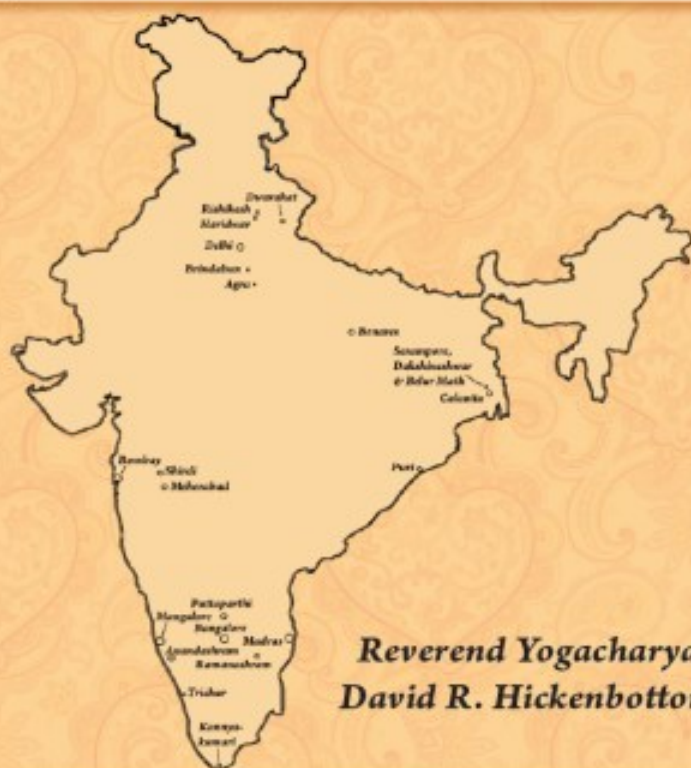


# *My Spiritual India*

A JOURNAL OF TRAVEL & SADHANA, 1998-1999



*Reverend Yogacharya  
David R. Hickenbottom*



THE CROSS AND THE LOTUS PUBLISHING

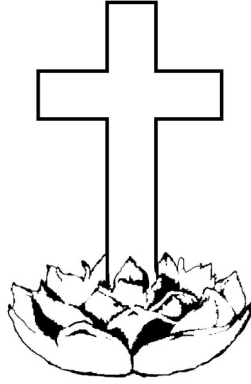
# MY SPIRITUAL INDIA

A JOURNAL OF TRAVEL & SADHANA, 1998 - 1999

*by* YOGACHARYA DAVID R. HICKENBOTTOM

**PART I: PILGRIMAGE**

**PART II: ANANDASHRAM**



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“My Spiritual India is an intimate diary of my outer and inner journey to India from September 21, 1998 to March 3, of 1999.”

## My Spiritual India



The author, Reverend Yogacharya David Hickenbottom,  
His Satguru, Reverend Mother Yogacharya M. Hamilton  
And his Paramguru, Paramhansa Yogananda. Jai Gurus Jai!

## My Spiritual India



### **Saints of Anandashram:**

Above: Mataji Krishnabai, Swami (Papa) Ramdas

Below: Swamis Satchidananda & Muktananda



## A LIFE LIVED IN GOD

FOREWORD BY SWAMI MUKTANANDA

“India is a land of wisdom, because it is the land of sages and saints. These sages, having plumbed the depths of human experience, and transcending even the highest flights of the intellect, have attained the loftiest vision of life, viz. the great and imperishable Reality. The cultural values, in the varied fields of human activity, have been determined and worked by these sages from the summit of this spiritual experience.”

These words of our Master, Beloved Papa Swami Ramdas, came to mind when we were asked to write a foreword for the book *My Spiritual India* by Reverend Yogacharya David Hick-bottom.

In India, saints who have realized the Supreme Goal have taught that a mere superficial view of nature creates for man the illusions of fear, sorrow and death, and so he is asked to pierce through the apparent veil of the phenomenal life and manifestation, and reaching the depths, to mingle with the Supreme Light which lies at their basis. To behold the world and the universe outwards from this vision of the Source, is to solve the great problem of life and death, to know and realize a state of immortality. No wonder, Reverend Davidji chose to pen his reflections on spiritual India.

The word, spirituality, stands for expansion from individual to universal. Normally, in His Lila, God has arranged things in such a way that most individuals are caged within the confines of “me” and “mine.” And then, at the appropriate time fixed by Him, the chosen ones are prompted by Him to establish contact with spiritual preceptors, who touch and kindle the awareness of a higher life, one of true freedom and bliss. From that moment on, the aspirant’s pursuit is to understand and experience his relationship with God and the co-creations. This is called the spiritual journey.

Proportionate to the intensity God gives to the aspirant, he progresses and finally realizes that it is God who has been guiding him and the Universe right from the beginning, even when he was not aware of His presence.

God bestowed Reverend Davidji with intense yearning for Him, which is evident from his prayer:

“O Infinite Beloved, charming is Your play, designed to bring a smile to your Sadhaka. May You create in us a desire and yearning for You greater than for Your earthly comforts and distractions. Give us the same desire for You as a greedy thief has for gold and riches kept in an unlocked room next to his own! Make us have such desire, nay greed for Your Presence alone. And may it abide with us always.”

Aspirants and devotees get inspired by going through writings of evolved souls about their spiritual journey, including visits to various pilgrim centres, meetings with Sadhakas and saints, etc. The first part of this book covers Reverend Davidji’s experience and insight during his Yatra.

The second part of the book chronicles his visit to Anandashram and how the lives and mission of Beloved Papa Swami Ramdas, Param Pujya Mataji Krishnabai and more so, the interactions and Satsangs with Param Pujya Swami Satchidanandaji inspired and gave a thrust to his Sadhana.

We vividly recall our first meeting with Davidji in the late 1990s at Anandashram in India. He was always soft spoken, calm, serene and equipoised in all his talks and dealings with everyone. Apart from this, the remarkable characteristic that enraptured the hearts of all was his bewitching smile of love while he talked.

During his stay in the Ashram, every day Davidji used to come and sit silently with closed eyes for more than an hour in Pujya Swami Satchidanandaji’s room while Pujya Swamiji would be



## My Spiritual India

busy with signing the letters and completing administrative tasks.

Pujya Swamiji's profound humility, contagious calmness and endless benevolence were conspicuous in every action and interaction. About the deep influence Pujya Swamiji had on his spiritual journey, Davidji wrote:

“Swamiji stole my heart and became my second spiritual Mother. I felt it a blessing and a rare privilege to be in his presence. A tremendous spiritual powerhouse, Swamiji has been an indispensable help in my realization. His radiance pours out to one and all; he serves in compelling humility and is saturated with Divinity. Realized Beings such as Swamiji help to balance this world from the negative tendencies that have kept it bound to ignorance. We are blessed to have such a living Master in the world today.”

Following the footsteps of his Master, Mother Hamilton, a true disciple of his Guru in letter and spirit, Davidji blossomed into a spiritual master. Over the years, he endeared himself to a number of spiritual aspirants and guided them on the Path.

