

Climbing the Sacred Mountain

POEMS AND PRAYERS OF A WESTERN YOGI



Reverend Yogacharya David R. Hickenbottom



THE CROSS AND THE LOTUS PUBLISHING

CLIMBING THE SACRED MOUNTAIN:
POEMS AND PRAYERS
OF A WESTERN YOGI

BY YOGACHARYA DAVID R. HICKENBOTTOM

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The Cross and The Lotus Publishing
Seattle, Washington, USA

Climbing the Sacred Mountain - Poems and Prayers of a Western Yogi
©2021, The Cross and the Lotus Publishing
ISBN 978-1-7355535-3-5

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Published by
The Cross and the Lotus Publishing
Seattle, Washington, USA
Website: www.crossandlotus.com

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Reverend David, On Mountain Path. 1989.

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Yogacharaya David at Sri Yukteswarji's Altar, India. 1998.

PREFACE

Reverend Yogacharya David Hickenbottom (1954-2019) was a disciple of Yogacharya Mother Hamilton (1904-1991). As a young man, David met Yogacharya Mother Hamilton and he realized at once that he had found his Guru Teacher. The seeker of many years, through a set of chance circumstances, found his teacher—and the Dharma search for God-realization had truly begun. David became a Reverend in 1984, and when Mother Hamilton left her body, she gave the title Yogacharya and her spiritual mantle to David. A new Dharma, a new mountain, and David said, “Yes.”

David gave many talks—well over a thousand—until he left his body in 2019. He gave workshops, wrote blog posts, provided innumerable one-to-one meetings, and led multi-day workshops and retreats both in the US and Canada. He also recounted experiences in a series of private journals where most of these poems were discovered. David, to our great regret, was called to God much sooner than any of us would wish.

When David’s wife, Carla, asked to meet with me the morning after David’s Memorial, she requested that I organize David’s work and teachings for publication. Without a breath, I said “Yes.” Carla and I then met with Reverend Larry Koler and his wife Cate to briefly discuss this devotional project. David had spoken to me much earlier on several occasions about my working with him to publish his teachings. He specifically wanted me to reference some of his experiences by linking them to historical, scientific, and evolutionary processes that support the living dynamic sacred nature of our human condition in this amazing universe. May his presence ever guide this devotional work.

As I began to catalogue the materials Carla gave me, to my surprise and the surprise of many, we found that David wrote poetry. At times he was very prolific, and at other times he journaled more prose than poetry. David wrote regularly in his journals, in these documents he shares his journey up the steep,

sometimes perilous and at other times glorious Mountain. Most of these poems were written in various different journals starting from 1978 to 2019.

I have placed the poems in themes and added dates when possible to show the dynamic cyclical process of his inner and outer spiritual journey. Very few words have been changed, punctuation has been added in places, and titles provided as required. A list of poems and dates is provided in the reference section.

The themes for this collection seemed to arise spontaneously. They are, *The Call and the Response*; *The Path to Purification*; *The Path to Witness Consciousness*; *Homecoming*; *Prayers*; *Guru Tribute*; *India's Gifts*; *Mahasamadhi*; *Aphorisms and Principles*, and *Closure*. Admittedly, as you will see, many poems could fit under various themes. In fact, I am certain that no two people would place them in exactly this order. I humbly submit this compilation with a prayer that David whispered guidance along the way.

David made many pilgrimages to India. He shared his 1998 pilgrimage to India in *My Spiritual India*, a book he completed just prior to leaving his body. Here in this book, poems from that pilgrimage and other India pilgrimages are included, and of course, poems from 1978 onward.

David wrote more poems in his early journals. In the later journals he shared his mountain climb more via narratives of his experiences. Future publications will feature these narratives, along with talks and other writings.

A PERSONAL NOTE

Soon after David started teaching as a Yogacharya, he visited Vancouver, B.C. Canada to give a talk. My friend invited me to the talk. I also had been seeking a spiritual path that connected deeply to some sacred longing in my heart. A path that honored freedom and deep personal commitment. Books from the East had been my guide.

When I arrived, my friend introduced me to David. I then sat down on a couch with a few others and went into silence until the talk started. Soon David began an hour talk. He spoke of Mother Hamilton and Yogananda and the path of Kriya Yoga. As I listened, I felt a magnificent golden sphere form around me.

Pure and brilliant gold. An experience never to happen before or after. The gold was fully around me and 'felt' about four feet away. I was 'held' in this sphere of light until the talk ended. We all said farewell, and home we went. I was silent. Silent. Somehow no words could speak this experience—till now. My mountain had arrived. I had a teacher, though with my skepticism very awake and aware, it took me four years to formally ask David if he would be my teacher. David said "Yes!" Human and Divine: the divine knew right away, the human took four years!

David's poems share his climb up the sacred mountain.

*May his experiences awaken the great inner fire in your heart,
 May your materialistic, mechanistic, habit-based, programmed,
 perceptually imprisoned creative truth break free,
 May the truly human and divinely human sacred activate;
 May your unique Mountain climb bring the highest and best forth to
 this beautiful planet.*

Ruth Lamb, February 3, 2021
 Vancouver, BC, Canada



Himalayas, N. India. 2005

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages, great Masters have spoken of the sacred climb to access Divine-realization, to bring humanity in touch with the highest truth of existence. Yogacharya David Hickenbottom, even as a child, knew there was more than surface life. He sought via the church and through science and philosophy for answers. Then he found a teacher who spoke a new language, one of such deep inner awareness that a whole new world of freedom began unfolding. With his guide, David now starts his sacred climb in earnest. Here he shares his climb and the life experiences he undergoes through poems.

