

George and his friends moved down the road. It was a long time before anyone spoke. They passed one kirtan then another. Temple bells mingled with drums and bells, clappers and clapping. The world seemed afloat in music. Spirit for the people of Vrindavan was not a weekly class or weekend retreat — they breathed it in at every moment and breathed it out in song. “How magnificent this feeling is,” George told his friends.

The album of traditional songs and mantras was released in 1997. George considered *Chants Of India* one of his most important works, as it allowed listeners to “turn off your mind, relax, and float downstream, and listen to something that has its roots in the transcendental ... beyond intellect. If you let yourself be free ... it can have a positive effect.”

George never stopped making music or trying to put a spiritual message out into the world. But these callings seemed less urgent to him in his later years than they had as a young man. He once described himself as someone who had climbed to the top of the material world, then looked over to find that there was much more on the other side. There, on the other side of the material mountain, was the call of his eternal self and his relationship with the Divine. As he approach death, with his missionary years behind him, that vision became all that mattered. “Now I understand about ninety-year-old people who feel like teenagers,” he said less than a year before his death. “The soul in the body is there at birth and there at death. The only change is the bodily condition.”

George's life started in music and ended in music. In Los Angeles, surrounded by family and friends and the chanting of God's holy names, his soul left its body on November 29 — only a few weeks after the tragedy of 9/11. For those of us who had been inspired by his example, it was impossible to avoid seeing these two events in macabre orbit around one another: the terrible consequences of turning away from the light, and the miracles that can come when we put the light of spirit at the center of our lives.

In August 1966, a reporter had asked George to describe his personal goal. “To do as well as I can do,” he replied, “whatever I attempt, and someday to die with a peaceful mind.” He was twenty-three years old when he set that goal for himself. He never gave it up.

“You know, I read a letter from him to his mother that he wrote when