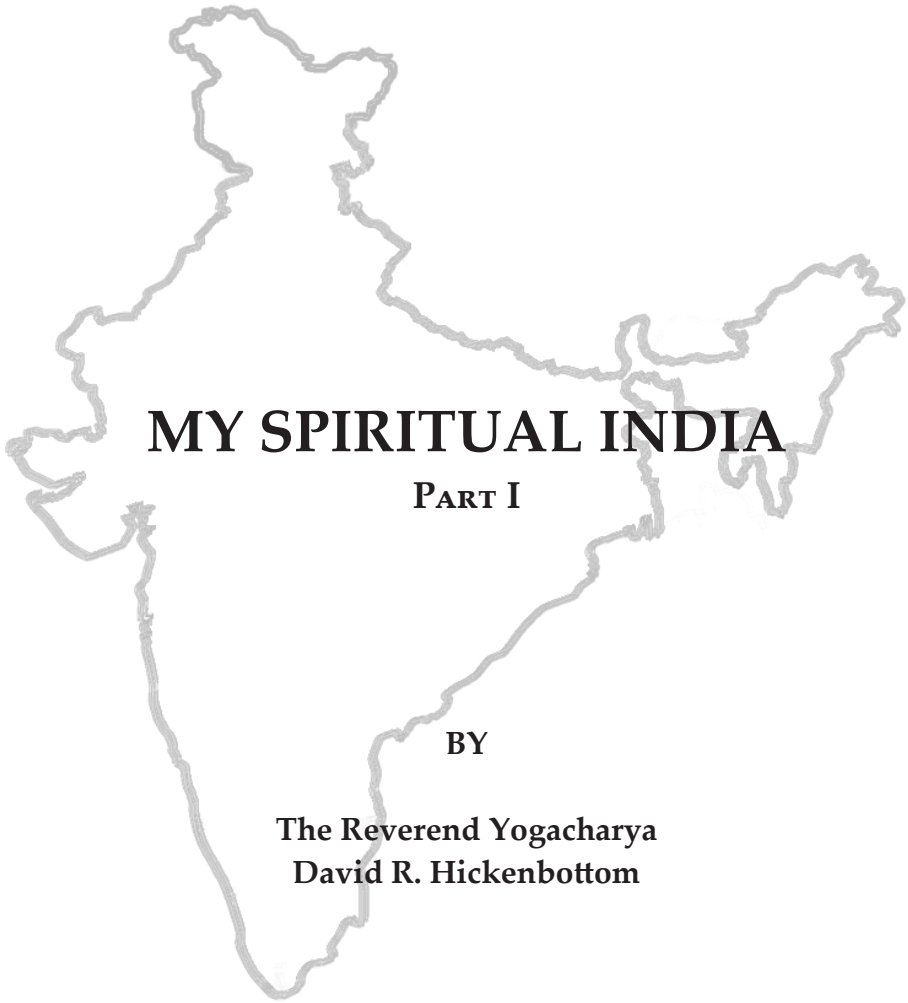
This travelogue offers a glimpse of the Divine guidance Reverend Davidji received from stage to stage in his spiritual journey.

May this labour of love in the form of the book *My Spiritual India* published by The Cross and The Lotus Publishing, be a source of perennial motivation to spiritual seekers, is our prayer.

Muktananda

Anandashram, Kerala, India

My Spiritual India—Part I



**MY SPIRITUAL INDIA**

**PART I**

**BY**

**The Reverend Yogacharya  
David R. Hickenbottom**

**Editors' Note:** Part I of *My Spiritual India* was originally published in 1999 after the author's return from India. The second printing was in 2000 and is currently out of print. Part II of David's journal was prepared for publication this year. We decided that the two sections should be contained within the covers of the same volume so the whole journal could easily be read in its entirety.

Please note that the spelling of names and places can vary from one area of India to another. When there is more than one version, we have retained the spelling the author used, even if it is the less common one. We have added a couple of footnotes—they are starred or in square brackets.—Larry and Cate Koler

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

[Written by the author for the original publication in 1999.]

My first and foremost gratitude goes to my beloved Guru, The Reverend Yogacharya Mother Hamilton. All that is good in my life is due to her. I also wish to acknowledge all those who made this trip possible through financial support and through their good wishes. Without this support this trip would not have been possible. A hearty thank you to Elaine Cone who typed and edited this volume. Also to Carla Gold who proofed the final edition.

## INTRODUCTION

*My Spiritual India* is an intimate diary of my outer and inner journey to India from September 21, 1998 to March 3, of 1999. I have followed a spiritual discipline from the time I first met my Guru, Yogacharya Mother Hamilton in 1974. From her and books I read, I had heard stories of the Spiritual Masters of India and of my Guru's own experiences while there. Once I asked her, "Mother, I have been thinking about traveling to India?" She smiled sweetly at me and said, "When your Guru is right here?" Well of course, I did not want or need to go anywhere for my spiritual adventure, it being right where I was. All interest left me for such an adventure. Since January 31, 1991, when Mother left her body in Mahasamadhi, my life was full. I was living my *sadhana*,<sup>1</sup> my path to God, and teaching the Kriya Yoga tradition and balanced spiritual living as she had taught me, right where I was! It was the year preceding my departure for India that an inner direction came to me very powerfully to go. Why go? It was all due to an inner prompting.

To go on a pilgrimage, I felt, was not to go with the idea of what I was to receive, but, in gratitude for what I had already been given. My own Guru was the disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda, one of the greatest spiritual masters of this, or any, century. Mother often had the feeling that Master, as Yogananda was lovingly referred to by his disciples, was so great that he could have been Christ come again. Paramhansa Yogananda had come to America in 1920, to live and teach the liberating message of Yoga. The practice of Yoga leads the aspirant to conscious union with God, that all beneficent, all loving, all powerful Presence and sole Creator of all that is. In India it is said, "God is one, but has many names," and may be known by Its qualities. God-experience is the sum and substance of this path that came to me from these great masters.

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1. Spiritual discipline or practice for the means of realizing God.

## My Spiritual India—Part I

It is for these teachings that I feel such great gratitude. These spiritual masters not only paid the price for their own realization, but also made it possible for all who have sincere interest to have the means to gain this great state of God-experience.

My gratitude extends not only to my Guru and Paramguru (my Guru's Guru), but to those who made it possible for Master to be successful in America. For Yogananda was the recipient of the wisdom and training of his own Guru, Sri Yukteswar, and the love and blessings of so many of the great saints of India of his time. A guru is one who comes as the teacher of the methods by which one can achieve the goal of God-realization. They are also the living example of those teachings, in that they have achieved that realization themselves. They also serve as a living link between that highest Consciousness of God and the *sadhaka*, the aspirant. That is, through association with a true guru, an aspirant's consciousness is quickened to enable them to have some experience in that supreme state of awareness. Gratitude comes easily and naturally to me in going to India for all I had received from my Guru. A generous line of teachers from Babaji to Lahiri Mahasaya, to Swami Sri Yukteswar, to Paramhansa Yogananda and to Mother comes to me, and all who follow this path, even as the Ganges comes down from the headwaters of the Himalayas. It has been said that Babaji, along with Jesus, is working out the means of salvation for our times. May their millennial plans come to fruition.