To place his explorations as he climbs in context, we begin with a quote from David's *Cloud Mountain Journal* as he reaches a plateau and follow with a brief outline of his life as he writes it up until 2007.

David reflects:

My life is a dedication to God. In fumbling steps and in precision of movement I steer my life toward that precious Goal. My Great Guru set the course, direction and Goal. She beckons me still from her deeper life. God awakened me to that purpose when my own will would have taken me down to self-destruction, or, at best, to a mundane, senseless life. I pretend no greatness nor even goodness, for there is none other good than my Heavenly Father. Truly I can say wholeheartedly that it is by God and Guru's Grace that I have found my Self.

I suppose it is natural to want all the world to share the sacred mystery that I feel, and it would be sheer arrogance to assume that no others do. But there is the song-bird within that bursts into Divine verse that aches to share that deepest Intimacy, yet finds that longing all the more painful as its song disappears into the void. The pain is nothing but God's constant yearning for His children to forsake their gloom-drenched dream of creation long enough to

join once again in Divine Union. Songs of Angels are not just beautiful voices, but the thrill of vibration that resounds throughout all space and is caught and finds resonance in the receptive soul.

David's poem, *I AM*, gives us an entry into the complexities, challenges and beauty of his climb to the heights over approximately forty-five years of the internal spiritual work that is sadhana.

I AM

In the beginning: I AM.

I was in the stars—the black sky—vast space—so free.

Then I thought, What would it be like to be part of the earth?

Five outer shells surrounded me, and I became earth!

I was red-hot lava: moving, flowing out of the earth—liquid rock.

I cooled—I became solid, hard rock! I was content to be rock and mountain for a very, very long time.

I was aware of growing things on the surface, roots reached down into my earth.

I thought, What is it like to be plant?

The outer shell of mineral dropped away—I became plant!

I was seed—seed stretched out into root—root yearned for light and became branch—branch broadened into leaf!

Life became more active—shorter—juicy and vibrant.

I lived as so many plants—green vines and ferns—I became bright flowers and rose into monarchs of the forest: giant trees.

So many varieties—always reaching for light.

Then I was aware of moving things: insects, worms, deer and bear.

The outer coating of vegetation dropped off and I became animal.

I swam in the sea—I burrowed in the ground—I flew in the sky.

I ran over hills—I drank cool water and ate berries with delight.

I discovered movement, experienced sight and sound through the senses.

I was sometimes frightened and ran! I was sometimes courageous and fought!

Change happened more quickly now—I learned to adapt.

So many experiences—so many changes—the good times and bad were higher and lower now.

Oh—so many forms of animals I tried on—so many lives I lived!

Then I became aware of human—I somehow knew this was the next step.

After my last life as animal, animal dropped off—I discovered higher centers of thought and awareness—even more possibilities.

I became—human!

Now I walked on two legs—my spine went up and down—not sideways like my animal body.

Language was more complicated—and ideas—more ideas—interesting ideas—also more confusing ideas that fought with each other.

And choices—more choices—I entered this human body with a greater desire to learn—learn about the power to choose—choose what I ate—who my friends were—creating good habits—and bad!

Life became more complex—more interesting.

And through my choices—my free will—I sometimes had pleasure—and sometimes pain—what I did, choices I made—brought pleasure or pain.

And oh what a maze—good and bad—high and low—I had the delight of figuring something out! Sometimes I had painful confusion.

As time went on I made better choices—I realized that how I treated myself—how I treated others—made a difference in whether I felt happy or sad.

After a very long time I became aware that I could become more—more than human.

I struggled to learn—to go to the next stage of evolution—but this time instead of a change of body—this required a change of mind, involution.

I was taught to quiet the mind.

When I learned to quiet the mind, the human covering fell

away and those higher centers lit up—like a Christmas tree!
 Now I re-remembered who I was before the lava flow—the plant—
 the animal—or even before I was human.
 I remembered who and what I had always been—before all this
 activity—all of these bodies—all of this confusion!
 The I, who had always been the same inside all those bodies—the
 I that was in the stars—the black sky—vast space—and so free!
 The I AM that existed before even the stars—the I AM that is
 pure joy, love and Light!
 The I AM that touches and is a part of everything that is!
 The same I AM that is inside of you!
 Finally, that last covering dropped off and I knew, I knew the
 forever
 I AM
 I knew God

David poetically shares that he ‘knew’ that he could become more than human, that he could take the human condition to the next stage of its evolution as has been taught by great Masters throughout the ages.

In 2007, David wrote a biographical sketch. He told the story of a young man in search of something of vaster more meaning than he had so far discovered. Excerpts from this sketch place his poems in context as he takes us with him on his magnificent challenging journey up the sacred mountain. The full biography can be found on The Cross and The Lotus web site at www.crossandlotus.com. David speaks of coming into this world:

It is not unusual for a yogi to have early memories or have them come spontaneously when in deepened meditation. My earliest memories come from being in the womb of my mother. One day as I was thinking about God, I felt a powerful force come over me and I spontaneously curled up in a fetal position. As I lay in a tight ball I had the experience of being in my mother’s dark womb; I could hear her heart beating loudly. I was warm, comfortable, and it was soothing to be there. I enjoyed the experience and was content to be where I was. On the frontiers of my consciousness I was

aware that I would eventually be born into the world. I was not looking forward to this and preferred to stay where I was. I knew my coming life would have great challenges, and my mother's womb was a comfort.

