  
Yet Himself-the Whole.

## Calendar of Events

March	7	Master's Mahasamadhi
	8	Core Values Class in Maple Ridge, BC
	9	Sri Yukteswar's Mahasamadhi
	20	Spring Equinox (5:02 p.m. PST)
April	16	Swami Ramdas's Birthday (Hindu Calendar)
May	10	Swami Sri Yukteswar's Birthday
	23-25	Loon Lake Retreat (in BC)
June	21	Summer Solstice (11:10 a.m. PST)



God the Father resides in the Deep of our Being. There: stillness is vast; conscious awareness is awake, expanded; all potential keeps like a pregnant womb. The direct perception of this sublime state sets the soul free, it acts as a foundation of unshakable knowledge.

Yogacharya David Hickenbottom

The modern trend is to use religion and God as “baits” for mere health, prosperity, and material happiness. One should seek God first, last, and all the time, not for His gifts, but as one’s ultimate Aim. Then he will find, in the abundance of God’s love, all else for which he longs. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Mat. 6:33) In oneness with God, man finds the satisfaction of the heart’s every desire.

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

Every new birth presupposes a period of agony. Every seed breaks up with pain and manifests the charm of its hidden foliage and fruit. The innocent and smiling babe is revealed from behind the veil preceded by the mother’s pains. The glowing stream of gold runs out of the dull ore when heated in the fiery furnace. The aroma of certain leaves and barks spreads out only when crushed and bruised. So also the life which is attended with the most painful experiences exhibits its highest glory.

Swami Ramdas