In going on this pilgrimage to India, my gratitude not only extended to my line of Gurus, but to the many saints of India of whose lives I had read about and who have helped inspire me in my own sadhana, my spiritual discipline and path to God-realization. Not the least of these was Swami Ramdas. This great God-man had traveled to America in 1954. After Yogananda's passing from the body in 1952, circumstances occurred in such a way that Mother felt she needed the help of a living Master to go

through those experiences she would come to speak of as the “mystical crucifixion.” After meeting Papa, as Swami Ramdas was lovingly known, she felt a powerful inward direction from God to answer his invitation that she and her husband, Ralph, come to see him in India. They sold their home and all they had to make this highly unusual trip, especially for those times, to Anandashram<sup>2</sup> in the south of India.

I too found myself in the position of feeling the inward direction to go to India, and in particular, to see Swami Satchidananda, Swami Ramdas’ successor as head swami at Anandashram. It was at this ashram in 1958 that Mother went through some terrifically difficult experiences that propelled her toward her full God-realization. In truth, becoming established in full God-realization was my goal as well. I felt that having the *darshan*<sup>3</sup>, the sight and blessings, of Swami Satchidananda and other saints and sacred places of India would help in achieving my goal of complete God-realization.

In my own search for God, I have undergone tremendous experiences that have helped uplift me from the human state of consciousness toward the Divine. However, this transformation had not yet completed itself. It is said by some that only twelve completely God-realized masters are on this earth at any particular time. Whatever the truth, it can be said that fully, or completely, realized masters are rare. I had it in mind to have nothing less than this complete realization and have come to India by inner direction for the purpose of achieving it. We are told this realization is our inheritance and that if we desire it beyond all other things then we will have it. The thing is this: desire nature does not die easily and as long as any residue of worldly attachment resides in the conscious or subconscious mind, it will continue to

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2. Means “Abode of Bliss.” An ashram in the south of India founded by Swami Ramdas.

3. Vision and blessings of a saint or God.

be an obstacle to the realization of our universal Self.

In the 1980s Mother had given me permission to teach and to give Kriya initiation. She told me when Master had asked her to do the same she had not yet realized God fully. It was by serving other souls in this way that helped her in attaining her full realization. By an inner and outer commission I have served other souls by teaching the methods of living a spiritual life as my Guru had taught me, and by practicing my sadhana. When Mother asked me to teach, she said, “teach by using your own experience.” This did not come naturally to me, as I am a private person by nature. Not only that, but the nature of spiritual experiences represents the most sacred and intimate part of me. Up until the time when I began to teach, I had not discussed my inner experiences with anyone outside of my Guru. Talking of my inmost experiences to other aspirants was an act of total surrender to my Guru.

What follows are my writings that speak to these experiences during my pilgrimage to India. It is a record of my struggles and times of upliftment. This is a discussion with myself that is frank and self-revelatory in nature. I do this in humble submission to my Guru as part of my ministry, service, to other seekers. I find most of us feel alone in our struggle in gaining self-mastery of our desire nature of fear, anger, lust, greed or any of their “family” of kindred spirits of darkened consciousness. However, humanity not only shares a lower human nature, but a divine one as well. Both are a part of the narrative and I have let it stand as it is. My greatest desire is that you, the reader, gain value and edification in your own path to God and find inspiration to fulfill your own quest for realizing Who and What you truly are: Divine God-Beings; nay, God Itself.

Reverend Yogacharya David R. Hickenbottom

December 3, 1999





Give up doubts and churning of the intellect. Feel you are a simple child of the Lord and thus enter into His being. This is the easy way to reach Him. Do not perplex the mind with questions. Be humble, pure and cheerful, taking refuge in Him. Follow the straight and simple path of devotion. Open the flood-gates of your heart and allow Prem, pure love, that is in you to flow over unimpeded to the holy feet of the Lord seated within. Remember that God's grace is ever with you. Benefit by its redeeming influence, by opening yourself to receive it and becoming aware of the Amrita Vrishti—shower of nectar. Some churning of the mind or intellect may be there. But after some time, this process should stop so that the butter of Divine Bliss may be formed and collected. After the impurities are eliminated, pure and divine emotions rise up. Even this stage is passed when the infinite silence of the inner peace is experienced. Here the rippling and dancing river mingles with the calm waters of the ocean. That is the end of all Sadhana.

— Swami Ramdas, founder saint of Anandashram

September 21, 1998

*Pacific Ocean: The Start*

Flying 30,000 feet above the Pacific, Phyllis<sup>4</sup> and I are headed to India, land of my “spiritual fathers.” The weeks leading up to this day have been difficult. I have had the feeling of a lead blanket on my heart, an unknown source of pressure from above and behind the center of my chest, as well as the solar plexus feeling a fluttering sensation. I have also had intense *kundalini* heat and pain in the spine and head. This, combined with daily withdrawal of the life force from voluntary motion of the body, have made it difficult to operate in the world, much less to prepare for a trip of this magnitude! However, stronger than these difficulties has been my faith that Divine Consciousness is in strict charge of this trip and my life and therefore I am looked after perfectly. Even when the pressure in the solar plexus feels a bit like the wind getting punched out of me, and my life force with it, I know that it is God that moves through me for my highest good.

I find that I cannot anticipate anything about this trip. I am as a small child led step by step. I had hoped to be more organized in preparing to go. Due to these inner experiences I found it impossible to manage my own affairs. Fortunately God has seen to it to send help through many hands. A year before leaving, I was talking to Peter **Schultz** about the trip to India. He stood with hands in his pockets and suddenly produced a crisp ten rupee note. Handing it to me he said, “Here, this is for your trip.” As I took the note in some surprise (I had never seen such a note before), he continued, “I have never been to India before, and I have never seen Indian money before. In fact, I have no idea where that note I just gave you came from!” I felt this “miracle money” was

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4. Phyllis Victory, a co-disciple of mine with Mother Hamilton. She has served as a center leader and we travel together on this pilgrimage as spiritual brother and sister.

sweet assurance by the Great Provider that all would be provided. In fact, Peter and Laura gave a generous gift on the eve of my going. Phyllis Victory had paid for my plane ticket, and my parents sent money for a video camera. Carla Gold has helped by taking care of my business affairs while I am gone, and Pam Banks assisted in my preparations to go. Larry and Cate Koler, Al and Elaine Cone and so many sincere and dedicated souls all have made this trip possible through contributions and heartfelt good wishes. My heart fills with gratitude at all that God has done to work His will through so many. I feel God and the Masters' will being worked in my life. I am a grateful lump of clay being molded in their hands.