At another time I had a spontaneous memory of my pre-birth life. I was with my astral family on an exceptionally beautiful astral planet. My parents were wonderfully wise, loving, joyful and light-filled beings and I loved them with all my heart. I knew I was coming to the earth for an incarnation and I knew it would be difficult. These wise beings assured me that I would be helped by someone who was tremendous during this life. While having this vision I knew they were speaking of my guru, Mother Hamilton.

David goes on to relate how he, as a child and young man, sought for more meaning in life both in church and through studying science. When they came up short he was then directed to study philosophy. Still his questions were not answered.

Then came an opening to the greater mystery:

Finally it came to a head when I was nineteen years old. I remember sitting under the stars on a warm summer's night; it was around midnight. The stars were spread like a carpet of tiny lights above; my heart felt like it was physically breaking right down the middle. I felt a crushing weight pressing down on me and I was breaking under the strain. It was all too much for me and I made a spontaneous prayer in my agony, Oh God, I don't know if you exist, but if you do, if I have never needed you before, I need you now. Help me! Amazingly, with that prayer came an instant relief. I felt that a thousand pounds of weight came off of me in that moment. The tremendous pain in my heart was soothed. I was aware that in a split second, the agony I had been feeling was gone.

Immediately after this unseen help came to my aid, my mind began to reason, Well, since I prayed to God, my mind imagined getting some help and I felt relief as a result, it was my mind, not anything else that helped me. Coming on the heels of this thought some gnosis, a knowing, came to me

and said, No, it was more than the mind. I connected with something wonderful and powerful and definitely beyond me. This was the beginning of my long road back.

David had other search experiences but here we focus on his being invited to a talk by a wise 'grandmother.' David says, "well, this grandmother description did not appeal to me. But... eventually I said yes."

On a Wednesday evening in the month of March, 1974, we all piled into a car and drove to a nice home in North Seattle... Mother began to speak with such spiritual power that I felt as if my long hair was being blown straight back. She spoke of God, of Self-realization, Christ-consciousness and renunciation. Many of the concepts were foreign to me, but I recognized that this was someone who spoke with authority and wisdom. After the talk, Mother gave each one of us a hug. As I stood in line waiting, getting one person closer to Mother, my heart was beating so hard I could feel it loudly thumping in my chest. After I hugged Mother I remember little until I found myself sitting in the back seat of the car I had come in... Each time I would come to hear Mother speak I would wonder if I would feel the same power of God, and each time it proved itself true... Before meeting Mother I would be looking for the nearest exit if someone started speaking about God, but when Mother used the word I knew there was a new and enlarged meaning.

David speaks of his initiation into Kriya Yoga that spring. He says, "I felt I had the means for making spiritual progress, something I could take with me everywhere." He had fully committed to sadhana, a Sanskrit name for spiritual practice. He goes on to say, "How I made contact with one of the greatest Masters this world has ever seen is a great mystery to me. Every day I thank the heavens for this greatest of gifts, a sense of gratitude that does not diminish with time, but only grows sweeter."

The Reverend Mother Yogacharya Mildred Hamilton (1904-1991) met Paramhansa Yogananda (1893-1952) whom she

called 'Master,' in 1925. At that time she had been seeking deeper meaning in her life and spiritual guidance towards a truth she intuited was available but hidden from our daily view. Her first meeting with Master was in Seattle, Washington, USA. David said: "At that meeting, when Master looked at Mother she experienced a shock that went through her entire being."

Over time, Mother Hamilton became a Center Leader, then a Reverend, and finally in front of thousands, Mother Hamilton received the title Yogacharya from Yogananda. She was the only woman to receive this honor, and one of seven in total in his world-wide organization.

Yogananda followed the great Kriya lineage from India that came through Jesus, Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and then Sri Yukteswar who was Yogananda's teacher. Yogananda created a large organization in America. His aim was to "bring all into the spiritual heights he enjoyed in God." And as David says: "This is the work of a spiritual master. A true master makes you feel as if God is very close, very intimate, and very knowable." Yogacharya Mother Hamilton followed in the footsteps of these great masters.

After Yogananda left the body in 1952, Mother Hamilton received inner direction to go to India where she inwardly knew she would find the support she required to fully go through the "Mystical Crucifixion." There at Anandashram, in Kerala, South India, she placed herself in the capable hands of Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai (affectionately known as Papa and Mataji). During months of inner work, Mother Hamilton went through the deepest and most profound spiritual experiences known to humankind. As part of this inner opening, the New Testament scriptures' inner meanings were revealed to her. She saw that hidden beneath the outward story of Jesus was the evolutionary story of the ascent from the human to the Divine.

David finds his way to this great lineage of teachers.

He says:

When I came to Mother I was a definitely a diamond in the rough, not even a diamond but more a lump of coal hoping one day to shine with light like a brightly lit diamond! An inner pain brought me to the path, most unwillingly. And this inner pain kept me on the path when I would have gladly wandered away back into the world.

In his biography David speaks of the testing of his resolve and the testing of his commitment by Mother Hamilton. Not only did she invite David to give a talk to the devotees, she also asked him to speak of his inner experiences. He tells us: “Now I had never spoken to anyone about my deepest inner experiences except to Mother, and now she was asking me to say aloud in front of others my most sacred experiences. Mother had always cautioned against talking to others about spiritual experiences.” David realized the reasons not to talk and now the reasons to talk. “Not easy, this,” he says.

The testing was for a purpose. Ten years later Mother Hamilton ordained David as a minister. He agreed, thinking, “I can serve, I can serve Mother, serve Truth, be a servant of God and to serve the God that is within all people—that I can do! I found a way to be a minister.”