**God has thrilled me with ever new joy and bliss. I feel as if I am cocooned in His hands. Once again, perhaps continuously, God fills me with gratitude.**

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

**Sept. 21**

*Richard Wright*

On the way to Vancouver last night, God showed me something very interesting. When Richard Wright went to India with Master, and later left Master's work to get married, Master, inasmuch, cut Richard off! Why? God inwardly revealed to me the reason, at a time I had not been thinking of this situation at all. By Richard being in close working relationship with Master, he was in a crucible that was molding his human nature to a divine one. The pressure and strain of this crucible was helping Richard toward his God-realization at an accelerated rate. Leaving the crucible of the work was, for Richard, bound to retard his progress. To punctuate this in Richard's consciousness, Master cut him off. This action was, ultimately, for Richard's highest good. This spontaneous intuition explained something to me that I had felt troubled by before. One of God's inscrutable ways of showing me inner Truths.

**Sept. 24, Delhi**

Arrived from Singapore last night. Neelu, (tour guide for Bill Marion's group) met us at the airport with transportation, thanks to Bill's connection and whose tour group we flew with from Vancouver. We drove to the YWCA as it poured rain; traffic was very heavy; our driver proved to be skillful. I soon learned a honk on the horn means "move over" to the vehicle in front, or "I'm coming by you." Horns are always honking; not angry, but informative. Lights and windshield wipers are used sparingly, oftentimes being turned off despite it being night time and pouring rain. The "Y" did not have our reservations recorded and they were full. Just before midnight all were able to get rooms but me. I was asked to wait ten minutes and at midnight they released a reserved room. I am taken care of in such wonderful ways.

**Infinite Master, you take away with one hand and give with another! Who can gainsay Your ways?**

**O Lord, You have such a wonderful play.**

Breakfast came with the room, \$15.00/night. The room has a large ceiling fan; no air conditioning was really needed; slept well. Air is warm and humid. Fortunately the rain had broken the extreme heat of the week before.

**O Ram<sup>5</sup>, how sweetly you look after your tender-footed children.**

Went to train station to activate Indrail tickets. "Touts" are there to cheat the unwary traveler by directing them across the street to their storefront where they sell bogus tickets. They are quite insistent, but we were warned by the "Lonely Planet" book. Then we went to lunch at the Imperial Hotel—had some of the best dal ever. Back out to airport to retrieve Phyllis's luggage forgotten the night before. My mind has been functioning well.

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5. God's name; one of the ten avatars; form of address among sadhus.

That's good because Phyllis' mind has been a little absent. Had vegetarian plate here at the "Y" for dinner. Plenty of good food for less than a \$1.00 American! Will leave for Haridwar in the early a.m.

I have not yet got a fix on any spiritual feeling here in India. God is present; I see Him in all, but that is my normal state these days. That comes in the strength of my own realization. I have also wanted to experience the power and beauty of spiritual India, coming from the people and places of this sacred land of yogis. Others have described feeling a spiritual vibration when disembarking from the plane. Yet, for me, no discernible spiritual feeling. People here do not smile, and of course there is the poverty. Yet there is a gentleness about the Indians, even the more aggressive panhandlers. Buildings in decay: pity! Have seen some sterling souls, Neelu, Vini, who have helped with travel arrangements here at the "Y" and the woman helping with the lost luggage at Singapore Airlines. None, however have been overtly spiritual. It seems I am keen to encounter spiritual India as soon as possible. I have had to go inside consciously at times not to get overwhelmed by sensory stimuli. Well, tomorrow, to holy Haridwar.

**Lord, I am sure You will reveal to me why You have brought me here. Of course, You are my Supreme Tour Director.**

**Sept. 25, Delhi**

5:00 a.m.—sitting on verandah—giant palm in front—crickets and morning birds singing their psalm of praise—gently drifting through the air—coming from nowhere and everywhere—men's chanting from a nearby Sikh Temple. Longing prayers—the sound of the universal heart. Is this answer to my plea of last night? Here, in predawn quiet is a piece of devotional India.

**O Lord, how sweet this moment—before the horns and traffic there beats a quieter movement.**

**Sept. 25, continued**

—sitting by the Ganges in Haridwar. Train trip from Delhi was all I had ever pictured. After boarding the train we had breakfast: tea, spicy vegetables fried in batter, white bread, butter and jam, then juice afterwards. Train gently swayed, scenery changed from brick buildings in various states of disrepair to sugar cane and rice paddy fields. As we journeyed further from Delhi people started to smile, laugh, so very little of that in Delhi. Haridwar found us with one night's accommodation at the Tourist Bungalow only, tomorrow it is completely filled up.

**O Ram, how sweet and loving You are to us. One day later in our arrival and there would have been no accommodations. You are more kind than a mother to her children.**

I continue to look for spiritual India. Phyllis and I took a motorized rickshaw looking for ochre shawls. Did not find them, but had a raucous tour-de-force sightseeing trip. The rickshaw driver took us to every nook and cranny, including a temple of Krishna and Rama. The statued images had mirrors on three sides. When you looked to the left or the right it appeared that the images were replicated unendingly through the opposite facing mirrors. But, even here, in holy Haridwar, I do not find mystic India. Am I too anxious for it? In Singapore I visited a Moslem Mosque. At first it made no impression. But as I became inwardly quiet, the inner charm of the place grew. Perhaps I will need to be inwardly quiet with India for her to reveal her deeper secrets to me? Perhaps. In any case I know God will forgive me for my impatience. He has seen after us with such loving care. Even now He moves through me while sitting next to His sacred Ganges.

**Om.**

**Sept. 27, Haridwar, 5:00 a.m.**

So much happened yesterday! I awoke early in the morning and sat by the Ganges. Many middle class people were up walk-

ing and jogging when it was still mostly dark outside. A nice-looking young man came near and asked permission to sit. He asked if I liked the Ganges. I said yes. (I had in mind the sacred meeting Christine had had two years ago with the man who told her of the location of Lahiri Mahasaya's *samadhi*.<sup>6</sup>) He said he walked the Ganges every morning and night. Then he asked what I thought about the affair between President Clinton and Monica Lewinski! I said I thought it was shameful. He said he didn't know what the problem was, everyone had affairs before and after marriage. This conversation only added to the feeling of disappointment about finding spiritual India. We discussed this for some time. He left and Phyllis joined me. We walked down the Ganges so I could get a picture of the Red Temple at sunrise. A *sadhu*<sup>7</sup> asked, "with heartfelt thanks," for us to join him on his blanket. The *sadhu* told us he had been on that spot for fifteen years. Then he "gave" us some blessed *rudraksha* beads, then asked for 250 rupees each, over ten times the going rate! He was nothing but a merchant in orange clothes. We declined, and on the way back bought some flowers with a waxed wick in a "boat" of leaves. Lighting the candle I sat the devotional offering in the Ganges saying a prayer:

**O Babaji, in the form of Mother Ganges, please lead me to see Spiritual India!**

When we returned to the hotel Neelu met us on the stairs and offered to take us to Lahiri Mahasaya's *samadhi* site. I, of course, said yes. We arrived to find a group meditating in front of the great Master's shrine. They were celebrating the *Mahasamadhi*<sup>8</sup> Day (day of his death) of Lahiri Mahasaya, the specialness of the

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6. Place of the remains of a saint.

7. Pious or holy person; monk; one who has renounced worldly ties.

8. A saint's or realized being's conscious exit of the body at the moment of death.

day being quite unknown to us before our arrival! We quietly joined them in their meditation while facing the shrine that held the sacred ashes brought from the funeral pyre of Lahiri Mahasaya by Swami Keshabananda. The sun shone in our faces while on that rooftop, my *ajna*, third eye point, burned and gratitude filled my heart. The meditation ended with the familiar melodious Aum, Aum, Aum. We all bowed before the picture of Lahiri Mahasaya. B. K. Anand, the leader of the group, from YSS<sup>9</sup> (Yogoda Satsanga Society) in Delhi, turned instant host and we videotaped him showing us the area. We then heard some wonderful stories of marvelous events relating to the ashram where we stood.

Among those stories was one regarding the banyan tree where we sat. It had been the place of meditation of Swami Keshabananda and, indeed, there was a wonderful vibration where we sat. Also, there was a rudraksha tree on the ashram premises which was said to have been planted by Babaji himself. We were told this is especially extraordinary because this tree, that produces the rudraksha beads used by yogis, grows only at higher altitudes. In addition, it is said the deathless Babaji, Guru of Lahiri Mahasaya, continues to visit this ashram at least once a year. We were introduced to the security guard of the nearby dam, Sri Vijender Kumar Tyagi, who had seen Babaji at the ashram in March of this very year during the Kumbha Mela,<sup>10</sup> being held nearby on the banks of the Ganges.

Sri Tyagi told us, through a translator, that while sitting in his guard booth next to the ashram, he felt a spiritual force hit him very strongly for about a minute. After it subsided, he sat wondering at the source of this powerful influence. Again he felt this force, and this time it drew him magnetically along the path from

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9. Organization in India founded by Paramhansa Yogananda.

10. Hindu festival celebrated every 12 years; ritual bathing in river (nectar of the devas).



his guard booth to the front gate of the ashram. There he saw the source of this spiritual magnetism in the form of a man standing in front of the gate along with two women. He recognized the man from the picture of the *Autobiography of A Yogi* to be Babaji, Guru of Lahiri Mahasaya. The intuitive conviction came over him that this was the great yogi, Babaji, and one of the women, Mataji, said to be the sister of Babaji.

Overjoyed by the visit Sri Tyagi escorted the threesome about the grounds of the ashram. Secretly Mr. Tyagi held some hurt regarding Babaji. Previous to this meeting Mr. Tyagi had prayed to Babaji for dowry money for his daughter, since he had none. Babaji had appeared to him in vision and assured him all would be taken care of. Later that night Sri Tyagi found all the rupees needed for the marriage under his pillow. Out of love, Mr. Tyagi prayed ardently that Babaji come to the wedding. Later, when he did not see Babaji at the wedding, Mr. Tyagi felt hurt. During Babaji's blessed visit to Keshashram, Sri Tyagi asked Babaji why he had not attended his daughter's wedding. Babaji then went on to describe details of the wedding that proved to Sri Tyagi that Babaji had indeed been there, in spirit if not in body. This removed the hurt Sri Tyagi had felt. They walked the grounds of the ashram and as Babaji and company prepared to go they got into a waiting car, a white Maruti<sup>11</sup>. As the doors of the car closed, Tyagi felt remorse he had not bowed at the feet of Babaji. The door of the car opened back up and out came Babaji's feet, allowing Sri Tyagi his darshan. As the door closed again, Sri Tyagi's attention was distracted away from the car for a moment. When he turned back to where the car had been, the car and its occupants had disappeared! Based on my feeling toward this devotee of God, his veracity was not in doubt. Such blessings come for not Sri Tyagi alone, but for all those who hear of this blessed event.

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11. Compact car made in India.

Raj Kumar, a joyful Ram, then told of an English Colonel who, many years ago, wanted the ashram property for constructing a watch tower for a nearby dam. The Colonel took Swami Keshabananda, devotee of Lahiri Mahasaya and builder of this ashram, to court in London. Swami Keshabananda, then living in India, bodily materialized in the courtroom and petitioned for a fifteen-day delay. Fifteen days later in court he again materialized his body in the courtroom. Because of that miracle the Colonel realized he was not dealing with an ordinary person. The legal proceedings to take the property were stopped.

The devotees we met were all love and service to us. The head swami of Keshashram is not associated with the Kriya lineage, but has continued to display the pictures of the masters, Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Keshabananda. Also, a statue of Keshabananda graces the grounds.

**O what sweet bliss, what swift answers to a heartfelt prayer!**

That day Raj Kumar saw to it that we got another hotel, as the one we were at did not have any openings for this coming night. He put me on the back of his scooter, and we raced off in search of a hotel. We found one with openings that would also accept Westerners. Anand kindly informed us of many Indian customs, many of which we were unaware. He was emphatic we tell hotel clerks and others we met on the trip that Phyllis and I traveled as Guru bhai and Guru bhan, spiritual brother and sister. In addition, I should be sure to stay in a room next to Phyllis as a show of protection. In India, he said, it is not customary for unmarried men and women to travel together. He would not even travel with his own sister as his only traveling companion. Anxious not to bring any dishonor on Mother or the work we did for her, we were sure to announce we traveled as spiritual brother and sister and not invite any wrong assumptions or criticism. We were invited back to Keshashram later that afternoon at 4:00 to meet Anand and Raj Kumar.

We took a three wheeler, provided by God in response to Anand's prayer, according to Anand, and went across the wide Ganges to a leper colony. There we met an amazing young devotee of Yoganandaji. This devotee, Ashish, has started a school, the Divya Prem Seva Mission, for the children of lepers. Even though these children are not afflicted with this dreaded disease, the schools in town do not allow them to attend. Along with the school, consisting of three large thatched roof huts built by local people, there is a medical dispensary for lepers. When we arrived the children were standing in neat rows singing devotional songs. We visited a hundred-year-old swami who blesses the school by living in the compound. He is a bright luminary engrossed in the chanting of Ram Nam.<sup>12</sup> We paid our respects to him with bananas and pranams,<sup>13</sup> and moved on to the hut that serves as the temple. More bananas, brought for the occasion, with pranams, all presented to the altar containing pictures of our lineage up to Master, along with Rama and Shiva.