David’s inner growth continued as he developed his inner agreement to find the Divine path. He speaks of a time just before he started to write poetry:

In the fall of 1976, I sat in a meditation group when a sudden intensity came in my body. My attention was powerfully drawn to my spine and brain. Then, to my amazement, I felt and inwardly heard a snap at the base of my spine. A powerful surge of energy shot up my spine to the base of the skull, then crossed through the brain to a point in my forehead. Then a tremendous feeling of heat formed at a point on my forehead; my whole attention was nailed to this point. It was very powerful, uncomfortable and awe-inspiring all at the same time. I had heard Mother speak of such experiences on her own way to realization—now I felt blessed to have this experience come to me. This experience lasted for perhaps five or ten minutes before it began to subside (time is very difficult to measure in such cases). This was the beginning of an inner transformation that was to last for many years.

With his inward journey progressing, David accepted an increasingly large ministerial role, while Mother Hamilton’s health challenges increased as did her resolve to serve God to her last

breath. Serving to support Mother Hamilton came at the same time as full-time school and full-time work and full-time sadhana. Mother, in planning for the continuation of the Guru-disciple lineage, told David that she was going to make him Yogacharya (teacher or master of yoga) and that she would be passing her spiritual mantle on to him.

David shares:

This gift "...came as a deep Mystery, with inner potency and meaning that continues to unveil itself to me through the passing years. Far from feeling I deserved such an accolade, I felt deeply humbled and prayed that I would acquit myself to whatever capacity God would give me." David also says, "...I, to the best of my ability, put my shoulder to the wheel of this great Work begun so long ago."

On January 31, 1991 Yogacharya Mother Mildred Hamilton entered Mahasamadhi, a yogi's conscious exit from her body. David knew that Mother Hamilton was now in her light body. At this time David says his task was "...to find her in her universal Presence beyond the physical realm." And that decision plus other life decisions led David to what he calls the dark night of the soul, that started in 1992.

At this time I took a leave from ministerial duties as I felt I was in no condition to help others; for, I was entering a dark night of the soul. Mother described this dark night coming at a time when the aspirant has almost continuous communion with God, then all sense of connection disappears. This was my case, and it was to last for two years. Meanwhile I was working fulltime, going to school fulltime, working part-time in an internship, and experiencing a deep emptiness inside that had no solution, but to go on. Never did I doubt God or the path I was on; what I keenly knew were my own errors, all the ways I lacked the spiritual qualities I knew that I should have, and most of all how familiar God had been to me before, and now with the curtain drawn, how helpless I felt to get that inner Presence back. There was no joy for me and I struggled just to get through the day.

Time passed:

One night I had a vision. I was walking along a path in the desert. This desert was so beautiful, green and lush with flowers like springtime. The path I walked on was spongy-feeling and the air smelled delicious. I felt God. Oh, it had been so long! Like parched ground receiving fresh water I soaked up the feeling of God. As I looked behind me, from where I had come, the land was charred black, the ground hard, cracked and broken from earthquakes, the air black with soot; I knew the dark, ugly landscape I looked upon was a true representation of what I had been experiencing. When I saw it I let out a cry of anguish of all that I had been holding in for so long! A prayer came, Oh Lord of the Infinite, I have missed you so much. Please never leave me again.

For the next six months I gradually emerged from the darkened gloom into a new Light. I had completed my master's degree and went on to a work in my chosen field, which was very satisfying. One day I received a call from some Kriyabans in Canada who were asking me to help clarify their Kriya practice, then an invitation to come and speak; there were many thirsty souls awaiting my visit. For so long I had felt I was the last one to help others; now the Light came to me at the same time as the expressed need of others. God's ways are perfect and mysterious!

This was in 1995 and yes, David answered the 'call' to engage in his ministry in a new way. And Canadians got to hear Kriya teachings. By 1997 David was increasingly sensing that his inner direction was to engage in work as a full-time minister. While not knowing what would come next, he gave up a position he loved and turned this new phase of his life over to God's design. And, just at that moment Peter Schultz offered to build a tiny apartment for David. He now had a home. Then in 1998, Phyllis Victory, a long-time devotee of Mother Hamilton, sponsored him on a pilgrimage to India. Of course, one very important destination was Anandashram and Swami Satchidananda who was now the god-man guardian of Anandashram. There David found Swamiji "an indispensable help in my realization."

Returning to America, David led a busy life teaching, holding retreats and meeting with devotees in many cities in both the USA and Canada. He says:

On my return to America I continued a busy schedule of travel to work with various aspirants. Now, and after many years of fully scheduled days, I had time to simply go with the powerful stream up my spine into higher realms of consciousness. No longer was I daily crucified on the cross of vertically upward spiritual power meeting the horizontal daily demands of worldly activity. I was now free to sail into the mystical sea of consciousness without limit.

One day, out of my mouth came the idea that I should spend a year in silence and solitude; again it was an unsolicited idea that came unbidden from some unknown depth. Never before had I considered such an idea; I don't even think I had spent even a day in silence except when there were no others about. I found the perfect place to spend the year: Cloud Mountain Retreat Center. From September 9, 2000 to September 9, 2001, I was in silence and seclusion. During this time of silence I became established in an inner state of stillness that has never left me.

And then another life surprise:

Toward the end of my year of solitude an inner direction came to me that was yet another surprise. The inner direction was for me to marry Carla, a devoted aspirant who had given sincere service for the last several years to the Work. I realized that this was an important decision, one I did not take lightly as it affected many people, even the Work itself.