Trampoline-type couches were set up outdoors and tea was served. Ashish said it was Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya and Master who inspired him to start the school and medical treatment for the leper colony. Individual YSS members help support it with several thousand rupees every year. It is all privately funded. As we spoke of God, Master and the good work being done here, the setting sun illuminated pointed spires of nearby temples hidden amongst the trees. Then the darkened sky revealed hidden stars shining brightly overhead. The peace and pure aura were pervasive and permeated my soul. Oh, what gratitude welled in my heart! I gave what rupees I had to Ashish and later I sent some things I thought they might find useful. A bicycle rickshaw was "waiting" for us, arranged by Master, out in that remote area. Across the long bridge over the Ganges, crescent moon lighting

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12. Name of God.

13. Salutations; prostration.

the sky, sweet smell of burning dung hanging in the air. The beauty of ancient India seemed to light our way back.

Just back to the hotel, and a knock at the door. A 4<sup>th</sup> year student of Ayurveda from the meditation group had stopped by wanting to know more about practicing medicine in U.S. We took him to his favorite restaurant, just across from his university building. An eatery for students and local people, we attracted not just a few stares. The food was very good. We also stopped in at a temple, attracted by the loud sound of ringing bells and blowing conch shells. The blatant cacophony over, a bright looking renunciate with salt and pepper colored beard and hair, round belly, wrapped in ochre *dhoti*<sup>14</sup>, came over to talk. He had been a businessman for many years and had left everything in his son's hands in renunciation of worldly pursuits. Now he lives at the temple. He glowed. He proudly spoke of a daughter in St. Louis, U.S.A., whom he had visited last year. On to the Ganges and a star-lit talk of Ayurveda with our young student friend, but my heart was with God.

**O Lord, what gratitude fills my heart at such sweet blessings.**

This morning I start another day, another adventure. I now hear temple bells complete with blowing conch shells, beating drums and loud chanting. The sounds of the material world begin to compete now with horn toots and some stirring voices and sounds of others.

**May Your name be blessed above all others. Om Sri Ram Jai Ram.**

**Sept. 27, 11:00 p.m.**

Quite a full day, filled with devotees, love and kindnesses. Meditated under the banyan tree at Keshashram—quite peaceful. On to Dr. Bhagat's home for *satsang*<sup>15</sup> with YSS devotees—many

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14. Cloth men wear around the lower limbs.

15. A meeting of devotees. Literally: association with the wise.

devoted souls, had opportunity to video some of the proceedings and people. They honored me by asking me to read from *Man's Eternal Quest* for their service. The power of God flowed during the reading and several came up to tell me what a realized yogi I was. Imagine, this Westerner, God's youngest child, getting praise such as this! Wonderful music from Sri Chakravarty Vijay of Aurobindo Ashram—this humble saint who seemed to not touch the floor when he walked. He graciously invited us to his Aurobindo Ashram, near Varanasi when we travel to that area. (I regret to say that we were unable to do that.)

Gifts were given to us from Raj Kumar: pictures of Lahiri Mahasaya and Babaji, a candle from Dr. Bhagat's family (eventually left at Babaji's cave), an *Autobiography of a Yogi* from the security guard, Sri Tyagi (who had met with Babaji), and a picture of Babaji (black and white) from Anandaji. Due to lateness of the day Dr. Bhagat gave us his car and driver for visiting temples, such as Ananda Moyi Ma's<sup>16</sup> samadhi, and for the trip to Rishikesh. Anand and Raj Kumar graciously accompanied us as our guides. We got a hotel, visited a Kriya Yoga ashram and met two bright swamis with beautiful spiritual eyes. One's name is Swami Purnananda Giri, who is a disciple of Swami Sadananda Giri, who was a disciple of Master's. The other swami practiced repetition of Ram Nam. While visiting these lovely souls, one said through our translator, Anand, "You must have done a lot of spiritual sadhana in past lives in order to chant Ram Nam and practice spiritual sadhana, especially being all the way from where you live (in America)."

Late dinner, and now I am writing. Phyllis said each day seems like a month of experience, and I completely agree. Anand said he rarely talks these days and does not usually visit devotees. But he has extended himself completely to us. This evening, God showed

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16. A woman saint, famous worldwide and written about in *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

His Light through me to Anand while we sat at dinner. I have come to India as a seeker, not one who teaches or even displays the Light for all to see. But, it seems, in some cases, God sees fit that this Light shine in profusion. As he looked at me, I held his gaze, God radiating through me and finally he looked down. He then commented, “You know everything.” Before that moment he had been in the role of the “teacher.” I say this, because, like a child, I find it all so interesting.

**Jai Guru.**

**Sept. 29, 6:00 a.m.**

Rishikesh, on the other side of the river. The sound of the river Ganga flowing in some rapids, and prayers coming over a loud speaker from across the river. I slept on the second story porch because the heat and humidity made the room oppressive. The body is getting more adjusted to the heat and humidity, but this body is needing recharging. The heat, the noise and pollution of traffic, demands by beggars and constant bargaining for every service and good is a strain. It is good to rest here for now.

A wonderful thought, a realization, came to me the other day after an incident. Anand asked if we could forgive a swami who had done an inappropriate action. We said “Yes, of course.” Later at Professor Bhagat’s home, during meditation, the thought came to me that all of life is like a river, constantly flowing, constantly flowing. It is huge, mysterious and sacred. When we choose not to forgive and to hang on to the past, we inhibit the flow of the river of life within. We deny the freedom of constant change when we hold on to the past. The River Ganges now reminds me of that realization. Like so many times in trying to relate some inner realizations, they seem flat to me as I write them down. But that is the essence of it.

Diwali is a 10-day celebration of Lights—Rama overcoming a demon of darkness. Today is the end of this holy time that has

encompassed our entire stay in India. Raj Kumar tells us this is a very blessed time to be in India.

### **Oct. 2, Dwarahat**

Twenty-six hours straight of bus and jeep travel from Rishikesh to Dwarahat. Pilgrimages are those times that try humans' souls. At least this trip tried ours. We traveled on dirty, noisy buses, had insect bites from head to toe (from who knows what), were riding for hours, perched on a seat only half supported, or crammed between two other people on a seat built for two at most, not the three or four as we were. It is hot, humid, and traffic was stopped because of a holiday (10<sup>th</sup> day of Diwali). All that contrasted with the lovely time spent in Haridwar with devotees and their love of Master; the selfless service of Raj Kumar; the hospitality of Anand; the calm presence of Sri Tyagi; and the smiles and sharing of food with fellow pilgrim souls.

But as always, the more important part is the inner journey. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the difficult outward conditions the silent, constant chanting of Jai Guru, Jai Ram and the affirmation that "all happens by the design of God" never leave the mind. This inner attunement sustains even the most travel-weary soul. Phyllis thought how wonderful it would be to stay in a three-or-four-star hotel in Ranikhet, but all were full. That led to a Jeep ride to here, Dwarahat, by two lovely souls. Stopped for scenic moments, and finally arrived at the YSS Ashram. The head ashram swami is Swami Nityananda. Oh, the peace, the feeling of God! Better than any five-star hotel by far!

T.K. Aurora,<sup>17</sup> just arrived from the Punjab with a group including family and friends. They told of the tragic circumstances in which their homes in Kashmir were looted one night by separatists and then burned to the ground the next night. They moved their families from Kashmir and have made new homes for them-

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17. I do not know how to spell this name. This is a phonetic spelling.

selves. T.K. Aurora has been to this ashram before, and is now bringing friends and family for the blessings of this ashram. One of the party also told me that two years previous, while at this ashram, he had a vision of Swami Nityananda in the third eye point. It confirmed for him that Swami Nityananda had attained the spiritual perfection of Master. He went on to say that I am the first person to whom he has related this vision; he had not even told his wife!

**O Lord, what blessings you heap on this head! Will my heart hold all this? Only time will tell.**

Swami Nityananda has a beautiful spiritual light in his face and his eyes. He told me some of his life's story. He refused to be videotaped at this point, he does not want to "propagate" himself. Interested in the spiritual from a young age, he became a *Vaishnavite*.<sup>18</sup> Some of those followers can be bound by orthodoxy as believers in Krishna.<sup>19</sup> After joining an order, he resided in a run-down temple. They asked him to go to the Kumbha Mela to do work there. All he wanted to do was chant, and did not feel like submitting to their request. He wanted only to chant Sri Krishna's name. So he ended up leaving their order. Reading the *Autobiography of A Yogi*, his life was changed. He had heard of the book before, but it was out of print in India when he first heard of it. Finally finding the book, he found the *Autobiography of A Yogi* widened his focus. It turned out the yoga teacher who gave it to Swamiji had had it loaned to him by a Westerner. The teacher had not read it himself, but acted as a conduit. The Westerner found out from the teacher that Swamiji had read it in about a month. The Westerner spent some days with Swamiji. Swamiji was disappointed to find out only Westerners carried on the leadership of this tradition. The Westerner signed Swamiji up for the lessons,

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18. Worshipper of Lord Vishnu.

19. Avatar of Vishnu, the ideal of Vaishnavas; expounder of *The Song Celestial*. [Some think Krishna is above Vishnu.]



but Swamiji refused. The Westerner said Swamiji was under no obligation to read them, then Swamiji agreed.

Before receiving the lessons Swamiji assumed he heard most of what was in them, thinking he knew it all. He got 8 lessons and read them all immediately. He was impressed how they were laid out and what they contained. Then he heard, after 17 months of getting lessons, that Daya Mata, current president of Self Realization Fellowship/YSS, was coming to India. After meeting her, having read the *Autobiography of A Yogi* and the lessons, he realized he had never before been so happy. He decided to follow this path. He has been the ashram swami for 2½ years, the ashram being built in the late 1970s. Swami Nityananda has a gentle mien, a laugh that comes from some place deep in the belly, bright skin and bright eyes. I think he is wonderful. Perhaps in the next few days I can get him on videotape.

Well, this body is fatigued. 1½ hours sleep in the last two days and all the travel. I am glad Ram got us here today, although I was disappointed at first not finding a hotel this morning. Right outside my window is a flowering bush called the Night Queen. It blooms and smells only at night and has a powerfully perfumed fragrance. It is wafting her fragrance toward me now. Snakes too are enchanted and will wind themselves around her trunk, intoxicated with her perfumed presence.

**Om Shanti**<sup>20</sup>

**Oct. 3**

The other day Raj Kumar introduced me as a “great yogi.” Why he said this I do not know. I certainly do not feel this way. I do feel like a small child, being led by God with a great and overwhelming desire to have my oneness with God. That is, to have that certain knowledge of my direct link with God, without flaw,

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20. Peace

without a misstep, living in that Presence at all times. It is all due to God's grace—even my desire for Him is by God and Guru's grace. Who could say anything different? From the beginning, what has propelled me on this path has been a force beyond me. The Swami at the Kriya Ashram in Rishikesh, who chanted God's name, said I must have had good *samskaras*, (past life tendencies), to be drawn to chanting Sri Ram. Swami Nityananda said Master wrote that many souls from the East are now being born in the West, as well as from the West to the East. Perhaps this explains this attraction so many souls in the West have had for Eastern teachings? Those who have had those past lives in India and the East recognize and know the truth when they hear it. Oh, so many mysteries in life, how shall we know unless God reveals them to us?

**Aum Shanti!**

**Oct. 3, continued**

Swami Nityananda spoke to Phyllis, and two other devotees, a young couple—he originally from America and she from Switzerland. He seemed to speak mostly to the couple. His main points included:

Life is filled with pain and death  
The soul continues to incarnate  
The world is made up of thought  
Spiritual progress requires effort

I felt the vibration of his voice resonating in my heart center; I had this experience the day before with him. I felt uplifted, barely able to keep my eyes open. He said afterward to me, "I enjoy you being here." Why he said this, I don't know. I believe there are some truths he is holding back. I don't know if he will say. He has a fickle nature, or perhaps he has other considerations. He has said I may not take video on these grounds or videotape him; that may be a gesture of his humility. But, he also took a letter he sent to me

in America and is now reluctant to give it back, saying, “What do you need it for now; it has served its purpose.” He did say, with others in the room, he wanted to give me an Indian stamp with Master’s picture on it. He takes with one hand and gives with another. Such is the mystery of God’s *lila*,<sup>21</sup> His play. Perhaps—the thought just came—he is testing my ego nature. Yes, that has a fit to it. Well, the game is afoot!

Story from Swami Nityananda:

A preacher and a taxi cab driver died on the same day and both went to heaven. The taxi cab driver had a place way ahead of the preacher in the line getting into heaven. The preacher, noticing this, complained to one of the angels. He said, “All those years I preached the word of God, and now, now that I stand before this gate, this cab driver is way ahead of me. Where is the fairness in this?!” The angel answered calmly, “The facts are simply this: often when you preached of God, many slept. When this man drove his cab, **everyone** prayed!”

I wanted to make a note of Mr. Tyagi, the security guard who had seen Babaji. I stood next to him, and felt he was an extraordinary man. There was no doubt about the fact he had integrity.

### **Oct. 3, continued**

I sat on the rooftop, just short of a full moon lit the clear-skied night. The evening started at 5:30 when Swamiji rang the hand-held bell and performed an *arati*,<sup>22</sup> waving a burning lamp and then a sacred broom before the altar of Krishna and Radha. He then led us in energization exercises outdoors. We moved to the meditation hall where he also performed arati and, waving the sacred broom in front of the pictures of our lineage of Masters,

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21. Play of the Divine.

22. Waving of lights before deities or saints and sannyasins.

played the harmonium and led us in Master's chants; then meditation until 7:00. A light dinner—soup and chapati, water, and papaya chutney (spicy). The boy who works at the ashram literally ran to the meditation hall after the meal to play the harmonium and sing chants. I joined him with concurrent emotional fervor. Then up to the rooftop in the full moon. Tears welled up; thoughts of how I have let God down came to me; sincere sorrow in my heart, humbleness.