In his journal, David speaks of the levels of reflection and inner and outer affirmation he sought on whether this was indeed the right direction for his life. He received affirmations from all he spoke to and on December 15, 2001, Reverend Larry Koler married David and Carla in a marriage ceremony that came from Mother Hamilton and was based on a ceremony Master created.

In early 2002 David and Carla left on a pilgrimage to India.

Again, we have poems from this time and much more detail in journals. David and Carla made pilgrimages to India in 2002, 2005, 2007 and 2013. In between these times and ongoing into 2018, David and Carla traveled to different Centers. David says:

Through this Master lineage, He has freely given the very highest means for making that journey of realization. God and the Masters have decreed this Work out of love and compassion for those who desire nothing less than the highest realization. Far too often we are unmindful of the underlying Reality that gives real peace, joy and wisdom for all; no matter a person's circumstance. Jesus and Babaji are the headwaters of this Work, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Master and Mother bless it, and it will shine in this world as long as there are sincere seekers who desire spiritual transformation.

David closes his autobiography in 2007 with the words:

This spiritual evolution is the greatest hope for a strained world that is too often filled with conflict, intolerance and separation. Only through individuals gaining their realization of this spiritual Reality will this world come to know its full glory of the Light of the Infinite Divine. May we all put our shoulders to the wheel of this great Work: the upliftment and spiritual evolution of the individual soul and of this beautifully created world.

The Cross and The Lotus web site has many of David's other writings and blog articles where he shares his teachings right up to his Mahasamadhi (August 12, 2019.) As time progresses, David's journals will also be transcribed and placed in publications, along with his more than one thousand talks.

David's last five years were busy and dedicated during the time he was addressing serious health challenges. Always at each step David was fully supported and cared for in complete dedicated devotion by Carla. Carla's sharing at David's Mahasamadhi Memorial Service is included here in *Chapter Eight*.

David always sought for something more in his life. As a young man he deeply sensed that there was more to existence

than narrow materialism and superficial personality satisfactions. He sought answers, and he found a teacher and teachings that nurtured an evolutionary process to realization that neverendingly brought him surprises and new heights.

David's poems, approximately three hundred, interweave from start to finish a process that spirals from great height and promise, then spiral down to the valleys to gather up the lost pieces of shame, or blame or shadow, carrying these wounds lovingly up to the transformative heights. It is a climb of a sacred mountain, and with mountains, there are steep climbs, easy paths, valleys, rivers to forge, and false peak after false peak, until the grand top is reached. This is the sacred mountain, unique for us—present for us all. David gloriously shares his fierce determined and joyous living journey up the mountain.

He inwardly sought more meaning. He was called, he responded. In the first set of poems in *Chapter One* we walk with David as he speaks to *The Call* and provides his *Response*. Once his conscious consent to the spiritual process was acknowledged—for consent is the law—David enters the purification process. Tests, more tests, and torturous challenges take him from a superficial ego personality-desire world into his deepest pain. Shadow and light are hinted at in *Chapter Two, The Path of Purification*. His willingness to grow builds a healthy ego, one that can discern clearly. He starts to more deeply, completely and consciously serve a higher calling, a higher Light and Divinity inside—this process he shares with us in *Chapter Three, The Path of Conscious Witnessing*. He becomes clearer, a more refined and conscious discerning instrument for the Divine truth. As this interweaves in his life and inner nature, he claims *Homecoming* with poems in *Chapter Four*. Now he is in a conscious illumined state living in the world and in the light of Divine guidance. Throughout all this time he opens his heart and prays for higher illumined support, and *Chapter Five* features some of those selected prayers. David pays tribute to his Guru-lineage and to other great teachers that influenced him. He honors their Mahasamadhi and the teachings they have left for all humanity in *Chapter Six*. India had so many gifts for David, the life, the teachings, the sacred, and the scenery there impacted him profoundly. *Chapter Seven* brings us *India's Gifts* where David shares his delight. In *Chapter Eight* we

honor Mahasamadhi, the dropping of the body, the transcendence to the light body. Over time, David wrote aphorisms, affirmations and principles for living, these have been compiled in *Chapter Nine*. With *Chapter Ten* we find closure for now with David's poignant sharing of a life process, a spiritual evolutionary process that is reachable for us all: We just need to say Yes!



Yogacharya David and Carla, Victoria, B.C. 2008.



Yogacharya David, Sarnath, N. India. 1998.



Yogacharya David, inside Babaji's Cave, N. India, 2005.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CALL AND THE RESPONSE

Can we ever predict when the sacred mountain will appear? Or even that it exists for us? Do we at some deep subtle Dharma level say Yes, even as we are born? There are so many more such questions!

For David, a synchronistic meeting with a friend led to an invitation to attend a talk by Yogacharya Mildred Hamilton (called Mother Hamilton) in 1974. David had found his Guru. Mother Hamilton was ordained by Paramhansa Yogananda of the Kriya lineage. Much later Mother Hamilton ordained David as a minister and later, before she left her body, she designated David Yogacharya to carry the Kriya mantle forward. Now, the path to the sacred mountain truly unveiled. A renewed, serious, dedicated climb began with its relentless, perilous, and blissful guidance.

The Call came at an unexpected time, but in his deep heart, David was ready. He speaks of an aspect of the climb in *My Spiritual India*: “Proceeding through the successive planes of consciousness, what is thought by the world as evolution, is the gradual awakening of the soul to its own complete sense of itself—something, that in truth, it has never ceased to be.” He goes on to say, “...in truth the soul reclaims its conscious awareness of what it has always truly been.”

In *The Call* theme David’s poems show us in myriad ways how he received the call to return to soul-consciousness, Infinite Awareness. The Call comes to David from himself, from Mother Hamilton and from the Divine.

In *The Response* David’s poem *Devotee Test: There is a Mountain to Climb* affirms: “The separate ‘I’ in me gives itself to the great ‘I’ in You...let me be Thy instrument.” Here we begin to see David’s dialogue with the Divine and his gathering of resources for a climb he now knows will be relentless. In another poem, he calls on the *Master Engraver* to aid and to carve. David says, “Lift me

up the mountain...put Thy stamp on me forever more...protect me in the depths.” The depths do come as he follows the path to purification—here David provides us with hints of the steep and perilous journey, and while seriously tempted to abandon the climb, he never gives up.

He understands the temptation, “There are those in the valley who look up to the mountain top, ‘It is not so high,’ they explain, or ‘It is much too high’ they sigh...Some climb to the foothills and say ‘Tis far enough’ and return to the valley to tell of their brief experience. Others climb quite far and then say ‘Enough for this life.’”

Then, he continues, “Those few, those worthy ones set out over bleak snows, negotiate vast crevices, suffer whatever comes. False peak after false peak with steadfast steps they take, not being overjoyed or over-sorrowed at each new victory or defeat. Until through death’s jaws to mountain top they come.” He aimed to travel “ever closer to the sun.” Through *The Call and The Response* we start on the journey with David.

Poems gathered together in *The Call and the Response* speak to the call as David perceived and received it and share the varying ways in which he internalized his response.



Yogacharya David with Trees in Flower. Washington State. 1990.

THE CALL

YOU HAVE ASKED ME TO TEACH

Oh my Divine Mother
 You have asked me to teach
 As a Seva (service) to You
 Whatever good is done
 Whatever Light is shared
 Whatever Love is awakened
 Is a result of Your Grace.
 May this instrument
 Be ever responsive to Your promptings.
 May Your Grace
 Ever shine through this work.

HIDE AND SEEK: BE GRACIOUS NOW

O Lord
 I do not like your game of hide and seek
 Come now into Thy child's lonely heart
 Make Your Self known
 And the sun to shine upon this little one.
 Be no miser of Spirit
 But gracious evermore,
 O Lord, I do not like this game
 Come to me now!

DEVOTEE'S TEST: THERE IS A MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB

A test of a true devotee
 Does God pervade every thought, feeling and action?
 Does the sweetness of God fill their being
 So they serve God in all whom they meet?

Such are the tests of a true devotee
 And no one outward action may
 Indicate their wondrous attainment
 For it takes a knowing one to recognize a kindred Spirit.

There are those in the valley
 Who look to the mountain top,
 "It is not so high" they explain
 Or "It is much too high" they sigh.

Some are inspired to look upon the hill
 Some are inspired to write about it
 Some bow down and worship it
 And some gain a burning need to climb.

Some climb to the foothills
 And say, "Tis far enough"
 And return to the valley to
 Tell all of their brief experience.

Some continue on climbing higher still
 Till at last they break the tree line
 And with that mighty view they exclaim
 We clearly see yonder valley and Mountain top.

And with that view they suffice
 Their longing for the great beyond,
 Risen high, they rest,
 "Enough for this life" they think to themselves.

But a few, a hardy few
Dare not rest, cannot rest
Rather they feel impelled to continue
“To the top or die” they affirm gravely.

Leaving behind all kith and kin,
And thoughts of returning with glory,
Knowing they sacrifice all
That humans covet and seek.

Those few, those worthy ones
Set out over bleak snows
Negotiate vast crevices
Suffer whatever comes.

False peak after false peak
With steadfast steps they take
Not being overjoyed or over-sorrowed
At each new victory or defeat.

Pushed past all endurance
With faith they stand fast
Despair does not overcome
And with carelessness they spend their very selves.

Much do they learn
In order to skillfully climb,
Using markers of past travelers
They validate their wandering path.

Onward and upward
The brave juggernaut explore
Knowing no end or beginning
Only endless tracks of white.

Until at last by grace and skill
Through death's jaws
To mountain top they come
And with clear broadening view
They emerge into their own infinite vast space.

Not the same as when begun
Yet strikingly similar are they,
Wisdom's eye sees more than mortal
And stillness belies their activity.

Who can say in words what such a one knows?
Who could convey the changes that journey wrought?
How could those on valley floor
Know what it is to be That?

Spiritual climbers be such as we
With ice pick of faith
And cleats of meditative mind,
We journey from valley to peak
Never a thought of looking back or giving up.

And what is the test of one reaching
That empyrean peak?
That God pervades every fiber
Of thought, feeling and action,
Sweetness of God overflowing their cups
And they love and serve God in one and all.

So come my hardy climbers
Come one and all
Scale those hidden peaks
And call answer to the Enchanters.

SWEET MISERY, YOU ARE MY FRIEND

Emotions arise from the fallen past;
 Sensations strike devastating blows.
 My mind merges in the murky water,
 Slowly it begins to sink lower.
 O sweet misery, you are my friend.

An imaginary lover gains access to my mind,
 She greedily absorbs me all in all.
 I recognize the unpleasant odor of a lie,
 I see her for the misery she is.
 All is in vain, and vain is in all.

My much-tested mind comes back within,
 Too many times I have followed that wearisome trail.
 It leads but unto darkness,
 A hell that is dark and bottomless.