**O Lord, I am nothing. Grace comes to the undeserving. Please Lord, let it come to me. I yearn to see You, know Your constant Presence. Come to me! Make me Your very own.**

In this way I spoke to God. Perhaps the Masters will not listen, I am too beneath their concern. But I know the eternal God, my constant Friend and Companion, even when I do not measure up, is there comforting me in my great need for Him alone.

O Babaji, tomorrow we go for darshan of the place where you initiated Lahiri Mahasaya. I have purged with fever in Rishikesh, now tears on the rooftop. I know I am undeserving of Your grace, but please know I want to love and serve You with everything in my heart.

**“Jai Guru” is constantly in my heart and mind.**

#### **Oct. 4, YSS Ashram**

Up early this morning. Swamiji was doing energization exercises in the pre-dawn night—barely saw him as all was black. Up on the rooftop. Lost in meditation. Suddenly, as if on cue, there was an explosion of sound: crickets, the coo-coos, chirps and songs of birds. I opened my eyes and saw light had come. Then smoke swirled over the second-story flat roof of the ashram building. Voices came floating up with the smoke from below. The Punjab group, Aurora, another man and two boys were heating water. It is done in a wood-heated stove that water is poured into, heated, then comes out a spout, boiling hot, into a pail. A simple begin-

ning to the day of our visit to Babaji's cave.

**Oct. 4, YSS Ashram, continued**

Well, we made the Himalayan cave where, it is said, Babaji initiated Lahiri Mahasaya. I feel so proud of Phyllis. A year ago, a walk around her long block was almost more than she could do. Today, 95 lbs. lighter, she made it through the ups and downs and uneven footing, 2 miles each direction! Well, quite an accomplishment, at nearly 8,000 ft.! While there, meditating in the cave, I felt such a deep vibration—low, rumbling, powerful, at the base *chakra*.<sup>23</sup> Like heavy machinery working deep beneath the mountain, the vibration was resonating powerfully in my spine and body. It has come back to me several times today, including the long meditation (5:30-8:30) tonight. It was not without its oppositional force however! The mind was whirling with attachment thoughts of Babaji appearing and other miraculous occurrences I secretly harbored, almost unconsciously. The ego was attached to some high-adventure outcome. But on reflection in meditation, I came to see the gift of that vibration felt in the cave as truly profound and powerful. Focusing on that vibration, visions of the Masters kept coming to me. Beyond those visions I asked but for one thing: the Universal Vision.

Babaji's cave is actually on Pandu Khuli (Place of Pandus), not Dronagiri as commonly reported. I was told Dronagiri is more widely known and that is why the cave is referred to as being there. Historically, Dronagiri is the mountain (giri) where Drona, the martial arts teacher of the Pandus had meditated. Pandu Khuli was the place where the Pandus, including Arjuna of the Bhagavad Gita, had gone during their thirteenth year of exile. They were sentenced to twelve years living in the wilderness. The thirteenth

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23. Literally: Wheel. Power centers of the astral body located along the spine and in the head.

year they were to hide, and if found, would be sentenced to further exile.

Back at the ashram, while taking a tea break, Phyllis was in a conversation with two YSS devotees from Nepal. When she spoke of Mother as being our Guru, they responded with the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) version of Master, (Paramhansa Yogananda) being the last guru of this lineage. For some reason upon hearing this, in combination with Swami Nityananda's glowing descriptions of Daya Mata, put the whole question regarding the Kriya lineage in my mind. I surrendered the whole question to Master during the visit to Babaji's cave. Inwardly, I submitted myself to Master's direction, whatever the outcome.

After I returned to the ashram I sat looking at Master's "last smile" picture that hung in my room. A Light came from that picture that revealed an inner essence of Master's divinity. This Light of Master supported an experience while on the mountain. It was there I had the memory come very powerfully into my mind, as a revelation, of Master's letter to Mother. In that letter, Master spoke of giving Mother permission to give Kriya initiation, diksha. He went on to say that hers was to be a "new dispensation of a new order of SRF." This memory combined with the "friendly Light" coming from Master's picture confirmed for me that what Mother had from Master was unique and separate from SRF. This I felt came directly from Master and resolved all doubts. Gratitude for Master's direct guidance was in my heart. Not satisfied with reciting by rote others' truths, I received directly from Master what I needed to resolve my doubts.

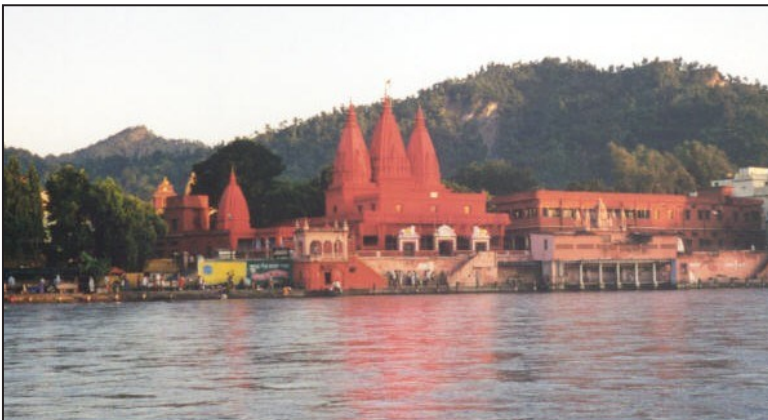
**Thank you Master for your love, care and guidance. I pray that you make me a fit instrument for carrying out your work.  
Jai Gurus**

So, it's been quite a day again! We shall see what the 'morrow

My Spiritual India—Part I



Sri Chakravarty of Aurobindo Ashram



The Red Temple, Hardwar

My Spiritual India—Part I



Lahiri Mahasaya's Samadhi  
Keshashram, Hardwar



L-R: Raj Kumar, Phyllis, David, Sri Tyagi, Anand, Unknown



My Spiritual India—Part I



Rishikesh: Sw. Purnananda (L),  
Kriya Yogi with a Ram Nam Devotee



Babaji's Cave

My Spiritual India—Part I



Path to Babaji's Cave



Looking toward Dronagiri Hill: 8,000 feet

brings. As I sat on the rooftop tonight, the full moon had a planet on its right. I talked all my quandaries over with God. You know, the test has been around separation from God. There is something around the SRF/YSS mindset that produces an effect in me that makes God feel distant. I worked on eliminating that distance. First, I acknowledged that sense of distance. Then, I reached out to that intimate Presence. A feeling of the Presence of God came within. Now I am feeling much better. Mother always made God seem close, accessible. He most certainly is tonight.

**Thank you Mother. Jai Ram. Jai Gurus.**

P.S. The young girls from the Punjab group have a nickname for me. In their own language they call me “smiley” because I always seem to have a smile. They also gave me some fruit and a lemon drop candy. God is so kind through so many.

**Om Shanti**

## My Spiritual India—Part I