Upon the sanctuary of my deep re-remembering
 Do I re-emerge
 Foreseeing the nights of calamity's woe,
 I reawaken to the Enubrance to whom I belong.
 Thin lightning shafts begin to dawn,
 Morning birds of heaven and peace do again ascend.

O sweet haven of heart and mind,
 Lovely and precious is your gift to me.
 Dark and meaningless is the world below.
 Luminous and wise is the greatness above.
 Oneness above and below, to the left and right.
 Home, Home once again.

AWAKEN ME O DIVINE MOTHER

In Purity You have called me to Yourself
But also in lurid outer forms
You come to tempt me away.

You are the sacred Power within
And You secretly yearn to rise,
To awaken divine experience Itself
Through subtle channels that flow.

But age-old patterns divert
That steady minded approach
And seek to divert that power to lesser gods
In vain pursuit of happiness.

Awaken in me O Divine Mother
Pure love for thy Divine Form alone.
Burn those puny gods in sacred flame
And free me now and always, in Thee alone!

MY HARI IS NEAR

Love pervades night and day
Where is my Hari not?
O who can hear his flute's call?
Who knows his love, his very nature?

Love abounds in heart and soul
Sweetness permeates the air I breathe
The body is slain in love's embrace
And soul melts in its rapturous time.

O my Hari is near
He calls the name of names,
His flute soothes the animal nature
And guides it home.

And look, what is that?
Under starry canopy goes on to dance
Krishna and his gopi lovers
Moving in sweet ecstasy's embrace.

O Krishna my love
Make of me an eternal lover
Like blessed gopis of yore
Eternally fixed on Thee alone.

Make me see you in every leaf and branch
Make me know you as the all in all,
Make my spirit blend in yours
Until at last we move as one.

TELL ME MY LADS

O sing my lads
Sing a song of joy
And make it speak to me
A song that tells a story blessed.

O sing my lads
Of a time of yore,
When men followed the stars
And kings watched for holiness.

And tell me my boys
Tell me true and clear
Of how a child was born
Under a star of wonder and mystery.

Can you show me a time
When shepherds knew angels
And wicked rulers feared the light
And humble folk grew in holiness?

Yes, tell me my lads
Of those sacred events
When dreams became prophecy
And prophecy made reality.

And most of all my dear ones
Can you make that story live
Live and breathe with heart and soul
A living song sewn deeply marrowed.

For the song I want
The song I need
Is a song that finds a way
Of giving birth to something new in me.

O sing my lads
 A story timely and timeless
 Of a child pure born of the heart
 For everyone on this tiny earth.

For the spirit grows weary
 Without renewed covenant,
 So sing me a song my lads
 A song that makes me new again.

O LORD, MY COMFORT, COME TO ME

O Lord, You are my comfort,
 When I hurt, You soothe me,
 When empty, You fill me,
 When tired, You energize me.
 I see You as a presence solidly in me,
 I feel You soothing me in every nerve,
 I hear You as sweet sounds surrounding me,
 I taste You as fulfillment.
 O Lord, You are my comfort
 Come to me
 Make me know You are near and dear
 Teach me to experience the fullness of Your presence.
 Be it ever so.

HEAR THE SAVIOR'S CALL

Midnight glance reveals that night
When the savior struggled with fear,
Mighty was that darkened fight
As forces of heaven and hell drew near.

Blood seeped from forehead pores,
Temptation struck with mighty blows
Soul stooped down to its very core
Blazing Light reduced to tepid coals.

Hanging on during the darkest darkened night
Refusing to let go of Heaven's Voice,
Blinded eyes seeking sacred sight
Knowing truly there is but one choice.

O brothers and sisters hear me now,
Mankind's future hung in peril
On that midnight lonely vigil's prow
When human soul wrestled with its devil.

But devil is but lived spelled backwards
And that darkened night is all about
Setting spiritual hero on the throne heavenward,
Deep seated faith replacing deep seated doubt.

O my friends let this be known
This is all mankind's story
As each one has a darkened night alone
Every soul can awaken to its own Glory.

Each one has a savior deep down
That daily suffers human indignity,
Every day is opportunity to be done
Acts that reflect spiritual integrity.

Every day we are tempted by nature's greed,
Each moment we build or destroy,
Our sacred temple in every deed
When with our free will we do employ.

So, come my brothers and sisters
And hear the savior's call
One who has shown us the way to love without fear,
And resurrect love and life within, and in us all and all.

DIVINE SEARCH FOR GOD

Divine Search
I search for God
The God who is all in all
All time, all space, all matter
Matter and Beyond Matter.

Matter, that translucent
Shimmering Presence
But, bereft of that presence
I searched in vain.

I looked, looked within
But all was black
Without trace of light or uplift
Sometimes, without hope or comfort.

A hard path
Uphill, without respite,
Yet driven
Driven was I to go.

To go within
Seeking, but not sure for what!
Yet seeking
Through inner darkness and misery.

Not spurred by logic, but an inner need
A need that would not go away
A need that would not be subverted.

This need was an exacting master
Punishing me with inner pain,
Inner yearning,
When ignore it, I would try.

But then! Suddenly
 Emerged some hope, some light.
 There! And there again, some oasis
 Only to be gone again.

Curse this need, this powerful need
 Why do I need?
 Why cannot I be satisfied, like others
 Curse this need.

Again, yet again
 Oasis comes more frequently,
 Promises of future promises
 The need drives on, now with headlights.

Frequency of oasis
 Makes dry desert even more dry,
 And drive continues to drive,
 But now with more frequent respites.

Lo, the goal arises!
 Light is more abundant than dark,
 Life affirms the driven need
 And understanding overreaches darkness.

Now, and now again
 I do not curse the need,
 Rather, I bless it
 Bless its invisible giver.

For it has driven me beyond,
 Beyond what I had known
 Beyond my comfort,
 Beyond my own self-made ignorance.

Now I bless the curse
For it has made me see the Light
Beyond myself
Beyond my own understanding.

And Lo
When I saw,
Saw that which I have searched for,
Saw that Sublime Light.

I was stunned, dumbfounded,
For what I did not expect,
For what I could not expect,
That Light, was also searching for me!

○ SADHAKAS

Let us journey home together
For each is born and dies alone
But here we have glad privilege
To walk hand in hand.

And once knowing our joy
And finding it a boundless font
Each drinking deep to their fill and more!
Find even more joy in sharing it with all.

So be glad sadhaks
The journey may be long and difficult
But, it is in the right direction!
And we will live to see thy homecoming.

FEEL GOD'S PRESENCE IN EVERY CELL

Feel God's presence in every cell,
Lift your eyes upward to the hills.
It is infinite love that you seek,
Don't be shy, don't be meek.

For who is God but our very self,
He's not dull, don't put Him on the back shelf.
Bring Him right out front, in front of your eye,
God is not imagination, not a lie.

Be bold and ask the Infinite for his Grace,
For it is only by God's boon, that we may see His face.

Love thy neighbour as thy self,
Love the Lord, for He is thy self.
Be True to Him forever and always,
Pray that the Love of God will always stay.

INNER PAIN WAS MY MASTER

Eternal I into this dark cavern
Of earthly existence so alone,
Formed of mud, sense and awareness,
Fused with body, higher knowledge had I none.

Fears, desires, confusion abound,
Thoughts of wanting nothing but to hide,
Or if to be seen, wanting only glory
To be beheld far and wide.

O dear little self
How much you struggled, how much you cried,
O dear little one
How you hoped, how you feared, how you denied.

Denied the fears, denied your deeper hopes.
Yet, within you, beyond your hopes for earthly glory,
You held a dream, half thought, half spoken,
Yet, a dream all the same.

As you aged, entering adulthood,
You thirsted for more than the world showed,
Yearning for a distant Light
Yet, a dream all the same.

For the Light was a belief
With glimmers only here and there.
Inner pain drove you on
O little self, how you did despair.

Inner pain was your master,
Your pilot and plight,

And how you yearned for something new
To be born in the Light.

Finally, with faltering steps,
You found your emissary of Light,
Your very own spiritual Master
To teach you how to take Flight.

Flight into realms of spiritual hue,
Flight beyond this body and structure
Into a broadening view,
Into existence of exquisite lustre.

Rome was not built, no, not built in a day
And neither does the chrysalis
Grow wings and emerge from darkened cave
All at once.

But slowly and unsurely
With steps not in a straight line
That little one grew in Spirit,
A new Consciousness began to refine.

And this transformation has a momentum new,
Shame and ignominy replaced
By love and understanding ways
And ever-new Light it may adore.

And life in that cavern of old
Seems more like a long-lost dream,
Set in my course now
My soul continues in Light that redeems.

O GREAT SPIRIT OF ALL

O great Spirit of all,
Bring thy gifts to us.
Give to us, thy children,
Your wondrous works of joy.

Create in us a giving heart,
Tell us of our selves.
O Creator of all, you alone
Are real to the God-man.

Many use your name,
Few know your Word.
How long will we wander from thee?
How long will we suffer cruel duality?

Our wandering eyes keep us
From thee, ever outward do we look for you.
Transform that urge to the
Inner kingdom, there to find, you abide.

THE RESPONSE

O MASTER ENGRAVER, LIFT ME UP THE MOUNTAIN

O Divine name, take me deeper into God,
 Be my guide and savior.
 Like a ship keeping me afloat,
 Carrying me across the sea of delusion.

Encompass me with Thy Bliss,
 Bless me with Thy wisdom.
 Fill my lamp with oil,
 And light it for me also.

Lift me up the mountain,
 Carry me to the Christ.
 Long in meditation do I wait,
 For Thy Voice, which art the Rock of Ages.

Be Thou a Divine magnet,
 Drawing me ever closer to the Sun.
 Wilt Thou now come to me,
 Wilt Thou now be mine forever.

O Master Engraver
 Carve me into Thy Word.
 Put Thy Stamp on me forever more,
 Thy Image is my Image, Thy Thought my thought.

O Divine Word, carry me to the heights,
 Protect me in the depths.
 Like an Ark you surround me,
 Forever will you keep me afloat.
 Om, Peace, Bliss, Amen.

○ LORD MY LOVE FOR YOU IS INCOMPLETE

○ Lord, my love for you is incomplete,
 Sometimes I love what this body wants
 More than I am moved by Your wants
 And my desires mean more to me than You,
 There are times when fears in me
 Override Your Love and Wisdom.

○ Lord, please teach me to love You perfectly
 Make Your will preeminent in my life
 That I might do as a perfectly honed instrument
 Responds to a master craftsman,
 That I will seek You as my only comforter
 And the fulfiller of all my desires,
 That out of love for You
 I will serve all whom I meet.

○ Lord, I sincerely pray
 From deep within my soul
 That You will grant this petition
 And make my love for You perfectly complete.

JUST FOR TODAY

Just for today
 I will trust in You,
 Just for today
 I feel you close and present,
 Just for today
 I remain in the moment unafraid.
 Om Sri Ram, Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram