

Darshan & Sadhana

Living in the Ashram

A Personal Journey on a Spiritual Path



Anatole Kononewsky

1st April 1991 to 19th December 2004

- Om Guru Om -

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1st April 1991 to 19th December 2004



**“The ashram is a furnace that
burns with the fuel of our spiritual
practices, igniting the fire of
love within our hearts.”**

Anatole Kononewsky
11th December 2004



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PREFACE

Sadhana is the practice of spiritual discipline. Gurumayi says:

"If you are only clever at theorising about God, the truth, or the Self, you do not attain any of them. You need the practical aspect of sadhana, the direct realization of God. Without this direct realization there is no attainment. We read and read, we listen and listen, yet we do not feel anything because we have neglected the practical aspect. Without direct realization, theory cannot really do much to help us."

Swami Chidvilasanada "Kindle my Heart" Vol I (NY Prentice Press Hall 1989), page 23.

Darshan describes those precious, particular and spontaneous moments of sublime interaction with the Guru. To quote William K Mahony from the book "Meditation Revolution":
"Of the various moments in the spiritual life of a student of Siddha Yoga, the most cherished by virtually all accounts is that which takes place when the disciple and physical guru see each other face to face. It is a moment of unmatched intensity and focus and can be an experience of what is described by many disciples as unbounded love. This is a time of darshan, that is, of being in the presence of the guru."

"Meditation Revolution - The Guru-Disciple Relationship" by William K Mahony, page 275.

He goes on to say:

"Darshan may occur at any time. It may take place in a large lecture hall or in a quiet room. It might take place as the guru walks through the ashram kitchen or along a path winding through a garden."

"Meditation Revolution - The Guru-Disciple Relationship" by William K Mahony, page 275.

We may contemplate our extraordinary good fortune in having the level of accessibility to a living saint, in our Guru, Swami Chidvilasananda, because as William Mahony continues:

"Fifty years ago, people would walk miles along muddy jungle paths, sometimes for days to sit for only a moment or two in the presence of Bhagavan Nityananda."

"Meditation Revolution - The Guru-Disciple Relationship" by William K Mahony, page 275.



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Chapter 1 - My First Visit to the Ashram

A friend of mine, in 1986, first invited me to a Siddha Yoga Ashram in Sydney. My initial response to the ashram was of uncertainty and a little confusion about the possibility of blind devotion, as typified in many cult leaders of the day. However, I felt a beautiful, peaceful, warm and welcoming atmosphere pervading the whole place and coming from the people. I visited a couple of more times that year, and then didn't return until 1987.

While visiting the Ashram in Sydney during 1988 I always found the atmosphere very peaceful, nourishing and rejuvenating to my spirit, and started attending regularly. It was quite a few years before I actually found out that Ashram literally means "*the removal of fatigue or stress*". I also learnt that the literal meaning of Guru means "*from the dark to the light*". I also started to learn a whole lot more about the implications of having a true Guru or Meditation Master in your life.

I always felt welcomed at the Ashram and my personal space was always respected during my visits. This was important to me at the time, as my work was very intense and I needed the space to simply connect with myself and disconnect from the stress of my business. After going along to the Ashram for about four years, for some unexplainable reason I stopped going in 1990. In retrospect this was quite unusual as I had been attending every program, twice a week, without fail, prior to this!

The Year of the Personal Purge

I unaffectionately call 1991: '*The Year of the Personal Purge*'. This was certainly how it felt. Yet, at the same time I also knew on another, deeper and more profound inner level, I somehow always felt right about what was happening.

During this year everything seemed to go haywire on an outer level. Things just went *beyond my conscious control*. Situations that should have, by any stretch of the imagination, gone one way, went the exact opposite! Every situation compounded upon the others. I was being brought to my knees on a material, worldly level.

If tried to actually "do" something it was immediately blocked.

I had always felt master of my destiny and for the first time in my life I felt I had no control over anything and although at some deep level it felt right, *I did not like it!*



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The situation was very uncomfortable. I had decided to follow my heart with no “visible means of support” or source of income. The circumstances created a very stressful emotional environment where my tolerance levels were taken to the limit. This made the simplest tasks of life a major trial and test. The most basic, mundane situations become emotionally overwhelming and subtle. I was being confronted on a deeper, more personal level. I was constantly being challenged to demonstrate the essence of three words: *Patience, Humility and Compassion*.

Stop Making Sense

Finally, I decided to *stop making sense* of what was happening and just started to trust the process was leading somewhere I wanted to go, although I was a little wary of where that might be. Then quite out of the blue in January 1991, I decided to go back to a program at the Ashram and discovered that a meditation Master, Swami Chidvilasanada was coming to Australia.

One of her Swamis, or monks, had just arrived and was giving a talk at the Ashram. He explained how a process of intense *purging* could sometimes start to occur for people well before the meditation Master or Guru arrives. He explained how this purging of the self can occur and people can experience very difficult times prior to meeting the Guru. He described this purging as a very healthy and productive experience to go through, like the forging of steel to make a strong blade for a sword. Well, hearing this was absolutely music to my ears. I had such a sense of relief!

Thank God for that, I thought. There finally seemed to be some sense to all the madness and everything I had been going through all that time! I started to see how the previous year had lead me to that point, with a new and much stronger commitment to my spiritual journey. I reflected on how important this commitment is to me. In fact this has been the most important thing in my life ever since I was a teenager. So I finally realized that 1990, although I did not know at the time, was a year of preparation for Gurumayi’s visit to Australia. It certainly was a real purging and a burning up of a lot of Karma.

Selfless Service - It Works if you do!

When I noticed Gurumayi would in Sydney around the time of my birthday, I felt this was a good sign, a possible turning point in my life. But I had no idea of the experiences in store for me in 1991 and beyond. I just felt it would be highly significant to me in some way.

I spoke with the Manager of the Sydney Ashram at the time, Claire Edwards, and she introduced me to the Executive Director of the Tour in Sydney.



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My return back in to the Ashram thus commenced with the normal intensity of an Aries, by diving head long into action by doing Seva, or *selfless service*. Finally I was able to become involved in doing something, albeit very simple, in an outer way. It seemed to be flowing right along. I started working at the main offices for organising the tour, a few months before the Guru's arrival.

I was very comfortable with service for a higher purpose; in fact I had been doing voluntary work for not-for-profit organisations for many years. The word Seva refers to an ancient spiritual practice that *works if you do!* It is based on giving selflessly, selfless service. It speeds up one's evolutionary process significantly. It is service performed with a sense of being unattached to the results and giving for the sake of giving. This willingness to give is a direct reflection of the inherent nature within the spirit of each of us. It is the natural expression of a human being that is connected to their true inner spiritual nature.

I had often contemplated how we make that connection to our true inner spiritual nature through the personality.

Selfless service is the ultimate and natural goal of every individual and if we examine history we see true greatness has only been achieved via unconditional selfless service. The great Masters and all those great Beings who have made a significant difference to humanity have all done so via complete surrender to serving humanity.

I remembered hearing that Baba Muktananda had said: *"If we stop trying to change the world, and learn to serve the world in love, then the world will change..."*



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Meeting a Meditation Master

I threw myself into helping out in preparation for the arrival of Gurumayi. I really loved it. I grew to love this one particular person I worked with, Marlise. She was always enthusiastic, encouraging and full of joy. She seemed to have a marvelous capacity to give and to keep on giving. She was a real inspiration! I loved working with Marlise and developed a close friendship with her.

In no time at all Gurumayi had arrived in Australia and I started attending all the programs at the Sydney Convention Centre, at Darling Harbour in Sydney. I had become quite involved in the Tour preparations. I had really enjoyed doing my *seva* and I was finding peace and strength in working for the tour. I had invited quite a few guests along to the programs. As part of my *Seva* for the programs I had the very good fortune to be seated up near the front, close to Gurumayi during the programs. I had not met her before, so the first time I saw her she seemed to just appear in the room. In fact, I was quite startled as I was not sure how she would enter. I felt a momentary surge of excitement throughout my body, as Gurumayi appeared in the hall.

I attended the programs, night after night, relishing the electric atmosphere created with up to 3,000 other people at the Convention Centre in the middle of Sydney. I pondered on the far reaching significance of having that many people, from all walks of life, professional backgrounds, ages, religions, etc, all chanting God's name in the middle of a big city every night during each of the programs.

Creating Greatness

I sensed I was in the presence of a truly great Being. I began to see how Gurumayi unceasingly treated everyone with such great respect and care. Now, you may say, that's no big deal. But greeting thousands of people for hours on end, day after day and somehow being totally present for that whole time was amazing to me. I wanted to be in that state that Gurumayi seemed to be in all the time. It seemed solid and really substantial. She seemed totally and permanently connected to something special and I wanted that experience too. She was totally interested in everything around her and invoked a spontaneous joy within everyone near her. I saw how Gurumayi put the opening words to all her talks into action; "*With great respect and love, I welcome you all with all my Heart.*"



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What really struck me was that Gurumayi was just totally there with every situation, in every moment. She also seem to generate a tremendous sense of joy that was constantly radiating out to everyone she came in contact with. *It was inexplicably extraordinary - the Guru simply created greatness around her!*

A special Easter Program

I decided to go to a special Easter program that coincided with my Birthday. I awoke on that crisp Easter Monday morning with a strong commitment to releasing my disappointment from the previous night. Namely, I had attended the Sunday night introduction program at the Convention Centre and I had missed out on meeting Gurumayi with a friend of mine who was invited to meet her after the Sunday night program. I had decided to let this disappointment go as this was my special day and I knew in my heart that what I truly wanted was to have the Guru awakened inside my heart, not just to be in her physical presence, as special as that was!

So I got dressed and decided to leave a little early to get to the Easter Monday program. I thought about what an auspicious combination of events the day was: *Easter Monday - My Birthday - and a Special Easter Monday Program with the Guru!*

The year of 1990 had been the most challenging, intense, difficult and *most rewarding* year of my life, all at the same time! It was certainly nothing like I had expected, I had been put through the proverbial wringer and felt quite burnt out! Looking back though, it had no doubt prepared me for the experiences ahead!

The Hibiscus Flowers - Unexpected Guests

I decided to leave the last twelve months behind. This was to be my day, so off I went to spend my birthday with the Guru. As I walked out to my car I noticed that I had parked my car next to a beautiful hibiscus tree that was in full flower. Two of the branches were leaning out towards the *Beemer's* car door, on the driver's side, and two large, gorgeous, magenta hibiscus flowers were reaching out expectantly, waiting to be noticed! I gave them my attention and asked if they wanted to come along to the program. The inner answer was a definite *yes!* So I picked them off the tree and invited the nature spirits of the tree to come along, as well. I sat the two beaming flowers in the front passenger seat and set off to the program. They both seemed pleased they'd got their "message" across to me.



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I arrived at Darling Harbour and checked out my guest list. I decided to go inside the hall and arrange the seating for my guests. I placed my coat on the chair, and placed my unexpected and excited guests, the hibiscus flowers, in a paper-cup of water, placed the cup inside my hat, and placed my hat under the chair. The nature spirits were no doubt having a great time basking in the sublime spiritual energy of the hall.

I went back out to meet the guests I had invited. I waited for some time, but as it turned out, none of them arrived! I decided to go inside to attend to the other invited guests I had left under the chair: *the Hibiscus flowers and their accompanying nature spirits.*

As I walked down to my seat I noticed a lady who looked very familiar, sitting in the seat next to me. I found out later this was Phylicia Rashad, from the TV Series “The Cosby Show”. On the other side of my seat was Peggy Lipton, who I had also recently met, also a celebrity from a TV show called “Twin Peaks”. Both of them seemed to exude so much love for the Guru - it was truly palpable. I really felt their energy coming from them in a subtle, yet genuine way. They had flown to Australia from the U.S.A. to be at the programs. I thought to myself what, wonderful company for my birthday: plus two radiant hibiscus flowers also waiting expectantly under the chair in my hat! I offered my thanks to the Guru for being with her in such lovely company!

As I sat down, the Master of Ceremonies for the program introduced two female singers, Lulu and Meg Christian, with beautiful voices who came out to sing for us. I felt he was hosting the program especially for my Birthday! The beauty of the song allowed my heart to open in response to the inspirational sweetness and harmony inherent in the song and the exquisite performance by the singers, who were coerced to do another song.

This song evoked a deeper response within my heart. I felt it was especially for me. I was feeling very nurtured. It seemed the Guru was showering me with blessings for my birthday and I felt the flow of love starting to move within my being there. The ‘disastrous’ year that I had just had seemed to be fading into the background. For now, I just wanted to be wrapped in this nurturing, caring, loving atmosphere and simply receive the attention like a little child. I had been through quite a lot, emotionally and mentally, over the last year. I felt really worn out and my entire being was feeling very fragile. I needed to get back in touch with the heart of love inside of me, that *feminine side* of myself that allows and invites nourishment and caring. I needed to open myself to receive love and support from others and the entire universe.



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Singing God's Name

Well, one of the Swamis entered and gave a tender, powerful and inspiring introduction to the spirit of chanting and the power of singing God's name, especially with around 3,000 other people, all from different walks of life, backgrounds and religious beliefs. I had always felt a little self-conscious about chanting and this provided a perfect invitation to immerse myself in the chanting that was about to commence with a sense of freedom. I felt ready to open myself up to the flow of love from the Guru.

A film of Baba Muktananda, and his Guru, Bhagawan Nityananda was shown, and this was a wonderful introduction to the fast chant with Gurumayi: *Govinda Jaya Jaya, Gopala Jaya Jaya*

These words sing praise to aspects of God that have to do with protecting and nourishing the earth. The chanting became outstanding as Gurumayi lead the chant to an ecstatic peak.



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Birthday & Divya Diksha

Shaktipat & Darshan - 1st April 1991

Chanting with Gurumayi, I felt a sudden surge of tremendous energy come up from my spine and up through my body. All of a sudden the presence of the Guru appeared right in front of me and she said: "*From this moment on you will be anew and I will always be with you.*" Tears of joy welled up in me and flowed down my cheeks, and as I opened my eyes, I seemed to be greeted by Gurumayi, looking compassionately straight at me. I had had many peak experiences before but this was an intensely inner experience that was completely different from anything else I had ever experienced.

It had awakened something that seemed at the depth of my being.

After the chant ended Brigit came rushing up to me and asked me to go with her. I was invited to meet Gurumayi. She was sitting radiantly in a beautifully transformed dressing room. I shared my inner experience from the program earlier, and the words that I had received, with Gurumayi, and in the moment in front of Gurumayi I was inspired to add: "*My life and being are in your hands, as you are in my heart.*" Gurumayi gave a nod and a slight *twinkle* in acknowledgment. I continued to speak with Gurumayi of my Ukrainian heritage and the beautiful scenery in Russia and the ceremony and ritual of the Russian Orthodox Church. We also spoke of the deep spirituality and giving nature of the people.

Gurumayi then said, "*So, it is your Birthday...*" and reached over to an exquisite silk and pashmina shawl, which she majestically placed over my head as I knelt in front of her! I must have been a little overawed because I remained fixed in the spot where I was sitting in front of Gurumayi. Soon I was prodded from the back by someone to move forward so Gurumayi could reach me and place the shawl over my head! I expressed my gratitude and spoke a little more with Gurumayi.

Gurumayi then gave me a small chocolate Easter bunny as a parting gesture.

Darshan & Gentle Tap - 19th April 1991

The Tour moved on to Melbourne and at the same time, I was unexpectedly invited to Melbourne for the *Before it's Too Late* project, producing a video about young people, called "Our Children's Future, in Our Hands". I ended up staying in a house just around the corner from where the programs were being held in South Melbourne. I was able to walk to the venue and attend all the evening programs. On the 19th of April, 1991, I took a friend along to the first program and at



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the end of the program I introduced him to the Gurumayi during Darshan. At the end of Darshan, my eyes were transfixed on Gurumayi as she got up to leave. My whole being followed her intently as she started to walk straight towards me. As she walked by me she gently tapped me with her left hand, twice on my left arm, as if to acknowledge the level of my devotion and excitement about being in her presence.

Darshan - 20th April 1991

I attended the program again the next day with the same friend. As Gurumayi was walking out she put out her hand to him and he seemed to be picked up out of the chair as she lead him out the back with her.

In a few minutes I was invited back as well. My friend, who is six foot ten high and 'four feet wide', said he felt like he was 'floating' as he walked out with Gurumayi. As I walked through the door to where I saw Gurumayi standing with my friend, Gurumayi asked what I was carrying. It was the presentation on a program I was developing called "Seeing the Invisible". Gurumayi gestured to be shown. Someone reached out to hold the album with both hands while Gurumayi turned the pages, looking at the presentation which included clairvoyant observations of Angelic Beings and Devas. Gurumayi looked at each page, and noted with interest the picture of the Kundalini Deva.

As we were standing with Gurumayi we started to explain the *Before it's Too Late* project we were formulating at that time. I explained the current status, concept and direction of the script for the video. Gurumayi listened intently with a sublime level of interest. We spoke with her, quite informally, for quite some time, savoring her presence. Gurumayi listened very serenely. I didn't want the meeting to end.

Darshan - 21st April 1991

The next day I attended the program again in the evening with another friend. We were invited back once again at the end of the program for another meeting with Gurumayi.

Some lounge chairs were set out in a circle and we sat with Gurumayi. I was sitting in a lounge chair right next to her. I was aware of a powerful stillness emanating from Gurumayi. There was an intense clarity and innocent purity that was so sweet and delicate. I wanted to stay there forever. There was such a sense of something special in the atmosphere. No one was allowed through the entrance door from the hall. Some were looking through at the door and a few others were standing at a distance, near the walls, very still.



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We discussed the project again at some length. I actually remember with some embarrassment now, trying to prolong the stay with Gurumayi by talking about anything I could think of. It was like chatting away to some dear old friend I hadn't seen for ages. Gurumayi seemed to be giving her Blessings to *Before its Too Late*.

Affectionate Gesture - 25th April 1991

I went along to the program once again, this time on my own. At the end of the program I went up for Darshan. The end of Darshan was absolutely delightful, so rich and joyous. Then Gurumayi got up to leave and headed straight towards me up the aisle. As she walked by, she unexpectedly and affectionately grabbed hold of my nose with her hand and gave it a gentle wiggle.

Blue Pearl Dream - 26th April 1991

On the Saturday morning I had a very powerful dream. I had not remembered any of my dreams for many, many years, so having this dream so clearly in my consciousness after I awoke was all the more significant! The dream was extremely vivid and I wrote down all the details as soon as I awoke.

I was in a huge orange hall or temple with very high ceilings. I walked to the side through some large wooden double doors at the back of the hall. It opened up into a long room filled with a large group of Swamis. They seemed to be waiting expectantly for someone. I decided to walk through another set of large wooden doors on my left. As I opened them, Gurumayi was coming in with an entourage of children. They were very joyous and were wearing Chinese-like hats made of white straw. I turned to go back inside as Gurumayi entered the hall with everyone playing drums and bells, just like the start of a sacred chant called the Arati Karun.

All of a sudden the scene changed and I found myself sitting in the middle of the room with Gurumayi. And although it was clearly the presence of Gurumayi, the person sitting next to me looked like a young version of Baba Muktananda. It was like a "combination" of Gurumayi and Baba. I asked in amazement, "*what am I doing sitting in the middle, here with you?*" Something was said to me by this person that I could not remember, but it filled me with overwhelming joy, and tears began to flow from my eyes.

Then this person with the presence of Gurumayi lifted her hand, and with her fingers pointing straight out, placed the tips of her fingers directly into the point of my 'third eye', just above my eyes in the middle of my forehead. As the tips of the fingers touched my forehead, a beautiful round blue light flashed out and appeared in front of me. It lasted for a few moments. It was soft



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and gentle but very clear and luminous, radiating out from the point on my forehead. I was also aware of seeing it as if I was looking on as well. It's very difficult to explain, now that I try.

Gurumayi then continued to 'gauge' at my forehead, with her hand, the fingers stretched out, still pointing straight to my third eye. There was no pain but I felt a firm pressure of the fingers against my forehead.

The dream then changed into something entirely different and I immediately awoke at 5.50am. The remarkable thing was that feeling of Gurumayi's touch still remained at the point between my eyes. At this point of time I had not understood the significance of the 'Blue Pearl'. I had heard something mentioned about the 'Blue Pearl' but I never really knew what it was or what it meant?

The dream was certainly very real and clear for me, especially as it was the first dream that I had remembered for more than twelve years.

Reply to letter by Peggy Lipton - 26th April 1991

"Gurumayi received the letter you sent describing so beautifully your birthday at the Easter Monday program. Gurumayi was pleased that this day affected you so profoundly. Gurumayi wants you to know she sends her love and blessings."

Darshan - 27th April 1991

I attended the final program with Gurumayi and listened to her closing speech for the Australian Tour. Mark Davis, a good friend of mine, had also decided to come to the program with his wife, Anne. At the end of the program Mark and Anne went up for Darshan. When Mark, who generally was not known for being lost for words, was introduced to Gurumayi, he was speechless. Possibly a world first!

During the end of the program, Mark and Ann Davis were asked to stay back for a private meeting with Gurumayi. I was also invited in to attend the meeting. This time we were asked to go to a private room just behind where we had met the previous day. Gurumayi was sitting in a large chair in the middle of the room against the wall. I sat on the floor to her right. Mark was on her left and Ann was directly in front of Gurumayi.

We spent a long time with Gurumayi, just the four of us. We spoke of a wide range of areas and it was very informal and intimate. I endeavoured to maintain the conversation as long as possible, I don't even remember if I was making any sense. Once again, I did not want our meeting to end.

Towards the end of Gurumayi's Australian Tour I organised appropriate ways that I could continue to communicate with her about our ongoing projects. I subsequently received many responses from Gurumayi and a few surprises



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Communications from Gurumayi – Selected Quotes

14th July 1991 – Fax reply to Letter & Telephone Call

“Gurumayi is happy that you are keeping in touch.”

17th July 1991 – Fax reply to Reports

“...Gurumayi’s appreciation to you. Thank you for your three reports.”

2nd August 1991 – Fax reply to Letter

“Gurumayi is always very happy to hear from you. Gurumayi remembers you with a lot of love and sends her blessings to you, and for your work.”

23rd August 1991 – Letter from Lulu

“Gurumayi told me how you keep in touch with her so I thought I would drop you a line.”

24th August 1991 – Fax reply to Letter

“Gurumayi sends her love, and her blessings to you, to you.”

8th November 1991 – Fax reply to Letter

“...wanted you to know right away...Gurumayi received your letter.”

7th February 1992 – Fax reply to Report

“Gurumayi was happy to hear your news and about your projects.”

25th March 1993 – Fax reply to Letter

“Gurumayi received your letter and your news. She sends her love and blessings to you and is thinking of you during this time. She was glad to hear of all the exciting events in your life.”

11th April 1993 – Fax reply to Letter

“Gurumayi sends her blessings to both your mother and father, as well as to you. She was interested to know how your projects were unfolding.”

18th October 1993 – Fax reply to Letter

“Gurumayi sends her blessings to your ongoing work.”



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Living in the Sydney Ashram

The Publicity Room: 'Abode of the Siddhas'

After I had moved into the Ashram in October 1991 I started using the "Publicity room" as an area for organising my seva. It was a very small room in the "outback" of the Ashram, down the end of the hall, the last room past the Ashram's laundry, with a panoramic view of the clothes-line. In other words, the place where everyone put all those things we didn't know what to do with!

It wasn't the most prestigious location in the Ashram and certainly quite a departure from my Film Production Company, which I had previously owned with premises in the central business district of Sydney, staff and in-house film and video production facilities. But this was the Guru's house! And that made the big difference. In fact, when I thought about it, I saw it as a step up, more than I had ever realised at the time.

I started using this small room on a regular basis for seva such as posters, leaflets, reports newsletters, etc. I was starting to spend a fair bit of my time there, so I started tidying the room up and organising things. I decided to put a number of photos of the Guru and her Guru, that I had found lying around behind cupboards and so forth, on the walls. Over a period of time I ended up with a fabulous array of photos of various Siddhas surrounding me in the room. I would look at and contemplate the photos for long periods of time, having their darshan. While I was working at the computer I started to feel their response coming from the photos surrounding me, totally focused on me! The energy seemed to be intensifying every day as I worked in the room. On the day after the Christmas intensive I became aware that something definitely was happening to me. I was becoming different. I felt every cell in my body was undergoing a change, a shift. I did not quite understand what it was, but it felt positive!

It dawned on me that the "publicity room" had now become a sanctuary for me and a focus of immense energy. It felt like it was FULL of the shakti of the Siddhas. The photos I had placed all around the walls in this confined area seemed to have evoked this energy. And I had been sitting smack bang in the middle of it for most of each day!

I felt the Meditation Hall was the heart and power source of the Ashram, but my little room, because of the compact size of the room, seemed to focus the energy from my contemplations of the photos of these great Beings. The little room had become an auxiliary power source for me in



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the Ashram. It was now a room filled with a powerful presence of the Siddhas. I thought of how much I was going to miss it while I was visiting Melbourne over the next 12 days.

The room felt very special, it was fantastic spending so much time in there.

A few years later I was pleased when I heard that the area that included the “Publicity Room” was going to be turned into a “Meditation Cave”. The room has now been renovated. One day when I was meditating I noticed that *the exact spot* where I used to sit, surrounded by the photos of the Siddhas, having their darshan, was precisely in the middle of the cave, in front of the puja setting in the cave.

First Christmas at the Ashram

There was great expectation building in the Ashram as we headed towards the end of 1991 and Christmas. At a Friday night program, just before the Christmas Intensive, I was sitting up front with the musicians chanting: *Govinda Jaya Jaya, Gopala Jaya Jaya*

This was the chant we were singing when I received shaktipat with Gurumayi at Darling Harbour. Gurumayi had explained in an earlier talk how we should become aware of the instruments and the role they play in the chanting. So during the programs I had been focusing on the sound of the instruments while I was chanting.

Musical Devas

I was listening to the drum and suddenly, I became aware of a beautiful, yet unusual presence of an intelligent Being or Deva that was connected to the drum! I felt it was the presiding Deva of this particular type of drum and was responsible for overseeing the “movement of energy” that was generated whenever the drum was played.

Its role seemed to be the collection and redistribution of this energy back and forth to anyone responding to the energy of the drum, although, the energy generated had an influence on anyone who was in the proximity, in and out of the Ashram.

The Deva would use the drummer as the focus for the generation of this energy. I sensed the drummer could play an important role in generating enormous flows of energy in cooperation with this Deva! The more sensitive the drummer was to the instrument, the easier the Deva could channel the flow of energy into the group and surrounding areas. I was aware of the power of a focused drummer to have control of the energy in the hall during the chants. It seemed that while a



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high degree of technical skill was required to play the drum from the mind, the energy was greatly amplified the greater the drum was played with the heart!

I have heard a few drummers that combine the technical excellence of their drumming with a deep connectedness with their heart to have a very powerful influence on the flow and generation of energy in the room. They seem to create a united pulse or beat for the group to tune into as one.

When I shifted my focus to the sound of the Tamboura, a similar experience of a presiding Deva was also felt, though the role of the Deva seemed to be different. The Deva seemed to create an atmosphere rather than channel energy back and forth.

I then focused my attention onto the Harmonium and became aware of a Deva involved with this instrument; a beautiful and glorious Deva, full of colour. The Devas all seemed to respond to my recognition and acknowledgment of their presence! I decided to invoke the Deva of the Guitar and Flute, which were also played in the hall and received an awareness of similar Devas involved with these instruments. The energy of these two Devas seemed more subtle and worked interactively with the Devas of other instruments, similar to how the instruments are played and fit into the scheme of things.

Music Devas - Their Purpose

These Devas were all involved to a greater or lesser extent with the channeling of the flow of energy generated from listening to these instruments at all levels of consciousness: inspirational, mental, emotional and physical. One of their functions was to collect the 'energy' generated and take it to the highest level of vibration possible and then redistribute it back to the group involved, each person receiving the greatest blessing and upliftment in direct proportion to their capacity to give and receive!

It seemed places of Spiritual practice and worship were a primary focus for the work of such Devas, especially where music was used primarily for Spiritual upliftment, by chanting the name of God. This could generate enormous amounts of energy, of a very high vibration. This not only had considerable benefit to all those who participated in this creative process, but to everyone in the surrounding areas.



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The Christ Principle

I then became quiet and decided to evoke the Presence of the Christ. This principle is under the guardianship of the Lord Maitreya. Immediately I became aware of a brilliant yellow/white light that burst forth above the Guru's Chair. It exploded outward and forward, radiating out over an enormous distance.

My early studies of the Christ Principle made me aware that one of the primary concerns of the Lord Maitreya is to oversee the development of all forms of Spiritual Teachings and practices for the upliftment of the planet. I felt that the Siddha tradition was certainly under the influence of this Great Deva. I had often invoked the Presence of the Lord Maitreya. This Deva was responsible for the manifestation of the Christ Principle on the planet.

The times I have been ever so slightly open to this energy, I have literally been overwhelmed at the enormity of the power and brilliance of this Deva. Yet, I knew I had only managed to grasp the minutest fraction of the power of the Love that emanates from this Great Deva.

The Cobra

As the chant continued I somehow automatically focused my attention onto the Kundalini Shakti and immediately a Cobra appeared on the Guru's Chair. At the same time, I experienced a re-occurring image I had been having recently where I found myself merging into Baba Muktananda's body. The image was when he was young. I literally felt like I was Baba. I thought that Gurumayi would be very pleased with this identification with Her Guru. The experience was totally involuntary and occurred whenever I focused on Baba at different times.

As the chant became faster and faster, I noticed the Cobra had now grown to an enormous size, the head as large as the entire Puja around the Guru's chair, some three metres in height - it was immense! All of a sudden it reduced back to its normal size and came straight toward me and the tip of the Cobra's head touched my forehead right at my third eye. A physical presence of this lasted for some time. The surprising thing was I was not scared at any point during this experience. I remained quite calm and detached from the entire experience, just observing what was happening!

At the end of the program, as I was walking down the stairs from the Amrit, a friend commented that I looked like I was having a rather 'ecstatic' time during the chant in the program! *I just smiled in agreement.*



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A Flash of 'Brilliance'!

Towards the close of the evening, as people were leaving the Ashram, I noticed an electrical storm brewing in the distance with flashes of brilliant lightning every now and then. Upon going to bed, the lightning became quite spectacular. It seemed auspicious; the atmosphere was literally electric and very powerful!

Merging with the Guru

I decided to go to bed and as normal, I began to repeat the mantra "Om Namah Shivaya" silently to myself as I went to sleep. While I was lying in bed I evoked the presence of the Christ again and I received a clear understanding that indeed the lineage of my Guru was certainly connected with the work of the Lord Maitreya.

I observed how effortless it was to 'merge' with Baba, in fact, I seemed to have nothing to do with making it happen. I didn't actually do anything, it just happened! It was very easy and I just seemed to slip into the presence of Baba very naturally. Now, of course, I only experienced what I was capable of experiencing of the greatness and colossal grandeur of the Guru's state, yet I certainly felt a direct and practical connection growing and developing, becoming stronger and stronger

I left it as a good experience to foster, whatever it meant, and put aside any analysis of the experience. I decided to let it be whatever it was supposed to be, and leave it to the Guru's Grace. It seemed to me that this inner "merging" with the Guru would certainly not do any harm to my spiritual progress. I found it interesting that the presence was always of Baba as a young, vibrant man, similar to pictures of him in his book, "Play of Consciousness" which I had been reading.

Becoming God is simple

One day, while I was sitting at reception I picked up the Meditation book by Baba Muktananda. I turned to a section that I had read a number of times before. I particularly liked this section and as I was reading it I noticed that a part of me just saw the words and their literal meaning and another part of me seemed to see another aspect of what I was reading by moving into a deeper understanding of the words, seeing behind the essence of the meaning to what Baba was actually getting at. It was like moving into the Consciousness of Baba for a moment and he communicated it directly, then you became yourself again, if that makes sense.

In the book it explained the extent to which an abusive word affects us depends upon the extent of our identification with that particular word and the extent to which we relate to the abusive word as the actual *object* of the word.



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In other words the extent to which we become the "word"!

So often we literally take the word personally and agree completely with the person directing the word at us. We say, "Yep that's me!" I suddenly realised that if someone says "I'm only human", I relate to that, a whole lot easier, than if someone says, "I'm God!" I therefore realised the only difference in what I actually experience is dependent on the belief in my mind, and whether I choose to become the actual object of whatever I choose to be! The fact is, within the unlimited, unconditional capacity of our minds we can choose at any moment to be whatever we believe we want to be!

Whether we are human or we are God, the choice is simply ours. God realisation is that simple. You are God if you able to completely encompass everything that means, and the associated responsibility it entails! It is the truth in the statement: I AM THAT I AM.

The mind is simply a limited form of the cosmic consciousness - the substance consciousness uses at lower levels of vibration. Every thought uses this "substance" or consciousness to produce its particular effects on the mental plane.

Now within each of us exists our true self - who we truly are. The only thing is, is that it exists at a state of consciousness beyond the concrete analytic mind. It therefore requires a faculty beyond the concrete mind to grasp or understand how it operates. So by occupying or focusing our minds via our thoughts on our true self - you begin using the natural tendency of the mind to go beyond it! *This is the secret of how we access the 'thinker' of our thoughts and discover our true self!*

Our ability to realise the power inherent within a mantra, or any word in fact, is directly proportional to our capacity to identify with that word or mantra. Therefore if a particular mantra is the vibration of God then by repeating it - by focusing on the essence or the power inherent, "behind" or within this mantra and then adding our identification with it, then you will inherit the qualities and power of the mantra. In other words, you will realise and become established in its essential essence and source.

To see everything around us with the awareness that everything we touch, every step we take, everything we see and hear and sense is an opportunity to focus our thoughts and therefore the vibratory power of God into it via our clear and definite intention to do so, and this therefore makes it so!

We thereby raise the raise vibratory state around us through this process of awareness of life. Honouring and giving respect with one-pointed attentiveness in every action is the state of God consciousness. The state of "God realisation" is the realisation of God in everything and



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everyone, it's that simple! The fulfillment of God's mission through the vehicles of our personality, our thoughts, desires and physical bodies (the three Gunas). Using their particular faculties inherent to their plane of vibration is the key to the overall transformation of all life.

In the Guru Gita I read verse 100 which stated that “*..knowledge is obtained through the mind*” and that we should “*..consider knowledge to be identical with the object of knowledge.*”

This means by becoming permanently established in the “thought” or knowledge of the Guru, one therefore becomes identical to the object of that “thought” or knowledge. In other words, you become established in the Guru's state. The verse finishes by saying: “*There is no other way than that (to liberation)*”, which seems to say it all!

This applies to the more mundane situations of how we react more to words said about us that we relate to within our beliefs of ourselves. That is, we react to the things said about us that we are in agreement with ourselves. In fact, we create our whole world around us based on what agreements we have made about ourselves. In fact, becoming God is quite simple, *it's staying conscious that's the hard part!*

Intelligence within Nature

On Christmas day I was at the ashram reception, after sleeping in the Meditation Hall as Night Guard, and I was reading a Darshan magazine about Baba's world tour. It was explaining the benefits of being in the Guru's presence and how simply walking in the dust of a great Siddha brought great merit. I suddenly saw the tremendous significance of one of my meetings with Gurumayi in Melbourne, earlier that year (another one of my slow combustion realisations!)

Gurumayi had looked at a presentation on the “Seeing the Invisible” project and I now realised the significance of having Gurumayi take the time to look at the presentation. Gurumayi had actually asked to have a look at the presentation and slowly looked through each page with me standing next to her. I had been told that the Guru does not waste any time, or any words. Hence the importance of being in the Guru's Presence and listening, to the Guru's Command. At the time I had played down this situation as not being a big deal. Mainly because within myself, I felt rather self-conscious about it.

Now I was filled with gratitude and appreciation as I grasped the blessings Gurumayi bestowed. Even though I was a little late in my realisation, as usual. I realised the Presentation was out the back, in the publicity room under some books and things where it had been lying for some time. I rushed out to the room, horrified at my lack of awareness of this Maha-Prasad. I picked it up in appreciation of the hands that had held it and the eyes that had examined it. It



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suddenly took on a much greater significance and so I very reverently carried it upstairs to my room and placed it on my Puja under the shawl that Gurumayi had presented to me on my Birthday. It wasn't the outward form of the presentation, it was simply that the Guru had taken the time to focus her energy on this presentation that I felt was important.

What if the Guru appeared?

I started walking around the Ashram with the awareness: What if the Guru was just behind the door I was about to enter? Was I ready to greet her? What if the Guru walked into my room? Would it be how I would like a Saint to see my space? What thoughts was I entertaining, how was I feeling, how was I acting? Would I be comfortable with my Guru knowing these thoughts, feelings or seeing my actions?

I became sensitive to all these things, without giving myself too hard a time about it all! I created the awareness within myself that the Siddhas were checking me out in every moment with all their love and compassion. This attitude was fostered by the fact I was sitting in a small, quiet room totally surrounded on all sides with photos of Siddha Masters and sacred places!

Accepting the Master

By the end of 1991 I realised another significant change had started to emerge within me. During my experiences in Sydney earlier in the year with Gurumayi, I had accepted Gurumayi in my life at one level, but it seemed this experience had not been fully integrated into myself. In the program on Christmas Eve I made an acknowledgment within my heart of the Guru as my Guru and I asked the Guru to accept me as her Disciple, if I was ready. It seemed I was starting to accept the Guru at other levels of my being. But I realised it was an ongoing, progressively deepening process.

God and the Guru!

What I had also realised is that I had been having a dilemma for quite some time with the concept of the Guru and its relationship to God.

I had been looking for a living master ever since I was a teenager, and now I was faced with the reality of a living master right on my doorstep. But the decision I had to make was to now take the step to open the door! My expectation of how I was going to meet my Master was a lot different, as I mentioned earlier.

I realised that although the Guru, as the Guru, was totally available to everyone, unless I was ready to connect within myself with the Guru, then the Guru may as well be up on top of the most inaccessible mountain in the Himalayas.



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Gurumayi had related a story in a recent video about a lady who had traveled all over India, at great expense and endurance on her part. She was looking for a Spiritual experience of God. She finally returned to her hometown of Sydney. Her lengthy and sometimes arduous search and journey had finally led her back home. She ended up finding her way to a program at Darling Harbour Convention Centre in the middle of Sydney. It was there she ended up having a powerful experience of God during a program with Gurumayi - right in her own *backyard*, so to speak.

The story seemed to be relevant to me. Although I had come to terms with this to some extent during my stay at the ashram, I still was having some difficulty with reconciling the connection between God and the Guru. I was also still unclear why the Guru would always say that devotion to the Guru was the highest practice a disciple could carry out. I had difficulty in wondering then, where God came in. I somehow thought God was the greater.

In my meditation I asked for clarification on the subject of God and Guru, and received the following clarification for myself. *In the natural outworking of Karma, God leads the disciple to the Guru, so that the Guru can then lead the disciple back to God.*

This was to the point and I got it! I further understood that the Guru has the Grace bestowing power to awaken the Kundalini Shakti. This is essential to leading the disciple back to God! The literal meaning of Guru is going from the darkness to the light. I saw the significance of the Guru in my life. It was like the Guru knew my personal "*Road-Map*" back to God and was responsible for assisting me with the appropriate *directions* to get there as quickly and as safely as possible.

It was about recognizing the fact there is a higher faculty dormant within each of us. This potential can be kindled into activity by someone who has also had this dormant faculty fully awakened and been given the power to awaken it in others. This entire process accepts the premise that there is an intelligence beyond the known capacity of the mind; a higher intelligence, intuition, or understanding that can guide us from within to allow us to progress to heights we have not yet even conceived of. It also can give us directions in ways we never could have thought of. To allow this process to work for us requires a fundamental basis of trust and surrender. And this trust and surrender is about us! It's the trust we have in ourselves.

Almost every important life experience we have is related to building trust in ourselves, *our real selves*, ultimately beyond the limitations of the mind. A place where extraordinary powers are available to use for the highest good of everyone. And that's the important safety catch. These higher faculties can only be accessed when used for the highest good.



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The Guru's Presence in Your Life

I returned to the Sydney Ashram and I started contemplating how every day was becoming an exciting journey of waiting to see what would happen next. I thanked the Guru for my life and for Her presence in it.

During the evening program in my meditation I became aware that my response to all my projects were not along the lines of how financially rewarding they would be, but only about how can I really add value and serve others? I sensed this was a turning point for the timely implementation of my projects!

It was nearly 12 months since the inner experience of my Divya Diksha had occurred on my birthday and my life had been undergoing a major transformation over that period of time with an intense period of preparation. I was starting to trust that the Guru's Grace was in total charge. I was allowing myself to surrender more and more.

In the wee hours of the morning I went and sat in the small room at the back of the Sydney Ashram, surrounded by photos of Siddhas. I had mixed feelings of excitement, with a touch of doubt, as to what was in store over the coming years.

Living on the Guru's Love

I decided to go to bed and as I lay there I found myself wide-awake. I was feeling a surge of energy running through my body and I ended up staying up all night. I lay in bed wide-awake for about four hours. I sensed I was resting but my mind seemed to be at full attention. Not in a speedy way, just very alert! Before I knew it, it was 6.30am and I went down to do my reception shift. I ended up staying up without sleep for more than 60 hours with only a few hours of rest. The surprising thing was I was not tired! I contemplated the meaning of Ashram, "the removal of fatigue" and how my heart was being opened. My body was being energised with a powerful love from the Guru.

31st March 1992 - Finding a Diamond Within

I returned to Sydney on the 31st March, 1992 after a short visit to Melbourne. My time in Sydney was very different this time. I was faced with a different type of experience in my life. The Ashram was having some very special events and there was a lot of preparation required. It was around my birthday and I started having a great deal of fun. I found myself connecting with the



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playful child inside myself. We were literally filled with joy every time I got together with anyone, about almost anything.

I was invited to assist with the design of the program on Thursday night, 9th April 1992 and somehow it got to include a classical guitar arrangement I had composed with singing harmonies of the chant: *Kali Durge Namoh Namah*.

I asked Claire to sing the harmony with me. I had never produced an arrangement of a piece of music before. I also had never sung or played in front of such an audience before, especially where the focus was so clearly and intensely on you, and in a holy place as well, plus I had never sung in harmony before.

It appeared to be a real opportunity for a breakthrough!

The night came, we played, we sang, we broke through. I loved doing it. And although I was extremely nervous, we did it, and we received great acknowledgment for it.

In the program during the meditation I experienced a very powerful image of a diamond emerging from a lotus flower that was absolutely radiating light. This was inside my head and moved upwards until it emerged at the top of my head.

I experienced my back become very straight and I felt a very thin movement of something I could not quite describe and it ran up one side of my back to the base of my cranium. I felt an enormous feeling of value and self worth with this experience and imagery. I had had a few early morning wake-up panics of self-doubt with no trust and a real sense of fear with the risks I was taking. I then experienced the following words come into my heart. '*I am of limitless value with the Guru's Grace*'. It was not just the words but the wonderful feeling of experiencing the essence of these words that was so beautiful.

The program seemed to evoke some very deep sharing and we received some great feedback on the format. It seemed to take people from where they were at within themselves, to where they would like to be.

My meditation experience became the inspiration and catalyst for the creation of the image within the book, initially presented to Gurumayi with the title "Good God – I am That" and revised into the current title: "Soft Diamond Light: *Only Love Matters*."

Another Dimension to Life

During 1992 I started spending more and more time in Melbourne for the "Before it's Too Late" project. I had returned to Melbourne and was staying at a friend's place. Early one morning as I awoke and looked out the window I noticed that after seven days of rain and cloud the sun had



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finally decided to show itself. I opened my eyes and looked up at the blinds and saw the sun shining through. In that instant I experienced another very powerful intuitive insight, coupled with the powerful impact of the physical brightness of the sun.

I glimpsed with an inner awareness or intuition the grandeur of the living Being the physical sun actually represented. I was stunned by the fact that I had looked up at the sky many times during my life but never fully experienced the significance of the fact that there, in plain view, right in front of me, was this magnificent Great Being. I had an actual experience of this Presence, albeit only a minute fraction of its totality. The awareness hit me, that behind and within every "physical form" is consciousness and the sun is an actual living "body" manifesting at a physical level a specific Consciousness - called God! In Theosophy, the term Solar Logos is used, but whatever the name, a Consciousness, requiring the awesome and magnificent power of "the Sun" to manifest itself at a physical level can only command silence in its contemplation.

This Being has the entire solar system under its influence and direction. This Being actually "held the space" if you like for everything that occurred within the solar system. What I mean by that is, if you can imagine a rather crude and microcosmic metaphor, of a teacher that "holds-the-space" of a classroom with all the students and everything that goes on in that space, then similarly the Solar Logos does the same but on an obviously much fuller, grander and cosmic level of consciousness.

I experienced why the sun had been worshipped in previous times. I realised why we should honour the sun again now. The greatness of this Being I could only glimpse, but I was still overwhelmed with awe in that moment of realisation and insight.

A Dream

I had not remembered any dreams since my 'Blue Pearl dream' back in 1991 during Gurumayi's visit to Australia. I dreamt I was running around a marked-out square with a matrix grid marked within it. Gurumayi was watching from the side. I started running very fast and in a random pattern following the "grid" pattern. I was flying off the sides and at this point I sensed from Gurumayi that I was doing something "wrong". I decided to "tighten" up my running and slowed down. I kept to the path and started doing very small squares on the grid. It felt like some kind of test or challenge I was weaving around the matrix while changing patterns but with much greater focus. I then started to increase my speed and got even more focused and increased my speed while staying on the path.



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Gurumayi was pleased and stated it was so good she would give me a kiss. As Gurumayi kissed my cheek, she whispered, "All it takes is three kisses." This seemed to symbolically mean to "enlightenment".

Stop Thinking – Saved the Day

I had returned once again to the Sydney Ashram during May 1993 and I was helping prepare the hall for a special program the next day. It was late and we were just finishing up. I was asked to take a long ladder with another person out to the back storage area. We picked up the ladder from either end and proceeded out the back door of the hall. The door opened out onto a verandah and we had to weave through the door and down a few stairs that lead out into the outside area of the hall. As the person in the front was starting to turn the ladder around to the right I lost my footing at the top of the stairs with the wide end of the ladder directly across my path!

In that moment everything stood still. I instantly realised the magnitude of the predicament I was in. Namely, I was falling from the top of these steps, totally out of control, headfirst, straight down onto concrete paving that had a dip of about 150mm at an edge where the concrete met the grass. This was directly where I was falling, plus I had tripped over the ladder, almost a metre in width, directly in front of me, and on top of all that I really couldn't see very well as it was getting dark outside. I basically realised I was facing very probable serious damage to my body!

In this instance I made a choice: *Stop thinking!* (There was no time in any case!) I went into total automatic. The following was truly one of those typical scenarios you often hear about, where everything goes into slow motion and I could visualise every split second of the two to three moments that transpired, as it happened.

I somehow, quite miraculously, went into a dive over the ladder and did the most perfect somersault where my back rolled in a perfect circular free-fall as it made contact with the ground. I had never done anything quite like that before. I simply continued the roll and stood up without feeling the slightest contact of my back with the ground. I could hardly believe it. As I looked up at the person at the other end of the ladder with his mouth open in amazement. He asked, "Are you OK?!"

I said yes, and we proceeded to put away the ladder.

This was an extraordinary experience for me because not only did I experience the fact there was no thinking involved in this process, but this time I witnessed the whole experience in slow motion with the simultaneous feeling of being in real control, while being totally out of



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control at the same time. A contradiction in terms I know, but that was the only way I could describe it.

It was my intuitional self taking over and coming up with the most perfect landing pattern for an “airborne craft”, completely calculated and executed to a tee! This faculty operates beyond the mind and has the ability to carry out the extraordinary calculations required to expedite my perfect “three point landing” that would probably have taken a high-speed, mainframe computer many hours to calculate, if not longer!

It is interesting that at this point in time we actually have a theoretical magnitude of measurement, namely a nanosecond (a billionth of second) which we have no way of conceiving with the mind.

Clap your hands - that took around 500 million nanoseconds - inconceivable by the mind.

Yet this measurement exists in our computers, which are extremely crude replications of the brain, which is but a shadow of the mind, which is in turn a limited expression of our inner capacity or faculty of intuition. This faculty is capable of working out all the calculations and precise parameters of all the factors in a split second, allowing me to execute my fall in complete precision and safety. The key to accessing this faculty is trust and letting go - surrender to our inner Self or Guru.

Alignment

Looking back, since meeting Gurumayi in 1991 my life had taken on a greater process of unfoldment of just letting things emerge, allowing a natural progression to the next level. The amazing thing was this seemed to happen in definite quantum leaps with definite unexpected but well orchestrated positive results coming out of the blue. My business and community service project, “Before it’s Too Late” had become totally aligned on an inner level, reflected in the name of our business, *In-Alignment*. To me there was no distinction between my worldly activities or my spiritual pursuits. There was only the Guru’s work!

An Earlier Reflection

I was being tutored for a talk for one of the Sydney ashram satsangs and I remembered when I first came to the Ashram in 1986 and began attending regularly. I recalled that prior to actually meeting Gurumayi in 1991, I actually had had a very powerful experience with the Guru and its significance had not fully registered in my conscious mind at that time. It was brought to



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my attention by my coach, June, while I was contemplating why I had fully immersed myself in Guruseva for the 1991 Tour so wholeheartedly, even though I had not met the Guru at that point in time.

I remembered back in 1987, after I had been attending the ashram regularly, one evening in my office I sat down to meditate and instantly a vision of Gurumayi came into my mind. Simultaneously and without any warning I had this extraordinary experience of my consciousness expanding to quite beyond anything I had ever felt before. It was an amazing feeling of limitlessness and freedom. I simply expanded my consciousness to what seemed to have no limits or boundaries. I lost all sense of my smallness or personal self and became magnificently great, reaching into the far reaches of the infinite universe.

The experience had such an impact on me, and was so definitely connected to the Guru, I rather impetuously decided to immediately call the New York Ashram in South Fallsburg, where Gurumayi was in residence, to let Her know! I just wanted to connect to the source of the experience in some way. When the receptionist answered and I explained what had happened I asked her if I could speak to Gurumayi to let Her know of the experience and thank Her. The receptionist was very compassionate to this somewhat overzealous, inspired “caller” from half way across the world asking to speak to the Guru. She calmly took my name and address and told me that even though Gurumayi was not available just at the moment she assured me she would pass on the message.

Although the experience had a profound effect on me, and in retrospect was probably when I most likely received Shaktipat, my world was extremely busy at the time and I slowly put the experience to the side and became more and more immersed in my business. I realised Gurumayi must receive thousands of calls and has a million other more important things to do and so forth. I basically decided it would probably be highly unlikely the receptionist would even bother to pass on the message to Gurumayi in any case.

Well, out of the blue a few months later I received a letter and a beautiful black and white photo of Gurumayi in a shawl. I was puzzled by the gift as I was so caught up in my hectic work schedule I didn't even connect the gift with the earlier experience.

The significance of the Guru's loving response to this “overzealous” caller from across the seas had its effect on the more far-reaching metaphysical levels, more than I ever really knew at the time. The photo is now beautifully framed and appreciated.



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A Close Shave with the Brahmins

In early 1993, a number of Brahmin Priests were sent by Gurumayi to do some special ceremonies and puja in Sydney and Melbourne. While in Melbourne I was asked if I would like to shave their heads for Shivaratri - a special celebration honouring Shiva. The management team at the Ashram must have assumed that since I had a completely shaven head I must be an expert in shaving. Unfortunately, little did they know I was a “techno-head” and used an electric shaver. They didn’t ask and I didn’t want to miss the opportunity and great honour.

When I turned up I was only given a normal “Sensor” face razor to do the job (I had no experience with a blade razor in any case). As I started, the blades proved to be rather inadequate for doing the job efficiently. The Brahmins were used to an experienced blade razor operator, who whisked away the hair in single movements. Here I was hacking away a millimetre at a time.

I had to be extremely persistent in my efforts and demanded an enormous amount of patience from the extremely sweet natured Brahmins. They never flinched or complained even once.

The head Brahmin kept a watchful eye over my efforts, making sure I especially left the centre tail-piece of hair alone. He offered a number of suggestions, trying to support my technique, but ultimately surrendered to the fact this was simply the “way-of-the-west”! I don’t think I really impressed anyone, apart from demonstrating my steady perseverance and focus in completing the job.

When Vencappa Ana, who was traveling with the Brahmins wondered in and gave my work a scrutineering eye it demanded my complete focus and attention to maintain my composure. In the end, although it took quite some time, the job was all done to everyone’s satisfaction. (But I did hear they *especially* requested someone with specific experience in using a proper blade razor when they visited Sydney!)

The Focus of my Sadhana

After meeting Gurumayi, my life took on a very clear discipline with a greater focus on my Sadhana - doing spiritual practices and committing to discipline. Going to Melbourne was very clearly part of the development process instigated by the grace of the Guru. I had a definite and very clear knowing that my move to Melbourne was right, even though it was against all logic - I just knew I had to follow the intelligence of my heart - my inner Self - the Guru’s command - there was no choice...



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In spite of all this, what slowly began to emerge was this feeling of deep appreciation for being able to spend all my time working with a great bunch of people on this project, supporting the future of our children.

I had committed to create a video documentary from “nothing” with the brief that it was “to be inspiring, about youth and a catalyst for change” - that was it! This ultimately resulted in needing to work in a voluntary capacity for this project, producing this video.

The video documentary, “*Our Children’s Future, in Our Hands*” was completed and launched in 1993. During the four years of the project it focused on empowering and motivating the community and business to become more effectively involved in supporting our kids. We did this by holding many major events and educational programs around Australia. We created tremendous “goodwill” with many of Australia’s leading celebrities, sports-people and business-people, all giving their direct, unconditional support.

I also created two other video documentaries on social and environmental issues; I ran a series of educational study groups in metaphysics; produced and performed a number of spiritual based musical productions; started working on a musical and two books and began consulting with ‘conscious’ businesses wishing to create projects as part of their businesses that contributed back into the community. My primary focus though was on my spiritual practices.

The highest state of our physical activity is achieved when we are engaged in serving selflessly. And for me, the essential element of Guruseva is a spontaneous desire from within the heart to give through service. Guruseva seems to create a pipeline in my life that provides the fuel for finding all the time and the energy I need for pursuing a wide variety of activities. It is like a key that opens the door of my heart to *let go and trust* the power of the Guru’s grace.



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The Sydney Ashram: *Returning to the Beginning*

All of a sudden, after I had been staying in Melbourne for three years I suddenly found myself based back in Sydney, living once again in the Ashram in November 1995. I still needed to visit Melbourne on a regular basis as Chairman for the Before it's Too Late Trust. The project had its own momentum now and was functioning well with two strong, active teams in Sydney and Melbourne. They were running programs and events that promoted the many issues affecting the future of our children and what individuals, business and the community could do.

Living in an Ashram - God's Home

I always found it interesting that at the center of "home" is the word "om". And it was good to be "home". The great thing about staying in the Ashram was that it allowed me to intensify and focus on my spiritual practices. Apart from the powerful and exquisite nature of just living in the atmosphere of a sacred place, you also have the support of the structure and discipline of the spiritual practices: meditation, chanting, Swadhaya (special long chants based on sacred texts), Seva (Selfless Service), etc, plus keeping the company of other spiritual seekers. I loved the opportunity to pursue this lifestyle as a natural way of daily life. I found myself attending the Guru Gita, a sacred and very powerful chant, every morning. I also endeavoured to do the evening Arati chant every day it was possible. After two and a half months of living in the Ashram I found "verses" of these chants arising spontaneously at any time of the day, and at any place, sometimes even in the hustle and bustle of the city I would start reciting specific verses from the Guru Gita or the Arati. I also had intensified the spiritual practice of "japa", or repeating the name of God silently to yourself in all activities, sitting in the train, walking down the street, in meetings, anywhere and everywhere.

On one occasion I was walking down Pitt Street Plaza, amongst hundreds of people and I simply focused my attention, completely inwardly, repeating the name of God - the Mantra. I found myself physically walking, but my focus or attention was in a far greater "space" with my inner Self. The outside world became very "unreal" as the peace and serenity of the inner world came into greater reality...

I decided the best course of action was to put the highest priority with continuing to pursue and focus on my spiritual practices in the ashram and in my every aspect of my life. On the 10th of February, the Ashramites had just finished a meeting with the Mangers regarding getting back to



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the essence of Ashram Dharma and the plans for reinstating much of the important aspects of this Dharma, as expressed by the Guru. We had been fortunate to have the thoughts of one of the Swamis from the mother ashram in India, Ganeshpuri, expressing many ideas that had been instigated there. It was aimed at improving the possibility of pursuing deeper sadhana via the essence of Ashram Dharma, as stated by my Guru's Guru: "*Meditation, one pointedness of mind and inner stillness...*"

After the meeting I felt quite elated and inspired, having "lobbied" for this type of focus for many years. After leaving the meeting I made myself a cup of tea and went out to the beautiful enclosed gardens at the front of the Ashram. I sat down on the front steps of the ashram, facing a four-leafed clover shaped fountain between the steps and an intricately designed wrought-iron gate along the path. The gate was only used for when Gurumayi visited Australia.

I started to drink my cup of tea and as I looked down to my left, where I expected to see a rather hideous little green gnome that someone had left in Darshan at the Guru's chair (*probably with great love and devotion...*), but instead it had vanished and in its place had appeared, quite miraculously, a beautiful metal statue of one of the great saints!

I thought to myself, what a perfect metaphor and actualisation of the current transformation that seemed to be occurring within the Ashram. (Change and transformation are the constant ingredients in the tradition of Siddha Yoga in one form or another).

A Vision in the Gardens - 11th February 1996

I awoke at 5.00am in the Sydney Ashram to do puja for the start of meditation in the hall. After meditation I joined the others for the Guru Gita in the smaller hall, as the main hall was being prepared for the intensive being held that day called: "*Shaktipat: the Great Awakening*".

After the Guru Gita I prepared my breakfast in my usual ritualistic fashion which I loved preparing as much I loved eating, and once again headed to the front garden and sat down on the steps of the ashram as before.

I looked around at the gorgeous morning and the beautiful ashram gardens when suddenly a great surge of love sprung forth from within me. I was overwhelmed with this feeling which totally enveloped me with its nourishing, all pervasive and gentle presence. I had longed to re-connect for quite some time with this type of deep feeling which essentially originated from the heart of love within me, particularly with such intensity and so powerfully. I reached into the deepness of the experience with such a sublime softness and sense of serenity of its love and savoured its presence within me. It was a love that needed no excuses for bubbling up and overflowing with joy into your life! I delighted in this moment of nourishment, and as I looked up towards the fountain right



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before my “eyes” was Gurumayi, sitting quite casually, on one of the “leaves” of the fountain, cross-legged and looking quite nonchalantly towards me. She was sitting there so naturally, and when I contemplated it later on, I realised it was the most natural consequence to my earlier experience of love. I realised when I opened myself to the love from within myself then the Guru naturally responds a thousand-fold more powerfully and “appears” simultaneously, as they come from one and the same source.

Gurumayi playfully beckoned with her finger for me to approach her. I walked across to her (in my mind’s eye) and she told me to place my head in her lap as she started to gently stroke my head. I must tell you I really felt it, and the feeling of her hand on my completely shaven head was the closest thing I could imagine to the ecstasy of God’s love. Gurumayi started patting my back as I purred in delight with this most sublime nurturing and serene spiritual experience.

I felt I had done a thousand Intensives in those few precious moments with the Guru within, which seemed to have manifested with such reality.

Listening to the Guru Within - 12th February 1996

The next day I was sitting outside once again on the fountain. I felt Gurumayi’s presence so easily sitting in that spot next to me, so I decided to ask Gurumayi what I should with respect to my sadhana at this point in time and also with the dilemma of being so vulnerable in moving ahead in total trust.

I had lived my life simply trying to see the invisible, feeling where was the “energy”, and what was my heart saying I need to do. Once it was clear, which usually came like a thunderbolt, I made the commitment to follow that at all costs.

The answer came very directly and to the point, from Gurumayi: *Meditate!*

So as soon as I finished some immediate seva I needed to do I went straight into the meditation hall and stayed there for an hour or so.

That evening, I chanted the evening Arati. At the end of the chant when we reached the closing mantras of “Hare Rama, Hare Krishna” I suddenly had this majestic and very powerful vision of Krishna above the Guru’s chair, accompanied by an explosive radiant aura of light surrounding the glorious sight of the blue form of Krishna. Needless to say, I was overwhelmed. I could see his form so clearly and could feel His presence in my heart! The vision stayed to the end of the chant.

It seemed the Guru’s instruction “to meditate” bore fruit sooner than I expected. The next morning I went down for meditation at 5.00am. I meditated for about an hour or so and it was then time for the Guru Gita chant. After it had finished I got myself some breakfast and went out to the



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front garden and sat on the fountain. The instant I sat down I felt and saw the presence of the Guru next to me. It was so real, I talked with her and I felt I could almost reach over and touch her.

I felt very honoured to be having the Darshan of the Guru constantly with almost the same intensity as when she was physically here back in 1991. The reality of the Ashram being an embodiment, the “body” of the presiding Saint, took on a new and deeper, tangible meaning...

It was a very full and satisfying experience to say the least.

Over the next few days the pressure and heat of my financial position was getting stronger and stronger. It was moving to a crescendo. The positive talks with the inventor of the environmental technology I was working with were getting increasingly more frequent and reassuring, yet its financial fruition still seemed to be way off in the future.

The Presence of Krishna - 16th February 1996

I had just completed the evening Arati and I was the last person to be leaving the hall. Just as I got to the door, I experienced this massive presence literally “hit” me from the side and I looked around towards the Guru’s chair. There, more splendidly; more radiantly than ever, was the vision of Krishna, *no it felt like Krishna Himself*, above the Guru’s chair, once again radiating with absolutely incredibly scintillating streams of glorious light!

I was stunned and transfixed, yet I was automatically compelled to pranam as tears welled up in my eyes in awe and ecstasy at this speculator vision. I just stood there bathing in this blissful experience

I finally left the hall trying not to look too overwhelmed by what had happened. I couldn’t really tell anyone how I felt as it was almost indescribable. I simply quietly joined the dinner line and went out to my favorite spot, the front garden, and sat down on the front steps.

Once again, right on cue, Gurumayi appeared sitting cross-legged on the fountain in Her “spot”! This time I truly savoured Her Presence as I slowly savoured my meal. As I was looking towards her I became aware of a massive radiant aura surrounding her in concentric circles reaching out far beyond the confines of the garden and even the ashram. This seemed a most fitting and appropriate complimentary end to my earlier vision and experience of Krishna in the Hall.

Praying for Grace - 13th March 1996

In early March, very early in the dawn hours of the morning I had this semi-waking dream. It was very simple and to the point - Baba Muktananda walked up to me and softly said, “*I love*



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you.” It was particularly extraordinary because of its profound clarity and directness in its communication. It was in English with a proper, neutral accent, yet the sound of his voice was very ‘forward’ in some way and definite with a rich, soft, warm nourishing edge to it. *It was so delightful.*

Every day for the previous two months at the end of the Guru Gita, I had placed my forehead on Baba’s Padukas (*Guru sandals symbolising the knowledge of the Guru*) at the back of the hall and one day the following affirmation sprang forth from within me: *“I am permanently and completely established in the Guru’s state of consciousness and the realisation of God”*. So be it. I had also begun repeating a combination of the three mantras from my Guru’s lineage: *“So Ham”*, *“Om Guru”* and *“Om Namah Shivaya”*. I had read these three mantras were the ones Baba had stated were the most powerful. And although he had inferred their repetition separately, I decided to repeat the three and get the full power of the lineage as I tended to relate *“Om Namah Shivaya”* with Gurumayi; *“Om Guru Om”* with her Guru, Baba Muktananda *“So Ham”* with His, Guru, Bhagawan Nityananda.

[**Footnote:** I found out at a much later stage that *“Om Namah Shivaya”* was used to purify the five lower chakras from the base of the spine to the throat. The Guru (*“Om Guru Om”*) is responsible for opening and activating the *“third eye”* chakra, and *“So ham”* is the mantra of the crown chakra, which leads to final liberation.]

Darshan with Baba Muktananda.

Later that week I went into the hall for early morning meditation. As the Guru Gita started I focused on the opening invocation at the start of the chant, with renewed awareness of the presiding Deva we were invoking. I became aware of a very subtle and gentle presence. The chant is over 180 verses of Sanskrit.

After a few verses, I started visualising Gurumayi on the chair directly in front of me, singing along with us. I was surprised that she appeared (in my mind’s eye) very clearly and easily. I instantly felt great joy at her arrival. Then, on verse 50 - which starts describing the power of the Guru - I suddenly, simultaneously felt and saw Baba appear right next to her chair in the hall, about two metres to my right. He was standing there as plain as day and as radiant as I could have imagined he would have been! The amazing thing was that it seemed so natural for him to be there. The community’s focus on the reunion seemed to make it the most natural thing for me to expect him to be here. I just wasn’t surprised... I thought to myself, just as well I was doing the Gita with focus and proper technique. In fact I hadn’t lost any of my composure and one-pointedness even with his appearance. I had read how he used to throw little missiles at anyone who became



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unfocused or too fidgety during chanting. Whenever I did the Guru Gita I always joyfully imagined him throwing something at me whenever I lost my focus or started moving around too much.

He seemed pleased at my efforts and walked right up to me and put both of his hands on my bald head and started to slowly massage my head. He then quite intentionally licked the top of my head. Now, although in retrospect this seemed like a very strange thing to do, it definitely felt like an amazing gift of grace at the time. It seemed like a metaphor for cleansing the impurities of my mind via the Guru's grace.

He then turned around and sat on the podium next to the chair at the front of the hall. He sat there watching everyone but was very casual and relaxed. Baba stayed for some time until only his subtle but powerfully palpable presence remained. At the end of the Guru Gita I quite uncharacteristically found myself going into a very deep meditation. The experience had been more subtle and less dramatic than the previous experience earlier that week, yet I somehow felt its full implications would unfold in the near future.

The Weight of Karma - 18th April 1996

On the 18th April I was doing the Guru Gita and a few verses into the chanting I suddenly experienced myself lifting, quite effortlessly these two large very heavy thick iron bars. I could see them quite vividly and they were shaped to fit over my shoulders with a curved shape. I felt quite attached to these bars as though, in spite of their 'burden', they had also been supporting me in some odd way. I knew they largely represented my financial debts which were a legacy of the 80's. The amazing thing was the sense of their destiny to be with me in creating the anchor for keeping me on track. In spite of their burden I was always able to meet my obligations, no matter how demanding or impossible the situation seemed at times. Always, just in the nick of time, I was able to handle my responsibilities. I had developed a real relationship of trust with my Bank representative with whom I was renegotiating my situation. After convincing them of my utmost commitment to honour all my obligations they began to look for ways to support me to meet their obligations.

In my mind's eye, I handed the bars to the Guru at the chair and I felt a sense of willingness and appropriateness from the Guru taking them from me at this time. I sensed a cycle was finally ending.

Later I contemplated this experience and realised the weight on my shoulders had in fact kept me extremely focused on my spiritual path. Over the last four years since meeting Gurumayi, all the money I received was channelled into meeting the obligations of my financial "karmic past". This prevented me from being distracted into other avenues. Instead, I was only ever being given exactly what I needed, not a cent more. The continuous pressure of stress turned into creativity in the form of one-pointedness and supported my utmost desire and experiment with life



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to follow my heart in its direction at all costs at an ego level, always ensuring and considering with discrimination that I was furthering the objectives of my higher self.

Blessings of the Devas - 19 April 1996

I was sitting up the front of the Meditation Hall with the lead-chanting group waiting for the program to start. I was contemplating a conversation I'd had earlier with a friend about the existence of Devas, and how they played an integral part in the special long chants, like the Guru Gita (swadhyaya) sung at the start of every day in ashrams around the world. They were powerful texts from ancient times invoking very powerful energies. I was explaining how I felt the Devas played a crucial function in the distribution of energy generated by these sacred chants. (See Appendix 1 – “The Guru Gita: *An Inner View – A Sacred Ceremony of Grace*”)

I was discussing how I believed each of us attracts the blessings of these ceremonial Devas or Angels in direct proportion to the strength of our devotion and one-pointedness in singing the chants. This is greatly enhanced when we establish a regular routine every day at the same time and it is carried out with the proper discipline and focus.

It is through this devotion we invoke the “*wish-fulfilling powers*”, often spoken of regarding this practice. The presiding Devas are responsible for channeling the very powerful energies invoked during these chants. They control the manifestation process of the Universe according to God's Plan and directly under the guidance and inspiration of the Guru's Grace.

As we started chanting the mantra with the lead group, “*Om Namah Shivaya*”, I decided to open myself to the Deva of the Mantra. I instantaneously had a direct inner experience of the inner manifestation of this Deva. It was inconceivably massive, a colossal rush of energy exploded with an enormous radiance of golden light, I felt like I had been plugged into a billion watt electrical generator, yet it was sublimely sweet, tender and extraordinarily nourishing at the same time. My body started to shake and vibrate as I found it difficult to contain the vastness of this experience, my mind was just not able to “get-a-handle” on the formless, yet obviously tangible magnitude of this consciousness.

I could sense an intelligence of infinite wisdom but had no way of even beginning to understand its way of Being. Tears welled up in my eyes. I was filled with a kaleidoscope of joy, elation, bliss and love. I could hardly believe how simply I had slipped into this experience. The fullness of its beauty and sweetness was just awesome. As the program formally commenced, the



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Presence of the Deva slipped into the background of my consciousness yet stayed within my awareness throughout the entire program.

I pondered the wonders of what was constantly going on behind the scenes, *always in readiness of our cooperation...* I also contemplated just how easy and accessible these wonders are if we are simply prepared to make the necessary effort and open ourselves to receiving the Grace.

Chanting: The Nectar of Ecstatic Bliss - 20th April 1996

The next morning after this experience I spontaneously awoke at 4.00am after an inner direction from Baba to revise some posters for a Guruseva project that was happening in the Ashram. After completing this I went into meditation around 5.30am and stayed there until the Guru Gita at 6.30am. During the chant I kept seeing and hearing the words, “wealth, success” keep repeating in my mind. I couldn’t stop it, no matter how much I focused on the chant and text. I assumed this was a good sign but thought nothing more of it.

On that night I was walking around feeling very restless, wondering what I should do. I had decided earlier not to go into the program but to do some work instead. The long chant had already started in the program and I kept walking up and down the stairs from my room. I was pacing around quite aimlessly and finally went up to my room again. I remembered something my Guru has stated about when you are feeling restless or agitated it usually means the Shakti is looking for a more appropriate outlet. I yelled out, “That’s what I need to do: *Chant!!*”

I picked up my meditation mat and went downstairs into the hall. I sat right up the front next to the drummer. The chant was “Hare Rama, Hare Krishna.” The men were singing “Hare Rama” and the women were responding with “Hare Krishna”. This was a very ancient chant and very powerful, a favourite of Baba's. There was a certain “magic” in the atmosphere as I entered the meditation hall, almost electric, which seemed to gently and caressingly wrap itself around me and take me into a heightened state of awareness immediately I sat down and started to chant.

I threw myself into the rhythm of the chant, which had already gathered quite a momentum. The hall was full with people. I realised I had very clearly made the best decision in coming into the chant and this allowed me to open myself even more liberally into the vibration of the chant and giving my whole being over to the chanting. I felt very aligned with Lord Krishna due to my earlier experiences and the connection to Lord Maitreya, (who imbibes the Christ Principle) being one and the same Being!



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While the women were chanting I became focused on the presence of Lord Krishna and without any warning, *it happened!* Waves of ecstatic bliss captured me with a captivating fullness. The word was definitely captivating. I was stunned! While I had experienced the vision of Krishna as I had described before, and although very powerful, this experience was *entirely different* - no vision - just full-on experience!

It was enticing and alluring while at the same time surrounding me with its nourishing beauty and presence. I literally cried out with waves of bliss in so much delight. In fact in a strange way, it was almost 'painful', because I was not able to contain the almost devastating fullness of the experience. I just was not able to hold onto the powerfully exquisite and ephemeral nature of the experience.

I kept repeating the words "*Lord Krishna - my Beloved, Lord Krishna - my Beloved*" as the women chanted. I was just completely enthralled and continued to cry out in joyous response each time the women chanted. When I responded with Hare Rama, tears poured out and overflowed with joyful rapture as the experience reached into the depths of my Self. I usually felt a little conscious of any little tear that appeared in front of others, this time I was entirely oblivious to everyone and entered this bliss of freedom with full abandon.

This happened with each call and response - a cry of blissful delight, with the women's call, and tears of joy, pouring out during my response - crying out and then tears; crying out and then tears.

This time I had truly and utterly completely lost it!

Yet in "losing it" I was gaining everything. Then, as I felt I couldn't take in much more, the Presence of the Lord become more tangible right in front of the Guru's chair - very tall yet still more an experience than a vision. Then instantly it entered into me, after which I was lost in the endlessness of its loving rapture, filled with richness and sweetness. All words in attempting to describe the experience were completely inferior and inadequate to the actual experience.

The amazing thing I became very conscious of was that, whatever I had actually been able to experience, it was but a minute fraction of the vastness of the *real* expression of the Lord. My experience was only a small taste of the totality of the sublime fullness of the Lord's Presence. I sat in awe of the potential experience that may still be reached by going even deeper.

As the experience subsided I didn't want anything else but to have the experience again and enter this state. The chant ended and during meditation I slipped into a very deep, silent space. I kept feeling a deep, pervading unity with everyone in the hall.



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After the program my physical body felt shattered. I could hardly speak, though I decided to explain what had happened with a friend. I felt I had to ground the experience somehow and allow it to integrate into my being as much as I could.

Manifesting the Christ Principle - 23rd April 1995

On the 23rd of April I walked into my room in the Ashram. The room was surrounded with large windows overlooking the west and north. The sun was setting and was dispersing a brilliant, golden glow, giving a majestic and almost surreal hue to the room. It looked out-of-this-world, yet incredibly inviting and “juicy”. Something magic was in the air...

The room was also full of bunks, in preparation for the reunion event of people who had met Baba Muktananda in person. In combination with the golden lighting supplied by God, the room was exquisitely majestic and had taken on an added dimension, in more ways than one. It had a sublime richness that was nourishing and warming. I had always stayed in this room ever since I started staying the Ashram and I truly loved it. Now the Guru had somehow given it an extra lift!

I left the room and walked down the hall. I felt the subtle presence of Baba. I received a clear message that all these preparations, now starting to reach a crescendo, were not just for all the people arriving for the reunion but more importantly to provide a “vehicle” for the Guru to manifest in a physical form again through the love and devotion of students and seekers.

It has always been said the Christ energy for the New Age would manifest in groups, wherever love and unity were the primary focus of that group. This united bond of love would then provide the vehicle for the Christ Principle to manifest on earth. The Guru is the focus for bringing this Light to devotees and together bringing the fullness of heaven to earth.

Guruseva: The Key to the Heart of the Guru

I contemplated all the inner experiences I had been having ever since I had moved into the Ashram more than five months ago and I finally realised the obvious - this was extraordinary! I asked why was it happening?

I began to assess what had been the key to these experiences. First and foremost I had done the Guru Gita every morning, plus the evening Arati, chanting, japa and meditation throughout the weekly Ashram schedule as much as possible. All these were the foundation for the



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spirit of Guruseva - the highest form of sadhana. Guruseva is in fact a holistic Sadhana. It is complete - serving the Guru is the highest vibrational state one can achieve - nothing else is necessary - it is the key that opens the door to the Guru's Grace and your inner Self. The spiritual practices are designed to simply heighten the vibrational state of our senses, thoughts and desires so that they become a perfect mirror for reflecting the magnificence of the inner Self.

Guruseva was the fuel for the fire of love in my heart to experience the fullness of God. It also dawned on me that the Ashram, the Guru's House, is literally the Guru, as the all the teachings say. It is not just mere brick and mortar. This Ashram was also auspiciously blessed and opened by the Guru herself, some years ago. Therefore, as we imbibe these teachings more and more through our thoughts, desires and actions then the experience becomes actual and tangible.

The Reality of the Inner Guru

The more I focused on discovering the nature of the inner Guru in all my spiritual practices, particularly in the Guru Gita, I noticed how the reality of the Guru's House "being the Guru" became more tangible and a direct experience. Living in the Ashram without the physical living Guru present provided the extraordinary opportunity to connect with and experience the true Guru within. Gurumayi always says that this is the real Guru - not the physical outer form, but the inner principle. The Guru's Home had become the vehicle (the physical body) to allow me to begin experiencing, albeit only on basic levels, the inner Guru (the real Self).

Experiencing the "inner Guru" had the supreme advantage of linking me directly to the source of the Self, whether I was physically with the Guru or not. In other words, I could have the experience anywhere, anytime because the Guru was within my Self.

Living here in the Sydney Ashram was the greatest opportunity of a lifetime - smack dab in the middle of Sydney - I wondered how many actually see the opportunity in its fullness. In any case, it is no doubt the reason why many are drawn to the Ashram, sometimes not even knowing why, just feeling something very special when they come into the atmosphere of the Ashram. How incredible, I thought - such a "spiritual oasis" of immense implications available to anyone and everyone of us - for the offering. It seemed the door to the Guru was forever open, ready to welcome and invite the aspirant to make the effort with the key of love and devotion to connect to



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the Guru. This would then allow the wonders inside the heart of love to flow forth into their lives via the Guru's Grace.

The Reunion of Devotees - 27th April 1996

I was lying in bed early in the morning half asleep and dozing, when quite out of the blue I imagined Gurumayi would make a telephone call during a special program being held during the day for all those devotees who had met Baba Muktananda.

It just seemed like the most natural thing for Gurumayi to do on this day.

Without thinking about it any further, I went down to the hall for meditation at 5.00am and then did the Guru Gita. We had a special puja to start the day off and we began feeling well prepared and organised for all that had to be done. The day proceeded beautifully, with everything mostly going to plan. I spoke with a person who had arrived from overseas who was the official Ambassador for the Trustees of the Siddha Foundation. He was visiting Australia for a few months.

That evening I decided at the last minute to go into the program. As I sat down in the lead chanting group I felt the immense power of the energy or Shakti in the hall from the day's program. The MC then shared how during the program, around mid afternoon, the Guru had telephoned in to *Speak Directly* to the participants. She announced she was coming to Australia in early 1997 and we would know in the coming months the exact dates. I wasn't surprised, just absolutely delighted with this news.

We began to chant in honour of Baba Muktananda. Everyone was intoxicated with the news. Immediately the chant developed a very sweet, melodious rhythm, yet maintaining a very powerful energy. I felt the chant starting to slowly build with so much energy behind it. The hall was full to overflowing with people and we were in a stunned, ecstatic state at the news of Gurumayi's visit, so beautifully conveyed, by a very articulate and emotive speaker who was attending the reunion.

During the chant, I experienced a moment of surrendering myself to my inner Self, a moment you *just know* when it happens, as it passes beyond 'thought' to an inner knowing - an intuitive state - which is a higher state than thought. In that moment I felt the same powerful surge of energy as I had the previous time chanting "Hare Rama, Hare Krishna". This surge of energy pulsed through me like a *thunderbolt*. It was a single wave of energy, of pure, unadulterated bliss. It was so strong it made me cry out in absolute delight.



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The experience subsided a little, yet remained gently uplifting and joyful. But as usual, just when you least expect it, as is usually the way of spiritual experiences, I witnessed this glorious blue light emerge and take shape into a lotus shaped flower in front of the Guru's chair. It started to grow and as it did, its petals opened up, from which this magnificent firework-display of *golden sparkling lights* began spraying down from the Guru. It seemed she was showering her devotees with her blessings - it was literally raining down with an effervescent brilliance, which added an appropriately spectacular finale to the day with its special announcement of the Guru coming to Australia the next year. I became more and more ecstatic in the chant until I yelled out in enthusiasm. Everyone started joining in with much exuberance until the chant ended on an amazing high.

I placed Baba's shaktipat photo on the wall at the end of my bed.

Silence of the Intensive

On the 4th and 5th of May, 1996, during the Intensive, I walked up to the foyer area and felt the silence of the program emanating from the hall. I noticed the hosts sitting quietly, also meditating. There were some people talking very quietly in the background and some others in the kitchen also doing some work. The silence was accentuating every sound.

As I was standing there I suddenly realised that people were receiving Shaktipat right there and then in the hall. The most profound, far reaching experience of their lives. I was floored by the significance of this realisation which totally changed my state. I became very humble and stood there in awe of the repercussions of what was happening. It made me become very silent internally and realise the effect of the connectedness of my consciousness with those in the hall and how their experience was in fact also mine at those deeper levels of our true selves. I began to understand how we can all add our focus and energy to supporting the Guru's work. We can keep our awareness on the experience of what is happening when these programs are being given. By focusing our attention and holding the awareness of the incredible nature of what is happening for people we can deepen and support the process of Guru's work. The weekend was very full and inspiring. It gave me a chance to offer my service for this special event.

I was also chanting the mantras "Om purnimanam. Om purnimdah... over and over again all day long. I realised the mantra was about the disciple emerging from the Master, that is the perfect coming out of the perfect, where only the perfect remains.



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“Honouring the Guru Within”

I wanted to complete a detailed proposal for a special ashram weekend retreat focused on “Honouring the Guru Within”. I was preparing this for a meeting with the Ashram Managers on the Saturday. I also had an important business meeting scheduled for late in the afternoon. So I had a very full day. The Proposal I was preparing was based on building on the success of a special day we had for honouring Baba Muktananda, which was created in preparation for the special Australia-wide reunion described earlier, I proposed we should continue the momentum by offering a special “Program” based simply around living in the Ashram for a weekend. It would utilise the existing resources and the current Ashram schedule. It was to be held over the weekend to provide both long-term devotees and new people a real way of simply “connecting” with the Ashram and the teachings of my Guru in all their fullness and glory!

It was designed to act as a focus for encouraging the community to do the spiritual practices and even attract people from all over Australia, possible from around the world, to visit the Sydney ashram for “*Honouring the Guru Within*”. Baba stated: “*The more one follows the discipline of a sacred place, the higher will one rise, the more intense will be one’s longing for God.*” It would provide the opportunity to inspire people with enthusiasm to understand the yoga of Guruseva and thereby give themselves wholeheartedly, *the only way it works*. Baba also stated, “*A disciple can receive Shakti through the Guru... but he can only increase that Shakti through service to the Guru. Guruseva is a great Yoga. Through service to the Guru knowledge reveals itself within you.*” “*The measure of the success of your efforts, the development of your inner Shakti, the speed of your progress - all depend on the depth of your devotion to your Guru.*”

The Ashram Schedule was set up by Baba Muktananda to provide a vehicle for seekers to attain spiritual awakening and the supreme knowledge. The weekend live-in program was based on this schedule and was created to provide a focus for honouring the Guru within, the essence of my Guru’s teaching. The Sydney Ashram had a fantastic opportunity to be the catalyst for igniting the fire of Guruseva and Spiritual Practices within seekers. Someone said of living in the Ashram, “*There are more comfortable places to live, there are less crowded places. But there are no places nearer to God.*”

It was also felt these weekends could become a powerful and effective means of “tilling the soil” for continuing the Guru’s mission in Australia, namely, providing the opportunity for spiritual awakening through Shaktipat. I have always believed Australia could become a nation leading the world in spiritual endeavours and practice.



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I was fully aware the blessing of a *living* Siddha Guru resided here in the Sydney Ashram. This presented the glorious opportunity for connecting with the *inner Guru* - the true goal of this Yoga. I saw the Ashram as a bright, shining diamond radiating out its light for seekers to see the extraordinary opportunity of receiving Shaktipat from the Guru - a primary role for the Sydney Ashram. I remembered how the Guruseva Team had made its mission, quite a few months previously to "*Have the Guru Tour Australia*". We rejoiced in the expression "*if a miracle happens within 5 kilometres, claim it as your own...*" to unofficially claim the Guru's Tour as our "little miracle".

In the ashram everyone is always invited to experience the presence of the inner Guru, which is here all the time and to "*tune in*" to Her particular "*Wavelength*".

During July and August I started to experience during the opening mantra a beautiful golden body of light descending down from above everyone's heads and pouring over us as a blessings and protection from evil. Please note that evil is simply energy flowing in the wrong direction at the wrong time and causes separation.

Meeting for the Tour - 29th September 1996

We were having a planning meeting for Gurumayi's forthcoming 1997 Tour to Australia. We had adjourned to the Amrit area of the Sydney ashram and Ray Militec, one of the Directors of the Siddha Yoga Foundation was drawing up a diagram explaining about keeping a balance in all aspects of your life. In that moment, as he completed the circular diagram with all its components, I felt a powerful, intuitive recognition that I was to shift my focus into the outer 'unreal' world of finance and business to bring a balance into this area of my life.

I remembered my commitment to Gurumayi when Lalita Franklin called me one day from Shree Muktananda Ashram. She had told me that Gurumayi, had asked, "*Was I looking after my finances?*" I had just managed to keep everything ticking over up to this time while I focused on voluntary work, but now it felt like the right time to put all my efforts into getting my business projects happening again.

"I Love You" - 25th October 1996

I was doing seva for the global satellite intensive with Gurumayi at the Sydney Ashram. The intensive was live from New York, USA and had started in the early hours of the morning. When I awoke, I was feeling very frustrated with my finances. I had started making it a priority but it was still a continuous, pressure-building issue. It had forced me to move ahead in trust knowing everything would ultimately work out for the best. However, today it just really got to me! I was on the verge of tears and decided to have a shower so I could just have a good cry.



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There I was standing under the shower with a flood of tears pouring down my face. At that point I had just had enough of living on the "edge" working on early-stage, start-up, innovative technologies! A good cry always seems to help. I felt a little better so I got dressed and came downstairs just as the intensive was finishing up.

I stood at the top of the Amrit stairs, near the entrance of the hall. I was directing people to receive prasad from the intensive. I heard someone call out, "*Sevites can come into the hall for darshan.*" I found it interesting that no one else seemed to hear this announcement and in some way it seemed to have been directed especially at me, as no one else seemed to respond.

I walked into the hall and immediately saw Gurumayi, larger than life, "live", on the big screen at the front of the hall, to the right side of her chair.

There was no line so I walked straight up the aisle to the front and stood behind the one person standing there, waiting to have darshan. As I stood there waiting, I was in awe of Gurumayi right there in front of me on this huge screen. At that moment on the screen I noticed someone being introduced to Gurumayi. I heard them say something to Gurumayi, but missed exactly what it was. I somehow felt it was significant to me.

I became a little puzzled as to why the person in front of me was standing for such a long time right in front of me, though I wasn't complaining because there I was, getting a full blast of shakti from Gurumayi on the screen, right there in front of me. In fact, I was a little overwhelmed and awestruck. It had happened so suddenly and intensely! I was transfixed to the spot. It almost felt like Gurumayi had asked someone to go out and get "Anatole", bring him inside and place him right in front of me. At that moment Gurumayi turned to the camera and looked right into my eyes and said, "*I love you and I'm glad you're here!*"

I could hardly believe it as it seemed she had said it just for me, half way across the world. I melted and burst into tears, though these were tears of joy. It was like Gurumayi had known of my anguish of a little earlier and decided to tell me exactly what I needed to hear, direct and live from her! Gurumayi had responded to my internal crisis, giving me the needed assurance and a boost of support in a most magnificently orchestrated darshan from the other side of the world.

I stood there motionless and just as Gurumayi finished speaking the satellite transmission ended and the screen went blank.

They were her last words of the intensive.

I meted into a pranam on the floor and stumbled to the back puja and pranamed to Baba. As I was walking out, a friend sitting at the back of the hall called me over. She told me how she was watching what had happened as I walked into the hall. She told me that she felt Gurumayi had spoken specifically to me from the screen. I asked her what was said when I was first standing up



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at the front waiting. It seems the person introducing a man to Gurumayi had said, this is so and so and he is a "magician". I was taken aback by this as the "White Magician" is what I considered as my archetypal aspiration. It has been very close to my heart as my "mode of activity" throughout my life, the concept of taking an idea from nothing and bringing it into reality.

Gurumayi's Upcoming Tour

On Sunday, the 22nd of December the Sydney Siddha Yoga Ashram gently came to life in the early hours of the morning. We could all sense a growing air of excitement and anticipation filling our shakti charged atmosphere. Our senses were caressed by the sweet lingering fragrances of camphor and Ganeshpuri dhoop from the meditation puja done earlier in the morning. There was a distinct feeling of the significant "*impending event*" growing ever closer and closer.; Gurumayi's Australian and New Zealand Tour.

Some people were entering the hall just as the Guru Gita was starting - I heard the sound of Gurumayi's voice - a momentary thought considered: "*Has Gurumayi surprised us, yet again, and arrived early - is Gurumayi here!?*"

No, but certainly a wonderful premonition of things to come in the near future. It was the video of Gurumayi chanting the Guru Gita that was a special treat as a prelude to the Community Satsang which was to be the last one before Gurumayi's actual arrival in Australia in less than seven weeks.

At the end of the Guru Gita the MC made a special announcement. We would be hearing from Catherine Parish during the satsang via a direct telephone link-up to Shree Muktananda Ashram in South Fallsburg. We also discovered we would be connecting with New Zealand and fifteen other locations in centres and ashrams around Australia. Another blessing through the power of grace and technology.

After the delicious amrit breakfast, and amidst the squeals of delight from children, and much excitement throughout the ashram, the community satsang was under way. We started the satsang by chanting the opening mantras which invariably invoke an opening of our hearts to the Guru. The MC actually explained a little later how the word "heart" derived from the Sanskrit meaning, "*In the act of giving we make room for receiving.*"

This certainly typified the flavour of Catherine Parish's sharing as she spoke of how devotees from around the world were enthusiastically preparing to come to Australia in support of the Tour. She said that devotees in Mexico were raising Dakshina for the Australian Tour in spite of their own country's economic upheavals - showing us all an amazing spirit of love, typifying the global mission of Siddha Yoga: "*Creating a Culture of Love*".



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We suddenly came to realise the “auspicious responsibility” that Gurumayi spoke of, where thousands of people’s lives will never be the same again after the Tour. Through the precious gift of Shaktipat their lives will be transformed - a special gift from the Guru to sincere seekers everywhere.

Catherine explained so exquisitely how Dakshina “exists for the sole purpose of bringing us closer to God”. It is the love with which an offering is made, or a gift is given, that is ultimately the most important thing.

The spiritual practise of Dakshina provides money - and as we know money is but one form of energy that can support the Global Mission of Siddha Yoga. These funds can be used in making the precious gift of Shaktipat available to seekers in countries like Poland and Russia. It can provide the resources needed to support projects like PRASAD and the expansion of Siddha Yoga throughout the world.

Ultimately, Shaktipat is the only true transformer of people’s lives and their quality of life. It is the best “social welfare program” in the true sense of the meaning of these words. It transforms people’s lives from within their hearts and strengthens the esteem of the seeker, bringing them to know God from within themselves.

The satsang built in excitement with everyone exploring the multitude of ways we could all participate in the powerful spiritual practice of Dakshina in supporting the Tour. The hall became electric with enthusiasm generated from the exhubirant joy and forthcoming expectation of seeing Gurumayi’s majestic form step forth onto our shores; into our hall and most importantly, into our hearts.

I knew that in so little time Gurumayi would be here with us and we would become part of her auspicious responsibility in establishing a culture of love, a responsibility where our children can experience the expansiveness of living in the expectation of greatness and creativity, an opportunity where we can all join as a community in manifesting the reality of Gurumayi’s Global Mission here on Earth.

Expanding the Mission of Siddha Yoga

One of the first activities I had become involved with upon my return to the ashram back in late 1995 was with a dear friend of mine, the late Dr Trevor Williamsz. We used to have wonderful, stimulating discussions about the Guru and Siddha Yoga. We considered two projects that may support the mission of Siddha Yoga here at the Sydney Asham in the coming years.

On the 2nd January 1997 I produced a report, outlining two projects we had discussed.



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Project One: The SYDHA Team:

The inaugural meeting of the Siddha Yoga Dulwich Hill Action team (SYDHA) had been on the 17th December 1995 with the late Dr Trevor Willamsz and Chaitanya Mathews. We met to consider plans for the expansion of facilities and resources at the Sydney Ashram and the surrounding community around the ashram. The objective was to create a strong Siddha Yoga residential community at Dulwich Hill, specifically for supporting the ongoing expansion of the global vision of Siddha Yoga and completely attuned to the Guru's grace. (See Item 1 Appendix 2)

Project Two: Live-in Weekend Retreat

The second project was a special version of the live-in weekend proposed to the managers back in April 1996. (See Item 1 Appendix 2)

Becoming a Flame

In late January I was chanting Om namo Bhagavate Muktanandaya in the Hall. I was looking directly at Swami Indirananda. In an instant I had an extraordinary experience of seeing my entire body becoming a flame. I wasn't just visualising this, I was the actual flame! My whole body was the movement of the flame; moving, darting, swaying and weaving. It felt wonderful and was a sublimely beautiful experience.

Gurumayi in Melbourne: 16th February 1997

At the start of Gurumayi's 1997 Australian Tour in Melbourne I invited my Godson's mum, Pam, to the introduction program on Sunday. I returned to Sydney before the Intensive in Melbourne and she subsequently did the intensive in Melbourne. Another close friend, Kalli, through a sequence of amazing coincidences was introduced to Gurumayi. Kalli said to her, "I worked with Anatole on "Before its Too Late". Gurumayi asked, "*Is Anatole here?*" Kalli replied, "*No, but he will see you in Sydney.*"

Darshan - 25th March 1997

After the introduction programs at Darling Harbour we were told Gurumayi would be visiting the Ashram on the 25th of March, 1997, in the week leading up to the intensive. The ashramites were also aware of the minute possibility of meeting with Gurumayi as a group. A few weeks before Gurumayi's arrival we were told of the possibility of such a meeting. On the "on-chance" we decided to rehearse a song I had written for Gurumayi back in 1993.

Gurumayi Arrives at the Ashram

Suddenly the moment had arrived; Gurumayi was there in the ashram. I was sitting in a packed hall, chanting and waiting for Gurumayi to enter. Finally, Gurumayi majestically walked in and as she took the chair everyone burst into thunderous applause with having the Guru sitting there physically with us, in the chair once again. After some beautiful talks and a chant, Gurumayi left the hall.



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I decided to find my way down to the manager's room. I had already placed the drawing of Baba, my guitar and other bits and pieces, including my "Sankalpa" in the room, a little earlier.

Darshan in Namaste Room

Soon all the ashramites, managers, three of the swamis and a few other guests were sitting at Gurumayi's feet in a semi circle. As we settled, a somber silence descended over us and Gurumayi looked at us all. Spontaneously and simultaneously we all burst forth in a hearty laugh and Gurumayi asked if there was a team leader. Gail spoke up on our behalf and thanked Gurumayi for giving the Sydney Ashramites and Melbourne ashram residents an opportunity to be with her.

Joyous Interchange

Then quite directly Gurumayi asked, "*What's the guitar for?*" It was innocently, yet strategically, placed at the back of the room. Gail explained the Ashramites had a song we wanted to sing her. Gurumayi nodded and the ashramites took their places. Gurumayi asked for a chair to be brought in for me and placed right up next to her. Gurumayi very sweetly tugged one of the Ashramites to move closer to her chair so that we could all fit in.

Gurumayi asked Gail to give the words to the song to me so I could read them. Gail, replied, "*He wrote them.*" Gurumayi just laughed.



I introduced the song to Gurumayi by explaining how the song had been written especially for her and to imagine that we have been transported to Gurudev Seeth Peeth, sitting on Topavan, in the early evening with a beautiful full moon shining brightly and a cool, caressing breeze blowing gently.



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A Beautiful Connection

During the song Gurumayi, who seemed to be enjoying the words and devotional feeling generated by the song, looked with so much love into the eyes of all the Ashramites singing. And at one point during the song Gurumayi looked directly into me, but then just kept on looking and looking. For a split second it almost surprised me, but her look was so serene and filled with love I just became completely lost in the openness of my heart and more absorbed in the look and the song. It was divine to have the opportunity to have this wonderful prolonged interlude with Gurumayi.

In fact, I became embedded in this extraordinary experience. It was a deep and powerful connection that lasted for what seemed an eternity. At the time I had no rationalisation of its significance as I was beyond all thought, yet I knew something of extraordinary significance had transpired and in retrospect, I began to view it as one of the most important moments in my life.



As the song continued, Gurumayi gave me another long, penetrating look, as her eyes seemed to simply lock into mine with a loving interchange of grace. Again, it was a moment of deep soul connection through the eyes of the Guru's being.

The ending to the song was arranged in a particular way that seemed to please Gurumayi as she seemed to be anticipating the melody and had a particularly beaming smile in following the words, showing her obvious delight.

After the song Gurumayi commented it was such a sweet song and I was surprised to see many of the people in the room with tears flowing and all of them seemed to have been deeply moved.



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Gurumayi asked me when the song was written and I explained that it was in 1993, after the satellite intensive. I explained how I had dreamt of singing it to Gurumayi many, many times and now my longing had been fulfilled.

This had now been fulfilled beyond my most extraordinary expectations. I realised how freely and completely I had lost myself in the song, how totally joyous it had been. *Completely giving oneself in a song you wrote for the Guru* while singing in a sacred, intimate setting with complete freedom, joy and love. I had no inhibitions in singing to Gurumayi; I had become lost in my love, singing to the Guru. I had always frozen when singing in public so *in retrospect this was amazing!*

A little later Gurumayi said, *“such sweet people, a sweet ashram and sweet song.”* I said this sounded like another song, and Gurumayi laughed. Jacqui mentioned how, *“This could be the song for the next tour!”*

Gift to Gurumayi

I asked if I could present a gift to Gurumayi and bought a large coloured drawing of Baba in a beautiful golden frame that another devotee, Lynne had done for me. I showed Gurumayi, who looked at it very closely with a very pleased eye. She asked me if everyone had seen it and I replied, *“No”*, so Gurumayi asked Bowbay to show it to everyone in the room.



Gurumayi asked how long it had taken. I explained it had taken over three months because I had to keep rubbing it out and doing it over and over, time and time again, looking very closely and studying Baba's photo. Gurumayi then commented, *“what a great dharana.”*



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Sankalpa

I was delighted at this response and decided to go for it! I asked Gurumayi if I could present something of tremendous value to me. I had not been too sure if I wanted to do this; it was a very significant step. I went to the back of the room and as I was reaching for the laminated copy of the Sankalpa, Swami Ishwarananda asked me if I was Russian and then told Gurumayi. Gurumayi smiled and said, "*Ahhh, Russian devotion.*" I gave it to Gurumayi to read and Gurumayi studied it for some time. She said, "*He used the word Sankalpa*", then handed it to Swami Apoorvananda to read.

I had contemplated this Sankalpa for the tour. I had read it to myself, day after day, after each Guru Gita at Baba Muktananda's puja in the hall. I was *totally surprised*. I just didn't expect Gurumayi to have it read out aloud to everyone.



Swamiji read, "*Sankalpa - Anatole Kononewsky.*" and said, "*To become permanently established and aligned to the Guru's state of consciousness and the realisation of God so as to become a perfect instrument and vehicle for the service and fulfillment of God's plan.*"

At the end of its reading Gurumayi said, "*Very good.*"

Gurumayi then asked someone to give out malas and little hearts to all the ashramites.

- Om Guru Om -



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After the extended darshan was finished Gurumayi walked around the ashram and gave darshan. She finally left via the front garden.





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Birthday Wish

On the 26th of March, 1997, I contemplated my darshan with Gurumayi and started thinking about my birthday, one week away and the tremendous significance of this day for me. I truly was wondering whether I could have the most incredible “completion” to the six years of sadhana by seeing Gurumayi again on this day. I wondered whether it would eventuate on this day or not. I wondered how I could turn a slight glimmer of hope into a “slightly better chance” of it happening. It certainly seemed a long shot!

Letter to Gurumayi

I decided to write a letter to Gurumayi, asking to see her on my birthday. I gave it to Bowbay who had played such a key role in organising the ashramites’ darshan with Gurumayi the day before. I addressed it to Bowbay and the letter read:

“Next Tuesday, on the 1st of April, 1997, it will be six years to the day since I received Shaktipat from Gurumayi in Sydney during the 1991 Tour.

Since then I have pursued a very intense sadhana, following the Guru’s command over the last six years. I have not seen Gurumayi for all this time, yet I have developed a very rich and deep inner relationship with the Guru. In 1991, Gurumayi gave her blessings to a project I have become Founder/Chairman of called “Before it’s Too Late”, a voluntary project supporting our children’s future.

The darshan with Gurumayi the other day was an extraordinary blessing and manifestation for the culmination of these last six years.

Yet, if the opportunity presented itself, I would like to most respectfully and humbly request an opportunity to “physically connect” with Gurumayi, if even for a moment, on the occasion of my birthday and sixth anniversary of receiving Shaktipat, Tuesday 1st April, 1997. This would be absolutely perfect!

The last six years have been an extraordinary time for me. The significance of which I am only just beginning to understand. Living in the Ashram over the last fifteen months has also been particularly wonderful! I have developed a very close connection with the inner Guru. (I therefore know in simply writing this letter and delivering it to you, the meeting has already occurred on some level.)

I knew I needed to maintain a sincere state of detachment within myself as to whether or not it was to going to happen. Ultimately, what was really important was to know that the inner connection with the Guru within my heart was everything!



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Divya Diksha & Birthday Celebration - 1st April 1997

On the 1st of April, 1997 I awoke at 3.00am - my birthday and six years since receiving Shaktipat from Gurumayi in Sydney during her 1991 visit. I went down to the meditation hall and sat in front of Gurumayi's chair. Her presence was so palpable I could almost feel her physically there, and that I could have reached out and touched her.

After the Guru Gita I walked out to have breakfast. I was deliberating when, or if, I should go to the office. I had this small spark of hope, a wish for the fulfillment of my most perfect completion of six years of Sadhana. It felt slightly possible, but very unlikely. The fact was, if it really happened it would be almost *too perfect*.

As I was walking up the hall I sensed this wave of excitement start to build around me. Then I heard the news; Gurumayi was coming to the Ashram! My heart picked up a few beats in anticipation of just the thought of it. I rushed out to the front garden where everyone was gathering. Swami Ishwarananda asked me if it was OK to chant because of the early hour, out of concern for the neighbours. I said very directly, "*Of course!*" so we all started chanting "*Om Namo Bhagavate Muktanandaya*" very sweetly with an early morning sensitivity that contained tremendous power. I was looking around at all the people's beaming faces at the prospect of the impending visitor and Brigit smiled at me as if to say, "*Great birthday present!*" Then suddenly there was a rush of activity outside the front gate as a car pulled up. Everyone was standing at attention when we suddenly heard the words "*April Fool!*" sounding out. A sudden wave of a very "bitter/sweet" mixed emotion ran through everyone.

The point being made was, if you are going to have a joked pulled on you, it may as well be by the Guru. The momentary disappointment turned quickly to joy and laughter as to the ingenious, and now obvious, "*April Fool*" trick that we had all fallen for, *hook, line and sinker!*

My Heartfelt Wish

I went back inside the ashram and fell back into my indecision as to whether to go to work or just hang around the ashram, *just it case*.

I was wandering around the ashram from one spot to another trying to get a "sign" as to what to do. This went on for quite some time. The program had re-started in the hall and the ashram was humming along with a buzz of activity. I walked out to the reception to find the telephone number of someone I wanted to contact. I reached to get the book behind the counter and as I turned around, to my utter amazement there was Gurumayi standing by herself, as large as life, right there in front of me at the front entrance to the Ashram! She had walked up the driveway of the ashram by herself, surprising everyone.

She was less than two metres away, looking directly toward me.

She was standing there at the door with the innocence of a "newcomer" waiting to be welcomed, yet at the same time with such an air of majesty and grandeur that I was simply transfixed to the spot - literally dumbfounded. I raised my hands to pranam - I couldn't speak.



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As Gurumayi entered the ashram she walked right by me. She looked straight into my eyes and said, “*Happy Birthday*” then casually kept walking right past me into the foyer of the ashram. As she walked by, I said, “*Thank You, Gurumjayi.*”

Her timing sent my mind into a total spin and I was stunned beyond belief. It could not have been more perfect! Gurumayi had fulfilled my birthday wish, as per my request in my letter to her. This simple salutation and being ‘mysteriously’ brought to the front door of the ashram at the precise moment that Gurumayi entered the front door of the ashram, felt like Gurumayi had arrived especially for my Birthday. In my letter I had asked to see her with an open, detached and loving heart and Gurumayi had orchestrated a perfect fulfillment to my deepest heartfelt request.

It dawned on me that Gurumayi had seemed to have actually responded to the request in my letter.

Birthday Wishes

By the time I regained some sense of composure, I thought to myself I probably should let someone know Gurumayi is here! I rushed into the amrit and saw Swami Ishwarananda standing there. I told him “Gurumayi’s here!” With the early “April Fool” experience still lingering in his mind, I noted a split second of almost disbelief, and then Swamiji, seeing the movement of people in the hallway rushed off “in pursuit” as well. I was standing around for a while, savouring the excitement of realisation of my request to the Guru. I heard someone say that Gurumayi had been upstairs and realised this could mean the dorms. I was told later Gurumayi had walked into my room and stood in front of my puja and stayed there for a short while. She had visited the other rooms and offices upstairs and apparently she was now in the front garden.

I decided to follow and walked up the hallway and noticed that Gurumayi had just walked back in and was standing at the front door. I stood to her left about two metres away and Gurumayi said, “*It’s his birthday*”, looking at me. A round of “happy birthday” followed and Gurumayi walked by me to the Ganesh puja and stopped there for a moment and then went into the Seva room with an ashramite who was standing at the door waiting to show her around. Jane, one of the managers, told me to go into the room as well. I walked in and stayed at the entrance. Gurumayi started to leave and brushed passed me, caressed my shirt and commented, “*Great shirt.*” The shirt was a timeless design that I had only worn a very few times. (I wondered if the shirt was the one I had worn back in 1991 when I received Shaktipat.) It was also worn the week before when we had met with Gurumayi. I only wore it on rare occasions and it suddenly was relegated to ‘prized-shirt’ status, along with my Russian embroidered vest which I had also worn for Gurumayi’s last visit to the ashram.

The Song

Gurumayi went down the hallway to the meditation hall. Everyone in the program was told to go back into the hall. I walked down to the stairs just above the entrance to the meditation hall and just smiled at the most perfect fulfillment of my request for my birthday. Then Bowbay came out



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of the hall and invited everyone to come in. I somehow managed to find my way right down the front, directly to the side of Gurumayi who was sitting in her chair. As the room settled, Gurumayi said, “*It’s Anatole’s Birthday.*” This was the first time I had actually heard Gurumayi mention my name, and it sounded like nectar. The sound of the Guru saying your name is just divine. Everyone burst into song once again.



Gurumayi then gave an impromptu talk and was very playful and relished hearing about the repercussions of the April fool’s joke played earlier that morning. She even gave some suggestions for prolonging the joke around the world as each time-zone entered the 1st of April.

We then chanted Hari Hari Bol, a long chant mentioning many names and aspects of God. During the chant I kept looking at Gurumayi (in retrospect, with some degree of hope and expectation of a smile or eye contact). Interestingly enough, it wasn’t until the chant reached a



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feverish pitch and I became completely absorbed in the nectar of the chant that Gurumayi gave me a mini version of the “look” I experienced a week ago, yet still very profound. (It was only when I had surrendered my self to the chant that the Guru then naturally acknowledged this state.) The chant finished with everyone feeling ecstatic and full of joy. Gurumayi started to speak again and quite playfully looked at me and said, “*Shambavi hasn’t heard your song yet*” and said that I “*should go and get my guitar.*”

I didn’t stop to think about the implications of that statement, I just jumped up and briskly walked down the aisle. The look of utter surprise on my face triggered a ripple of amusement with the people seated watching me leave.

I was told that Gurumayi had said as I was leaving, “*What an enthusiastic fellow!*”

As I returned to the hall I walked past Jacqui who asked if I wanted her to sit with me. I nodded a very definite yes!

Gurumayi completed what she was saying and then mentioned how she had met with the ashramites previously and gave a lot of praise to the people who live in the ashram and look after it. Gurumayi asked where was my “company”, then said, “*Anatole and company should come up the front.*” I will never forget the next sight. The instant Gurumayi said this, all of the ashramites sitting in the hall sprung up like “jack-in-the-boxes” from amongst the crowd, simultaneously. There wasn’t a moment’s hesitation in their resolve. Gurumayi told the swamis and trustees to move and make space for the ashramites. Everyone gathered around me and the one song-sheet I had. We were bunched in very snugly.

Gurumayi’s Instructions

Gurumayi then instructed me, in a very precise and almost child-like, innocent manner, “*Do it exactly like you did it last time.*” She asked me with so much love and sweetness, referring to the opening description of the setting to the song. There was no way I could have resisted, even if I wanted to.

I introduced the song once again as before and we sang the song, this time to Gurumayi and another hundred or so people. After we finished, Gurumayi commented she thought the song was much longer last time, suggesting she would have liked it to go on. She asked Shambavi about the song and Shambavi gestured by wiping away the tears and said it sounded good with all the women’s voices. Gurumayi suggested Shambavi would like a copy of the words. Gurumayi said it was, “*The perfect song*” and asked, “*When was it written?*” I replied in 1993 after the New Years satellite intensive and Gurumayi asked Swami Ishwarananda what the name of the Intensive was. He replied, “*Everything happens for the best.*”



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I said to Gurumayi, *“I can vouch for that”* and told her that I would be happy to sing the song to her *“at any time.”*



Baba's Drawing

Gurumayi then asked if I had *“seen the picture of Baba on the wall?”* I said, *“No”* and Gurumayi looked to Bowbay who said the drawing was on its way to the Ashram. Gurumayi told me, *“I have said to hang the picture on a wall of the ashram.”*

After all that transpired I don't have much recollection of anything else that Gurumayi said, but the program ended and Gurumayi left the hall.

In the following weeks I spent a lot of time contemplating this day. I began to realise that Gurumayi had answered my request beyond all expectations - I asked for a mere *“moment”* of Gurumayi's time in my letter and received beyond anything I could have imagined. *It was like my best friend had come to visit me on my birthday.*

Gurumayi's Birthday Gift

I decided to go to the office for the afternoon as there were some pressing things to do and since my work was very aligned to my spirit I felt going in would keep me grounded. I turned out to have a very productive and efficient afternoon.

I returned home around 7.30pm and the program had got under way in the hall. It was packed! It was a *“completion get-to-together”* for everyone involved with the tour. The vibes were beautifully joyful and electrifying! As I went in to have some dinner, Avni came walking up to me



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and said to me, "*Gurumayi especially wanted you to have this*" and handed me a present from Gurumayi. It was a beautiful asana, very thick wool with an exquisite purple border that matched the cover that contained the shawl Gurumayi had given me six years ago on my birthday.

The note enclosed was beautifully designed and said, "Especially for *Anatole*, With love from Gurumayi."

This topped off the whole day.

Chanting Finale

After I had savoured the delight of receiving my final birthday present from Gurumayi, I went into the hall for the chant that had started to end the program. The exuberance of the chant started with so much joy and love. The hall was filled with people from all over the world; swamis, tour leaders, managers, sevites, and visitors - a complete mixture. The chant started to build and build until it surpassed the heights of anything I had ever experienced before. The atmosphere in the room was *electrifying*. The chant built even further until no one could contain themselves and suddenly the room exploded with everyone jumping to their feet. Everyone was dancing and bursting with love. The interesting point was that we were all acting as if Gurumayi was there with us leading the chant. We completely surrendered to the grace with utter openness, abandon and freedom.

After the chant so many of the tour staff commented they had never experienced a chant quite like that before. I felt it was a glorious and ecstatic end to my birthday celebrations. (I suggested to people that they were all invited same time, same place next year and we could do it all again...)

The next day we were told Gurumayi would be coming to chant on Thursday with the entire community. This turned out to be another extraordinary experience of chanting that quite unbelievably surpassed even the previous night. We chanted "Nityananda Brahmananda..." and Gurumayi had great fun in conducting the men and women in singing different parts in sequence and when the women added a spontaneous harmony she nodded in delight. There was a dynamic spontaneity and freedom like I had never experienced before. So full of lightness and joy!

Gurumayi lead us to a most extraordinary close of the tour.

Gurumayi's Gift to the Ashram

I noticed a note to Mirella, a manager at the ashram, about the drawing I gave to Gurumayi. It said, "*From Gurumayi. For Ashram - to be hung on a wall (Mirella knows). Thanks.*" Mirella asked me if I had any ideas as to where to hang it. I suggested the "Namaste Room", since it was



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where I gave it to Gurumayi. I asked if it was OK by the program department. They agreed, and the Managers agreed, and it was hung there on 19th April, 1997. (It stayed there until 2000, and is now outside of Room 9 in the Cottage where I stayed for a number of years.)

Gratitude

I was MC for the following Friday night program and on Saturday the satsang was around contemplating the next practical step each of us could do take fostering our sadhana. I found myself going into very deep meditation. I had an insight into my previous experiences with the Guru. I began to further appreciate the significance of the two captivating and embracing looks into Gurumayi's eyes on the 25th of March, and the other deep and powerful look on the 1st of April.

During my meditation I began to feel the potential of realising my sankalpa in this lifetime. I reflected on what I had done. I had formulated a very clear sankalpa, presented it to the Guru, the Guru had read it, then asked to have it read out by a swami and finally commented at the end, "very good." *I started to consider this as highly significant.*

I felt it had somehow already happened at an inner level - *the real level of our being!* And the thing to understand was, because of this shift at this inner level, the outer manifestation was therefore evitable! This is at the essence of understanding the power of the Guru. It was only a matter of time. It was now up to me and my capacity to move out of the way, allowing it to happen by not moving into fear or "inter-fearing" with the emergence of this inner inspiration from the Guru. The significance of this was wonderful and overwhelming at the same time.

I also started to appreciate more than ever what the Guru had given me, was giving, and would continue to give more and more, beyond my reckoning. I saw no end to her giving.

I shared my entire experience with Kalindi. I had truly grown to love our connection of real friendship and unconditional acceptance and love. She made a fascinating comment to me. She said I was the only person she knew who so directly; so positively and definitely had "*put it out there!*" so to speak, to accept the reality of achieving the ultimate goal of my sankalpa in this lifetime.

There seem to be two main concerns usually raised when you start discussing liberation and its actual achievement, namely:

1. The danger of people deluding themselves into thinking they're liberated.
2. The extraordinarily high state that liberation actually is and its attainment should not be underestimated.



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Notwithstanding a sincere appreciation and respect for these two points, it may be worth considering whether it is possibly more dangerous to continue our delusion of limitation and struggle. Is it better to be in a state of deluded liberation, than a deluded state of bondage? If we actively begin to start creating the "thought form" of attaining liberation in this lifetime, we will then start to manifest and honour Baba's last wish of creating a world full of saints by making it a living reality.

Believing it can happen and bringing it to life is the first step! Where would we be if the Wright Brothers believed everyone's paradigm that "man" could never fly?

The first step for any budding and blossoming Siddha, is to come out of the "closet" and start directly exploring and contemplating what it's like to actually be liberated; what does it feel like; start looking at it from a different perspective; examine it; making it real inside our hearts and minds and accessible as a state right now, rather than in some far off distant future... As extraordinary as the state of enlightenment or God realisation is, the first step to its attainment is the belief we can have it and that it is truly possible now.

In other words, we start experimenting until it becomes our experience!

In fact, to me this was the entire message and mission of the Guru. Showing and providing us with the reality of achieving the ultimate goal, right here and right now. This is primarily her mission. Her Guru's mission was to have "a world full of saints." This is her wish and purpose - giving spiritual awakening to sincere seekers everywhere.

I also received very clear inner guidance that my next step was to deepen and extend my meditation practice. This was reinforced with Gurumayi's birthday present of a meditation mat.

The Power of the Guru Gita

At the end of the Guru Gita on the 15th of April, 1997 I felt that the closest thing to being with the physical presence of the Guru was to participate in the presence of the Guru Gita.

It simply seemed obvious to me that the same inner experience was possible and most importantly, as real, by either being with the physical presence of the Guru or doing the Guru Gita as indicated within the text of the chant. Therefore to me, missing a "Guru Gita" is as significant as missing a program with Gurumayi.

This seemed the reality of the matter to me.



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I left the hall after the Guru Gita, had breakfast and got ready to go to the office. Gail caught me as I was leaving and asked me if she could have a chat some time. I felt an intuition to make it now.

We went to the front steps of the ashram and she asked me if I knew the background to the bird up in Dorm 8. I knew there was a bird there but had not seen it and vaguely remembered hearing of some connection with Gurumayi. That was all.

Gail explained that the bird had flown into the house where Gurumayi was going to be staying in Sydney and just stayed!

Apparently when Gurumayi arrived the bird would walk all over her and loved being with her. When Gurumayi was leaving it was to be arranged for the bird to be shipped to Ganeshpuri and because this would involve a lot of red tape, Gurumayi said that it should stay in the ashram and that Anatole should primarily look after the bird, who she had named “songster” by this time because of its joyous capacity to sing.

I was once again dumbfounded at this news and immediately took to following up the request of Gurumayi. I also contemplated the coincidence of my realisations about the Guru Gita or the “Song of the Guru” and finding out almost immediately about “the Guru’s bird called songster”.

Gurumayi’s Visit to Uluru

On the last day of Bowbay’s stay in Sydney, I shared a new song I had composed, which had been inspired after I heard about Gurumayi’s visit to Uluru Rock. It was called “*At the Heart of Australia.*” The words were as follows:

*At the heart of Australia, I feel the love of the Guru.
At the heart of the Guru, I feel the love of Australia.*

*When you’re heart is so full, and you’re feeling good.
Reach for the stars, and hold them in your arms,
And know the fullness of your heart.*

*See yourself in the Guru, just become who you are.
Know the one and the other, are one and the same.*

Our golden land awakened with the light.



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Seeing destiny come into sight.
There's no limit to fullness,
as we start seeing our newness,
Coming down from above.
Our sacred golden land is filling with love.

And know the fullness of your heart.

A little later Bowbay came up to me and gave me a beautiful "Om" shawl from Ganeshpuri that matched the colour of the asana presented to me from Gurumayi for my birthday, a soft purple. It felt wonderful to touch. It always felt cool and nourishing.

The next morning I had a very powerful vision in the meditation hall during the Guru Gita. I was looking at the picture of Baba above Gurumayi's chair and I saw energy flowing and radiating out to everyone in the hall from Baba's hand that was raised and facing outward.

Previous Connection

On the 21st of April, 1997, I attended a combined ashramites and managers meeting. During the meeting we contemplated our most significant experiences arising directly or indirectly out the tour. My realisation in this contemplation revealed a profound wonder. I experienced very clearly that I had known my beloved Guru, Gurumayi in previous lifetimes and we had established a long-standing friendship and relationship from these times. This feeling was very definite and clear. I only conjectured as to our previous connection but they seemed to account for my apparent ease and comfort around Gurumayi, speaking, singing or just being.

The Guru's Voice

One month later on the 21st of May, 1997, I realised as I was listening to Gurumayi's voice chanting the Guru Gita that her voice was the actual manifestation of her, in reality!

I realised as western inventiveness has created technology such as recording and re-playing equipment which can replay the voice, our minds have "got in the way" as they are apt to do from time to time and tell us, "oh, that's not the real thing, it's only a recording."

This is not the case.

The recording, the sound or vibration and the original voice is all one and the same energy. The vibration is what's real, no matter what form you are hearing it in.



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Therefore, the sound of the Guru's voice brings her actual vibration, her reality if you will, right here, right now in the hearing. Just imagine if you had no prior knowledge of tape recorders, CD players, radios, etc. And therefore having no understanding of any of these technological devices and possibilities you would simply come from this naive, childlike point of view where you would simply hear the sound and would assume it was the real person, whose voice you recognised.

It is our minds that create the separation.

Guru Gita Booklet

On the 6th of June, 1997, I was looking for my beanie and opened the closet door to the hall and looked down to find, to my complete surprise, my Guru Gita booklet in its bright red cover. I felt so sure that I had lost this at Darling Harbour during Gurumayi's visit. Now it seemed to be jumping out to be found. It seemed almost magical in its reappearance after such a long absence.

I pondered this experience and it seemed like the booklet, which was so precious to me and had done hundreds of Guru Gita's with me, had just decided to go and "present" itself as a special gift to Gurumayi at Darling Harbour. (Or maybe Gurumayi materialised it, who knows - the imagination runs wild...) I knew that I had lost the book at Darling Harbour. I distinctly remember having it and then not having it while I was there. And now it had quite miraculously decided to manifest back home at the ashram. I was intrigued.

The other thing was when I told a friend of mine at the ashram about the booklet, she told me that she had noticed the booklet in the hall and had put into the cupboard. It had seemed to have re-manifested right in the centre of the ashram upon its return; the hall.

One Voice at the heart of Australia

In June, 1997 we decided to produce a CD for Gurumayi's Birthday.

Over a period of a few weeks, twelve Siddha Yoga Meditation Centres, one Chanting and Meditation Group and the two Siddha Yoga Ashrams joined as "One Voice" to sing "At the Heart of Australia". This song was inspired by Gurumayi's visit to Uluru - a sacred Aboriginal site at the centre of Australia. Uluru is a huge rock, 3.6 kilometres in length and rises 348 metres from the surrounding plain. The group of rounded rocks known as Kata Tjuta, which translates as "mighty heads" lie thirty two kilometres to the west of Uluru.



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The songs on the CD included an adaptation of “I Am Australia” (a Bruce Woodley song) with two original verses written especially for Gurumayi and performed for her at the Melbourne Concert Hall, the “Welcome Song”, performed at the Sydney Convention Centre, Darling Harbour for Gurumayi’s visit to Sydney, “I Know I Am”, performed for Gurumayi at the Sydney Siddha Yoga Meditation Ashram by Sydney and Melbourne Ashramites and the song “At the Heart of Australia”, written after the tour, providing a perfect platform for linking Australia as “One Voice”.

In a wonder-filled process of “connectedness”, each of the centres had a direct, telephone link-up with the Sydney Ashram during their Satsang programs. The Project was explained to everyone and the song, “At the Heart of Australia” was sung over the speakerphone in its fullness, “live”. Then the centres, ranging from 8 to 40 people, sang the chorus back through the phone -- very moving, inspiring and heart-warming!

Everyone truly experienced the “fullness of their hearts” as they sang across Australia between the centres and Ashrams.

Each Centre and Ashram then recorded the last chorus of the song at their individual locations and returned the tapes to the Sydney Ashram. The recording of this song contains the love and energy from the hearts of devotees from centres and Ashrams around Australia. The song was also taken to Uluru by a devotee during the time of Guru Purnima to be played to the “Heart of Australia” as well.

“Lucky Day” was written after the Global Satellite Intensive in May. The CD also included a musical mix called “Feeling at Ease” especially for the 1997 Global Conference at Shree Muktananda Ashram.

All in all, it was a unified, joyous and love-filled production from Australian in honour of our beloved Gurumayi’s birthday!

Recording with the Guru’s Presence

During the mix of the songs at the recording studio, due the intensity of my focus on the Guru through dedicating the song to her, I began to feel Gurumayi’s presence very strongly manifest in the recording studio. It would almost overwhelm me. By the end of the night I felt absolutely no attachment to Gurumayi actually physically hearing the songs. Her presence had been so tangible it truly felt like she had “got them loud and clear” already. Her presence had been so complete, so full and so real during the entire process it almost seemed immaterial to have to send them to her.

- Om Guru Om -



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The Golden Blessings of Spiritual Practices

During May and June I had also began to experience an extraordinary abundance flowing from the Goddess, Lakshmi. Over the last year or so, I had chanted the Guru Gita hundreds of times in the holy atmosphere of a sacred temple of a living Saint and at the start of 1997 I seriously initiated the practice of Dakshina.

The amazing thing was that these “practical” outcomes of chanting the Guru Gita were only a mere by-product of the more important and true purpose for carrying out this great spiritual practice and ritual. It was for a much higher aspiration, purpose and function! (See “The Guru Gita - An Inner View”)



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Gurumayi's Invitation

On the 7th of July, 1997, I received a surprise call on my mobile phone, quite out of the blue, so to speak. I was coming home in the train from work around 6.30pm and my phone rang. It was Mia Rucker from the Gurukula Department in Shree Muktananda Ashram, South Fallsburg. She told me that Gurumayi had asked, “See if Anatole can come for the summer.” Needless to say this request threw me for six! I spoke to Mia all the way to the Ashram as she explained the logistics of visiting the ashram. At this point of time in my worldly sadhana, initiated by the Guru within me back in November 1996, this invitation meant letting go of everything I was doing and was involved in at that point in time. I was at the peak of a huge wave of work that was all rolling in to me. I was Creative Director to advertising agencies developing media campaigns and I was Managing Director of my own company which was developing new environmental technology products for the world market. But I knew the Guru had created all my work and so there was no decision about putting it all on hold and going to see my Guru if that was what she wanted. I had learnt well that *detachment and flexibility rule* in all spiritual practices!

The fascinating thing about this invitation from the Guru was that if I had been asked to come a few months earlier there would have been no way, financially, I could have considered it, but in less than three months, my financial position had dramatically changed to be able to accommodate my Guru's request. Again, I realised I was definitely not doing the planning!

The other thing was that over the last few years I had developed an attitude of great respect for the energy of money. I honoured its presence in my life. I had also developed a largely detached attitude as to whether I had it or didn't.

Throughout my life I had never let the lack of money get in the way of what I felt I had to do in any given situation, especially when I was clearly in touch with following my inner direction. I believe you need to first discover and pursue what you love to do from the inner guidance of your heart and then life will supply the abundance of the universe to bring it to fruition. Often people want an external response before pursuing an internal guidance. I feel it is the other way around. If you follow the inner guidance of the intelligence of your heart, then in my experience, the external support flows in response.



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A Vision of Another Life-time

The following morning, after receiving the news of this invitation from Gurumayi to come to Shree Muktananda Ashram, I spontaneously awoke around 3.30am and was drawn down to the Meditation Hall. During my meditation I had this realisation that I have always had this deep-seated belief in the supreme significance of that moment when the Guru, the spiritual master sends for you.

The next day one of my great ashram buddies shared, (a little tongue in cheek) a different perspective of my recent news, one I hadn't really considered. Namely, he felt intrigued that there I was riding home in a train from the city, when out of the blue a very beautiful lady called me up on my mobile phone from half way around the world to let me know my beloved Guru had asked me to come and visit her ashram. When I thought about it in this light I realised not too many moments in my history could top that!

On Wednesday morning I was chanting the Guru Gita with Gurumayi, who was chanting on the CD, when during verse 52 I suddenly felt the words of Gurumayi start flowing into me from the top of my head. It was like the sound of her chanting was simply flowing into my heart, entering from the top of my head.

This sensation continued through the rest of the Guru Gita. It was especially powerful during verse 120. Tears of joy would keep welling up from within me as the thought of the Guru's message passed in and out of my mind.

Towards the end of the Guru Gita, during the "Wave Lights to the Guru" section, the thought of arriving at Shree Muktananda Ashram in New York state crossed my mind. Suddenly I had a vision of myself entering through this huge gateway or entrance, when Gurumayi came rushing out to greet me with so much joy, love and warmth. I suddenly realised it wasn't Gurumayi in this current physical form. I realised the vision was of a previous lifetime. In this previous life, Gurumayi was my older brother and I was her devoted loving sister. There was so much love between us. This always grew even stronger in our absence from each other. Whenever we were brought together our greetings were always filled with exuberant joy and love. At this point in the chant, I became quite overwhelmed!

The Master's Call

Over the next few days I contemplated the significance of the Guru's message. It started to trigger the recognition of a very deep-seated longing whose strength I hadn't even been fully aware



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of. This longing revolved around the acknowledgment that this command was a very significant milestone in my present sadhana. All this seemed to come to the surface and I realised it had existed for a very long time within me.

This longing had also been intensified by my resolve over the last 6 years, since meeting Gurumayi in 1991, to focus on the sadhana of selfless service, knowing that when it was appropriate, however long it took, the Guru would “call” for me. The important aspect was its initiation from the Guru. I simply maintained a detached self effort. It seemed important that it was not my desire to be with her or to be in her physical presence but that my constant focus was to endeavour to connect with the inner Guru, within my heart.

Interestingly, my financial circumstances and commitments at the time, which I had chosen, had enforced this path in any case on a basic, down-to-earth practical level. This deep longing had actually originated in my late teens after I discovered the existence, and subsequent possibility of meeting a Spiritual Master. I read how it was always when the disciple was ready and not a moment sooner. I inwardly knew this “meeting” would be at the Master’s discretion and will. Hence I had developed this longing for this sacred moment, initiated by the Master.

Although I had had very powerful experiences in many private meetings with Gurumayi during her visits in Australia during 1991 and 1997, this “call” initiated directly from the Guru was altogether different and something that was very special for me.

I also remembered how during the previous four years before going back to live in the Sydney Ashram I felt I should always do my Sadhana with the attitude of simply pleasing the Guru. I felt by offering my efforts in this way it would draw me closer to the true inner Guru which exists inside me. In fact, during my moments of anguish, due to financial pressures or the constant demands of the community service project I was involved with, I would imagine (or maybe fantasise would be closer the truth) a beautiful scenario where the Guru would become aware of my efforts and would most lovingly, in recognition of my service, whisk me away. It gave me great heart and inspiration at the mere thought, unlikely as it may have seemed at the time. Going to visit Gurumayi felt like a *deja vu* of my previous life experience - it felt so familiar and similar, though of course the magnitude of its significance, in this life-time was exceedingly more auspicious and great because of Gurumayi's now most elevated status as the Guru! My gratitude was growing and my excitement was welling up from the tips of my toes to the top of my head. Tears of joy kept coming up at the mere thought of our appointed meeting, greeting and reunion of love.

Over the coming weekend, I started to become a little confused as to the exact date to go; all the practicalities; my work commitments; the arrangements; my projects etc, etc. I decided to share the dilemma with a few close friends and then I decided to let go of the whole matter to the Guru. It was her call! I realised my visit was at her beck and call – it was her *sankalpa* and all would be taken care of if I completely surrendered.

The following mantra for my visit became embedded in my mind:



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“The Master’s Call”

*“I am going to the bosom of my Guru.
I am going to be with my beloved Guru Mother.
I surrender completely to her will and
allow her love to carry me to her arms,
to my Shree Guru with all my heart.”*

It took two months to put the reigns on my business and organise everything to be able to leave with a sense of completion.

“Good God - I am That”

I wanted to take a gift to Gurumayi of the book, “Good God - I am That!” (*) I had been working on this book for nearly four years and was finally happy with it. It was a compilation of meditations and insights over the last 26 years. I had found a printer who was able to produce very small runs, namely three in full colour. It was expensive, but exactly what I wanted to produce. I decided to go for it and put in an extra huge effort to complete the book.

It was quite a fascinating experience getting the three copies of the book done in time for my visit to Shree Muktananda Ashram. I was literally handed them at the airport as they were personally delivered, minutes before my plane was about to leave. The amazing thing was that the printers had gone to absolutely *extraordinary efforts* to enable me to take the book with me to Shree Muktananda Ashram so I would be able to present it to Gurumayi. Even in those last minutes I discovered I didn’t have my cheque book with me and I suddenly had to explain to them I couldn't give them a cheque as promised. They had only known me for less than three weeks and here I was leaving the country with the books they were personally delivering to the airport by car!

It was an amazing act of trust and support as I headed off to the USA.

(*) Revised and now called “Soft diamond Light – Only Love Matters”.



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Living in Shree Muktananda Ashram

I arrived for my first visit to Shree Muktananda Ashram on Saturday 29 August 1997 at the auspicious hour of 3.00am after what seemed a mere instant of time - the flight seemed to disappear behind me as if it had never happened.

The flight was quick, comfortable and easy, which was a complete surprise! The time taken to travel there simply dissolved into nothingness. It was like I was instantly here... In fact, in some strange way it seemed like I had always been there. A dear friend, Mia Rucker, my angel of transportation had picked me up at the airport and we had an excitement-filled drive of expectancy before reaching heaven near South Fallsburg. After I arrived I checked in with security and dropped off my bags into an overnight room.

The Temple: My First Experience

I decided to forget about sleeping and went straight to the temple with Bhagawan Nityananda for the morning arati and meditation at 3.30am. As I walked into the entrance to the temple, the sweet aroma of frankincense captivated my senses and instantly my heart exploded with ecstatic bliss at the gentle greatness, yet formidable grandeur of the temple. As I walked in I was completely embraced and caressed by the love and awesome splendour of Bade Baba's presence. I had darshan at his feet and asked for blessings for all the loved ones in my life.

Some time later I contemplated this experience and thought it extraordinary, how on this first day of arriving at Shree Muktananda Ashram, I had timed my entry into the temple at the exact moment when I would be immersed in the aroma of frankincense. The unusual thing was I did not smell it again for the rest of my stay over the next two months, yet I went to the temple every morning.

Frankincense had a special significance in my life as an anchor to spirituality. It was a very strong anchor for me to my childhood days when I was an alter boy in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. I had to prepare the incense for the priest. He was a very gentle, caring man. I have fond memories of this time and I have grown up loving the aroma of frankincense!

It was like all stops were somehow being pulled out to ensure I received the most heightened spiritual experience possible, as I entered the temple.

The temple, for those who haven't been there, is absolutely wonderfully constructed. You enter through a hallway from the main building of Anugraha. The entrance to the temple has large,



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beautifully designed wooden doors that greet you with the words of Bhagawan Nityananda above the door saying: *“The heart is the hub of all sacred places, go there and roam.”* As you enter the foyer entrance to the temple you feel the marble floor, almost alive under your feet, as the image of Bhagawan Nityananda’s murti holds the centre of your attention.

This is a seating area with chairs lining the walkway into the temple. Again above the entrance are the words of Baba Muktananda embossed in gold above, saying: *“I owe my existence to my Shree Guru.”*

As you enter the circular shaped, open design of the temple with windows all around allowing the beautiful gardens to become part of the temple, the murti of Bade Baba in the centre is usually surrounded with a multitude of flowers. As you enter the temple, Gurumayi’s chair is to the left next to the entrance with smaller statues of Ganesh, Lakshmi, Saraswati and Hanuman encircling Bade Baba in alcoves.

There is a huge crystal directly behind Babe Baba that seems to radiate this enormous source of raw cosmic energy. It is the size of the entire area of Gurumayi’s puja area up here at the front of the hall if not bigger!

In a word or two, the temple is awesome and amazingly powerful!

I sensed I had being greeted by the Deity of the Temple. I was immensely grateful for the experience and felt extremely open and ready to receive everything I could from my stay. After such an introduction I simply fell deeply in love with the temple and Babe Baba. I began to wake every morning automatically, as if called by Bade Baba to join him, for the Arati, a practice I have continued here in the Sydney ashram.

After meditation I stayed for Arati and savoured each line, then was surprised as we also sang the Upanishad Mantras before finishing with Hare Ram.

I could hardly believe doing Arati at that early hour with nearly 100 other people. A sublime experience! When the Arati finished I stayed for a short but deep meditation and as I walked out of the temple I realised it was now time for the Guru Gita in Muktananda Mandir, the main hall there at Anugraha. The shakti had seemed to dissolve any trace of tiredness and I couldn’t miss the chance of doing my most favourite practice on my first day there. I went straight into the hall and sat up near the front.

Doing the Guru Gita, exactly as I had done so many times in the Sydney Ashram over the previous two years, seemed to adjust my internal time-clock and helped me reorientate myself. It was the familiarity and anchor of doing this most exquisite ritual, the same way I had hundreds of times before seemed to realign my bodies into a new time frame and place. *(My new remedy for jet-lag.)*



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Doing the Guru Gita with hundreds of other people was fantastic! Now I knew I had reached heaven.

I held everyone I know in my heart as I did the Guru Gita. When we had finished I decided to go and explore the amrit and have a special breakfast as a welcome treat for myself. I ended up bumping into so many familiar faces from the Tour and from Sydney. I felt like I had simply left one family in Sydney and had come to another in the USA. I felt completely at home... It was a wonderful reunion. I then discovered the Brahmin priests were doing a Puja in the temple. So straight after breakfast I went to the Temple and sat with the Brahmin priests chanting Vedic mantras. (The Brahmins did the chanting and I did the sitting.)

The puja was dedicated to destroying all our inner enemies. With the enormous amount of blessings I had been experiencing since my arrival I felt my inner enemies had decided to pack up and go on holidays for a while, hopefully indefinitely. The shakti was just too much for them, so they had given up the battle and surrendered.

I stayed for an hour or so with the Brahmins and then decided to go to complete my accommodation registration and unpacking.

I walked to Atma Nidhi, where the main dining facilities are for the Ashram, via the "Silent Path". I enjoyed the beautiful peace and silence of the natural beauty of nature. When I reached the registration desk at Atma Nidhi, I met up with more familiar faces amidst squeals of delight and warm greetings. I had decided to stay awake for as long as I could, before going to sleep at an early hour that evening.

After unpacking I headed down to the bus-stop to discover the ways and means of "shuttle transport" at the ashram. I was back at Anugraha by 11.30am, fortuitously just in time for the noon chant in the temple.

It was a great way to prepare for lunch.

By this time I was "shakti-filled" and could hardly believe I had been there only *half a day!*

In the afternoon I headed off to see the Brahmins once again, as they continued their puja in the temple. I must admit by this time I was starting to "fade" a little and had to sit in a chair in the entrance area to the temple. I think I dozed off through most of it but who can complain about sleeping in such a heavenly environment and atmosphere to the melodious tones of the Brahmins.

After an hour or so I decided to go out and have a walk around. After a little more socialising with more familiar faces from the tour, I finished the day with the evening Arati, again in the temple.

This was a special treat because I met and stood next to Swami Sevananda for the first time. Back in the Sydney Ashram I had been reading so many fascinating stories in the old Gurudev Vani magazines about Swamiji and Baba, so it was a great honour to be in his presence.

I went back to my room and by 8.00pm, the moment my head met the pillow, I was out like a light. And after such a shakti-rich day, I do mean "light"!

It had been a most extraordinary and wondrous first day. *It felt like a lifetime of happiness!*



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Welcome - 30th August 1997

I had a great sleep and the next day I was up at 2.50am for the shuttle to Anugraha for Arati, meditation, chai and contemplation, the Guru Gita and then another breakfast treat in Amrit.

It was during breakfast that I discovered the Brahmins were going to be having the culmination of their pujas with a havan or fire ceremony in the Shakti Mandap. I very quickly finished my breakfast and I headed over to the Mandap for the first time. I was staggered by the size of the space; huge crystals at the back of the hall and the enormous photo of Uluru above them hanging from the ceiling (around 30 feet long)

The Brahmins were still preparing for the havan and there was hardly anyone in the hall yet. I had no idea as to what to expect, so I picked a spot quite randomly and sat down. It was literally a few feet from the central fire which hadn't been lit yet. I was in the first row, as it turned out. As the Brahmins continued with the ceremony I slowly became more absorbed in the ritual.

The havan was the finale of a series of pujas the Brahmins had been doing to the Goddess Durga every morning and afternoon over the previous few days in the temple. It is said that if the Goddess is pleased with the "offerings" then she will protect us from all our inner enemies. Although I had felt my "enemies" had surrendered for the time-being, I thought it best to play it safe and build my "protection" just in case they decided to come back... The ceremony continued with the lighting of the central fire and the Shakti Mandap began to slowly fill with people.

The Brahmins were amazing, doing chants at the speed of sound, back and forth with incredible fluid virtuosity! The fire began to grow and grow - I was transfixed. I had beautiful waves of humility wash over me as I felt simultaneously awe-inspired, privileged and over-joyed just to be watching and listening to this most sacred event.

I looked around the hall and all I could see were "saints" sitting there. Everywhere I looked, at all the people in the hall, they were great, so pure, all seeking the truth and participating in this holy ritual for the upliftment of life on our dear planet earth. I thought Baba's "last wish" was becoming a reality.

After lunch I walked through the front doors into the foyer at Atma Nidhi where the dining hall was and I saw a huge crowd - jam-packed! I couldn't see Gurumayi but I could hear her speaking and people laughing. I thought she may go through the front door I had just entered but alas she headed off to the side, and so I was just left standing there with my dirty lunch plate.

I put away my dishes and went outside to the front gardens. I saw another large crowd near the driveway and obviously Gurumayi was leaving. I really couldn't see anything. I saw a friend of mine standing to the side and when she saw me she rushed over, grabbed my hand and literally maneuvered me through the crowd with great expertise. She had a very strong intention and was going for it!



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We got to the car just as Gurumayi was getting in. So, almost miraculously, there I was standing at the window of her car while my friend told Gurumayi I had just arrived. Gurumayi asked how long I was staying and then asked inquiringly, “*What did you do to your head?*” I told her I had bumped my head under the bed. She asked, “*Here?*” and I said, “*Yes!*”

It wasn't the profound conversation I imagined I would have upon my introduction to Gurumayi, yet a little later, upon deeper reflection it revealed itself to be very meaningful.

This straight-forward question of Gurumayi's took on a deeper meaning when I realised I had been offered full-time garden seva, which was the exact antithesis of my normal life for the last 20 years. I didn't have to make any decisions, no planning, in fact I had hardly any thinking to do at all! I could just be. It was very nourishing, rejuvenating and grounding. The garden was the perfect place to be.

So, by the end of just two days I was already filled to the brim and could have easily left, contented with my stay. I felt a deep connection to my fellow ashramites back in Sydney. I wrote to them and told them: “I hold each of you in my heart as I walk around (I am your eyes, and ears, and heart here at Shree Muktananda Ashram. I invite you over in your dreams during our day-time. Just make the intention very clear when you go to sleep and leave the “transportation” to God!” I concluded the letter to them by explaining how, at the front desk in Anugraha, Gurumayi had written on the front page of an album on the Australia Tour:

‘Vivaciousness, brilliance, happiness, enthusiasm, vibrant health, bright smiles, charming colours, sweet words, innocent laughter, resounding beauty of nature, relaxation, immense love for God, the greatness of life, delicious food, happy birds, caring hearts, sweet children... all this makes me remember Australia. This is what Australia continually makes me nostalgic about.’

These were my sentiments exactly...

Labour Day Program

Very early Monday morning the 1st of September, around 2.00am, I awoke to a spectacular display of lightning flashing through my windows, followed by bursts of thunder. I thought it was a fitting tribute to the start of a special finale program for the summer with Gurumayi on Labour Day.

The program started with a chant with Gurumayi, “Om Namo Bhagavate Muktanandaya” (in a new raga). I was lucky enough to be sitting directly up front near Gurumayi. The vantage



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point paid off with what seemed to be a few very delicate and beautiful welcoming smiles from Gurumayi.

After the chant Gurumayi started to speak to us. She spoke of what a special day it was: Labour Day; Shiva's Day (every Monday), plus with great mirth she told us it was also Madison's Birthday (Gurumayi's Dalmatian dog). She said he was a great dog, but very arrogant! So having his birthday on such a special day supported his "individual existence." Gurumayi laughed! She added that if she doesn't mention him at the programs he gets very upset...

Gurumayi then focused, at considerable length, on "death" in relation to the recent passing of Princess Diana. She repeated the word "death" over and over again, almost like a mantra. It seemed as she was speaking of "death" she was simultaneously removing the many samskaras and the emotional charge people have around this word and the fear of letting go. She said, "death is a wonderful phenomena", in that it makes us examine our lives. She said it doesn't matter if you die in a motor-car crash or a bed, it is the great equaliser - we are all equal in death. She also said every moment is very precious! In retrospect, it was interesting how Gurumayi had mentioned dying in a "bed", before the news of Mother Theresa's passing was announced later that week.

Gurumayi then went on to speak about how people would buy a bracelet and go up to Baba for his blessings. Baba would ask them, "Have you done an Intensive?" "Yes, Baba," they would reply. At this Baba would burst forth and say, "Then it is already blessed, everything you touch is blessed!" What a great teaching this is to truly imbibe. Gurumayi seemed to be emphasising the incredible gift of Shaktipat and the power it bestows upon us!

The Spirit of Entertainment

After Gurumayi's talk we were entertained by an amazing mime performance by a veteran artist. He had opened the summer program as well. Joyce Wells also sang two beautiful songs within the context of the mime. The finish of the mime met with an instant standing ovation by everyone in the hall. Gurumayi was also obviously delighted. The program ended with a gift of prasad to our taste-buds and to our ear-drums with Shambavi's new single, "This is a golden day", dedicated to Baba's Divya Diksha. It was played over and over again through the loud speakers, to everyone's delight.

It was very beautiful and uplifting!

In retrospect I felt I had arrived at a perfect time. The first weekend had given me a taste, without being overwhelmed, of the rich fullness of the summer and then I got to experience this finale program with Gurumayi. Then literally overnight the Ashram became very quiet with so



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many leaving after this final weekend retreat for the summer. Interestingly enough, there was also a sudden and dramatic change in the weather.

The next day, after having lunch with some friends, I returned to Anugraha and noticed a crowd had gathered at the front of the entrance to the main foyer. I had begun to discover what a “crowd” usually means in the ashram.

Gurumayi was sitting majestically in a chair with everyone sitting and standing in a square at the entrance around her. Madison was sitting at her feet, portraying the true air of a dignitary in the grandeur of this central location. It appeared that Gurumayi had been there for some time and was having great delight with a three year old girl who had a number of entertainers trying to impress her, apparently with little success! Sofia was her name and she seemed content to maintain the centre of attention for Gurumayi. The whole group even tried a rendition of “I once met a girl called ‘So-fee-a’” instead of “Maria”, adapted from West side story. Sofia still seemed unimpressed...

After much further probing and prompting, Gurumayi started to leave. As she did, I noticed a small three year old boy, who had been trying to get Gurumayi’s attention in very subtle ways during the previous interactions. He had very clearly decided that he wanted to have the darshan of his Guru in a more direct and obvious way. He saw his last chance looming up so it seemed he adopted a dramatic and direct strategy. He let out a loud cry of pain which immediately attracted Gurumayi’s attention. He had quite genuinely fallen over and hurt his knee, though, sub-consciously he may have flung himself down as a last resort, with the determination of a warrior like Arjuna, to attract the attention of his Guru

This “plan” may have worked perfectly because Gurumayi not only stopped, but turned, walked back to him, bent down and lovingly comforted him by kissing his knee better.

I thought the little scratch on the knee seemed to have been worth it!

And by the look of utter delight and satisfaction on the little boy’s face as he walked away, it seemed the little warrior’s “tactic” may have worked perfectly. He had received more than he could ever have expected.

Extraordinary Events from Around the World

By the end of the week the extraordinary events from around the world regarding Princess Di and Mother Theresa were being strongly felt in the Ashram. It was amazing to see how, even in the very insulated atmosphere of an Ashram designed to create and maintain a very clear and one-



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pointed focus on the spiritual practices, we all felt the enormity of the global impact of both Diana's death, and subsequently, the passing of Mother Theresa. It made a very definite and major impact in the ashram.

The Saturday morning Guru Gita was dedicated to their passing and for the upliftment of all of humanity. We also had a special chant on that night as well. A video of Gurumayi's talk was shown in Muktananda Mandir the following Monday. It was also taken by Swami Vasudevananda especially to the United Kingdom for all the devotees there.

Garden Seva

I had started full-time garden seva and had been preparing a section of garden behind Muktananda Mandir. It was a very beautiful and powerful area. Some of the highlights of this seva are walking to the tool-shed (often more times than absolutely necessary, as it is close to where Gurumayi lives) and then walking behind the temple with my trusty wheel-barrow wearing my red-beanie (a gift from Swami Shantananda), gumboots, overcoat and track-suit pants. *It looked quite a sight.*

By the end of the morning working in this section I felt embraced by the strong meditative presence of the garden. I realised I was working in holy ground, land blessed by the Siddhas and walked upon by a living saint.

I found that I had completely dropped my normal level of hyperactivity, doing twenty things at once and thinking of a hundred more (a slight exaggeration, but I think I'm making my point). Here, I wasn't needing to think about anything, but just be! Working in the garden was a very nourishing, grounding and integrating experience for me.

By the time we stopped for lunch I was in a truly heightened state of awareness which was sublime and very beautiful. A wonderful blessing... I realised I had had the darshan of the guru through the shakti of the garden.

The Blessings of Ganesh

Another sweet incident occurred when I was paying my respects to the large statue of Ganesh out in the gardens to the side of the Temple. Now, I do mean large! Ganesh is about six feet high in his sitting position. As I walked up along the cobbled stone path to Ganesh and stood in front of him, I bowed my head and as I looked up I saw a cute little chipmunk sitting on



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Ganesh's crossed knee, directly under his open palm that was facing directly forward placed on this knee. I was a like a protective "umbrella" surrounding the small, furry visitor and epitomised Ganesh's capacity for compassion and protection.

During this week I had also decided to write a letter to Gurumayi. I thanked her for the invitation to stay at our beloved Shree Muktananda Ashram. I explained how,

"By the end of the weekend I felt like a small child who had been set free in a 'toy and sweets' shop, and allowed to have whatever I wanted, being able to partake of so many sweet blessings like doing the morning arati in the temple, then the Guru Gita, then listening to the Brahmins every day, then the noon-day chant and then the evening arati and more... And then the glorious bliss of seva in your home."

I shared my "mantra" for my visit, "The Master's Call", and that: "I am forever grateful for your shining light in my life, as my life."

I also told Gurumayi of some the new songs I had written, including the one written there at the ashram. I finally asked for the opportunity to share my sankalpa for my visit and permission to dedicate a book to her. I included some background on its development and I also asked for her blessing to undertake a number of major projects.

Siddhalokka

I finished the letter by saying that, as I was drafting this letter to her, sitting in the amrit, I could hardly believe my eyes...

To my left were Swamis Shantananda, Kripananda and Sevananda having breakfast; Swami Ishwarananda sitting in the distance, then Vencappa came walking by, waving to the Swami's through the window into amrit from the hallway, just as the Brahmins, in their splendid warm flash of brilliant colours, marched past in the opposite direction on their way to the temple with great smiles and enthusiasm... I had to check I hadn't gone to siddhalokka!

It was amazing when I thought back to my mornings before breakfast and my afternoons before dinner (although I often didn't have dinner, just some yogurt and fruit).

My daily morning routine became to rise at 3.00am; then catch the shuttle at 3.20am, arrive at the temple around 3.45am, chant the morning arati at 4.00am, meditation at 4.30am in the temple; then contemplation and chai at 5.00am in the amrit, accompanied by the Ganesh mantras, then back into the hall for the Guru Gita at 5.30am after which I listened to Baba chanting the Guru Gita over a cup of tea and a delicious amrit cake. And this would be a real extra treat, because I



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would be sitting at a table usually right next to Swami Kripananda, Swami Sevananda and/or Vencappa, soaking up their vibes! I would then usually catch the shuttle at 7.50am to Atma Nidhi, have a small breakfast, and then head off for our Garden Puja at 8.20am and then seva for the morning.

My afternoon routine varied, but usually I would attend the evening arati at 5.00pm then sit for meditation in the temple for half an hour. At one time during my stay I began to be regularly brought out of meditation, which was just divine, by the Brahmins starting their evening puja at 6.00pm. There would usually be five to six brahmins who would come and sit down within inches of me for their chant.

It was a blissful schedule and experience!

A Moment of Darshan

On Monday the 8th September I had just picked up a fax from the General Store up the road from the ashram and I was on my way down the hallway to the temple to pick up my bag from the shoe-room opposite. Just as I reached the end of the hallway before the shoe-room, in that instant, Gurumayi took me completely by surprise and walked in from outside through the side entrance near the temple. I was positioned and standing looking directly towards her, there was no one else but me and the guru in a moment of darshan. She seemed to be very intent on where she was going and she gave me a sweet look as she turned her head towards me. I saw her only for a few seconds and then Gurumayi disappeared into the doorway opposite where she had entered. It was quite a surprise and a very beautiful moment of darshan.

Impromptu Darshan

A few days later, on the 10th, I went to Anugraha after lunch to finish some garden seva. I started walking to the tool shed and noticed the blinds were open in the room next to the front entrance. They had been always closed up to then and so I decided to investigate, actually to have a little bit of a “sticky-beak”!

Now, the windows were floor to ceiling but I couldn't see in because of the bushes around them on the outside. I thought I would pretend to be checking out the plants, as a good gardener would, and confidently walked up to the window past the bushes. I looked into the room and there was Gurumayi sitting in her chair! I nearly jumped out of my designer gum-boots, and I think I aptly said, “Oh my God!” I then discovered the room was the namaste room and Gurumayi was giving darshan to some people.



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Luckily, “peeping-tole” wasn’t noticed by Gurumayi, at least I hoped that was the case, and I quickly and delicately retreated, albeit somewhat embarrassed, yet feeling elated at this quite impromptu darshan.

Blessings from Heaven

The next day, the heavens opened up and poured rain down upon us, heaven to heaven, so to speak, as I truly felt I was in heaven on earth! I spent the morning in the Shakti Mandap watering the pot-plants around the sacred fire-pit. It was awesome being in there alone. The rain was gushing down from the roof and there was literally a waterfall cascading down the sides of the Mandap. It looked spectacular, with sheets of water pouring down around the pavilion. The blessing of water next to the sacred fire-pit was a very stilling and a sublime experience.

Later in the day I did some lead chanting seva in the temple for the noon chant which oddly enough started at 11.45am. Looking out at the rain pouring down around the temple, it was a very sweet seva. I ended the day by moving a few huge plants in the foyer of Anugraha out into the rain. All in all it was an easy and beautiful day...

A Moment of Truth

That night, I was on my way to Parimahahal, one of the smaller chanting halls in Anugraha, around 7.00pm for some more lead-chanting seva. I met a friend in the hall-way to the temple and we were having a quick chat when he said, “There’s Gurumayi in the temple!” I remembered an intuition I had earlier, around 6.00pm to go to the temple but was told it was closed until 8.30pm (It seemed my “Guru-radar” was still working very well).

I watched Gurumayi doing Puja to Babe Baba and then she walked around his statue in the temple. I went down to the entrance to the temple (an obvious move) but it was on my way to my seva. At this point a man in front of me was approached by the welcome host, standing at the entrance to the temple. He spoke to him, and he was then allowed to enter the temple.

I was faced with a moment of truth. I needed to make a quick decision, should I go into the temple or go to my seva? It was a real temptation that had much fertile ground for logical rationalisation and justification in forgoing my seva, I mean it was chanting seva! My head battled with my heart, but I finally decided to go to my seva, downstairs away from the temple.

The chant started amidst some confusion, but once it got underway, as is the nature of chanting, everything came together and we all had a great time!

I remembered Gurumayi’s words from the last Monday’s program talk, when she said, “If you’re in your heart then you’re very close to me.”



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Upon contemplation of these words and my experience I realised I had been infinitely closer to the true guru doing my seva in the hall chanting, than if I had gone and sat with Gurumayi's physical presence in the temple, but was neglecting my seva!

The darshan of my guru even from a distance was enough to reveal this truth. This experience truly imbibed the meaning of darshan as a moment of perceiving the truth. It took on a whole new meaning and was a darshan I had to demonstrate and actually become the truth!

Lunar Eclipse Saptah

On the 15 September it was announced, in the true spontaneity of Siddha Yoga, that we were having a day-long saptah for the lunar ellipse the next day. This was in addition to the havan in the Shakti Mandap for Lakshmi.

I had a small hint of something special brewing when I was invited to the rehearsal for lead chanting. It was quite full-on and taken very seriously. At dinner I heard that Swami Akhandananda would also be sharing at the start of the Guru Gita about the significance of the lunar ellipse.

By the end of the day I was feeling quite exhausted from a very full day of garden seva, finishing around 6.00pm. I was ready for a good night's sleep. I looked out my window and there was the beautiful full moon, radiant! It had an uncannily brilliant sparkle, like diamonds, all around and through it! I actually couldn't quite explain how it was happening and thought my eyes might have been playing tricks on me. I considered it a blessing (which is always a safe bet in Siddha Yoga) and went to sleep, quite contented.

I awoke at the usual time of 3.00am and caught the shuttle to the temple for Arati, which was powerful as always.

When I walked into Muktananda Mandir for the Guru Gita I had the next hint that something special was about to happen. There were about twenty mikes set out for the lead chanters, keyboards, harmonium, the works! A full program set-up. I was on the first lead chanting shift for the saptah, straight after the Guru Gita. We started with Om Namah Shivaya in "Shiva Bhairava" raga, after Swamiji's introduction.

Lakshmi Havan

After my shift of chanting I went straight to the Shakti Mandap to watch the Brahmins performing the Lakshmi havan. This was a real treat and again extremely powerful. It finished around 11.30am. I loved the sprinkling of the holy waters by the Brahmins towards the end, and



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went into a blissful state. One of the Brahmins gave an extra playful splash to one of the puja attendants. He was slightly drenched, but truly blessed!

The Brahmin was smiling from ear to ear.

Vivek Godbole led a powerful finale. He is such a delight to watch and listen to, so full of God as he sings with an exuberant joy and enthusiasm!

As I was walking over to the temple, I contemplated whether I should go to Atma Nidhi for lunch. I decided to follow my intuition, miss lunch and go to the saptah instead. Swamiji had told us it was “good to eat lightly”, which I thought was a wonderful turn of phrase - “God eating light.”

Chanting with Gurumayi

I entered the hall to see if I could find a good position and noticed Shambavi’s harmonium set up in front of Gurumayi’s chair and puja cloths set down to the side.

When I sat down near the front, the host asked if I was there for the “recording”? It was then that I realised I had made the right choice - I was in the right place at the right time! Gurumayi was obviously coming to the chant for the lunar ellipse! (It was due to start at 1.08pm peaking at 2.47pm.)

I sat down and in no time Gurumayi entered the hall. The sweetness of the chant merged with the serenity of her being. Gurumayi looked radiant in the low light of the hall.

We chanted for nearly three hours with Gurumayi. Traditionally, the moon represents the mind and so the lunar ellipse is a time of turning within and focusing on spiritual practices.

During the chant, I wondered if Gurumayi would give meditation instructions. I suddenly realised the chant was not going to stop! It was a saptah, going all day to 8.30pm that night.

Just after the peak of the ellipse, I noticed Gurumayi had stopped chanting and seemed to have plunged into a very deep state within herself. She looked so sublime. After some time Gurumayi arose and walked out so gracefully (full of grace). I decided to savour the chant as people started to leave.

Puja to Babe Baba

Finally I also got up and left the hall and as I walked by the temple I looked in at Bade Baba. I spontaneously decided to do puja to him, for such a fantastic day. As I walked in I noticed



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lots of people already in the temple and as I entered the doorway by touching the marble floor and my heart, guess who was sitting in her chair to my left... I sat facing Bade Baba, to the right of Gurumayi, the temple slowly filled and we all stayed meditating with Gurumayi for quite some time. No one was checking any clocks... I saw Gurumayi slowly get up out of her chair, she bowed to Bhagawan Nityananda and backed out of the temple, looking directly into Bade Baba's eyes. I remained sitting in the temple, bathing in the shakti of a living master, in a holy temple, built by a great saint in devotion to his Guru.

In this atmosphere, I realised the shakti was always available, anywhere, anytime - my openness was all that was necessary to allow it in. My connection to the Guru had nothing to do with time and space - it had everything to do with my willingness to live in my heart and follow its promptings.

I finished the rest of my day with two more chanting shifts and then tucked myself away in bed for a good night's sleep. *A night's sleep with God.*

I had had an extraordinary few weeks there. My guru radar continued to function very well, seeing Gurumayi on a few more occasions.

The Bliss of Seva

I also had a great time doing my seva in the garden. The hardest decision I usually had to make during my seva was, do I wear a raincoat or not; which hat should I wear; what colour gumboots should I put on. Thinking of my Guru was my main mental past-time. So I wasn't complaining one little bit!

I planted chrysanthemums around the Shiva Nataraj statue at Atma Nidhi. This was the day after the Brahmins had performed a ceremony for installing the prana or life-force into the statue. I spent the afternoon in the serenity of a shakti-filled Shiva statue showering his grace upon me as I was digging in the sacred soil beneath his feet. I watered the flowers every day after that and they bloomed in all different colours. They looked very beautiful.

Swami Vasudevananda returned from his visit to the United Kingdom late September and shared that he had held five programs at different centres, plus an audio broadcast to twelve centres in England, Wales and Scotland. He mentioned how Gurumayi had sent him not because we felt sorry for them, but because we felt something momentous was taking place in the United Kingdom and we wanted to be with our "family" at this time. People's hearts had opened up like never before, catalysed by Princess Di's death. Swamiji said that everyone agreed they felt something of



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great magnitude had happened. He said that it had transpired not only on this physical plane but on other inner planes as well.

Quite a moment in history, I thought!

Global Broadcast

On the 28th of September I attended the Global broadcast with Namdev Hayes and Swami Apoorvananda. After the program, I was sitting in the Anugraha amrit with a friend. I was just near the doorway to the hallway that goes down to the temple. As I was sitting having a cup of tea I looked out the glass door and in that moment Gurumayi walked past with Madison at her side. I thought to myself how beautifully colour-coordinated they seemed to be; Gurumayi in fiery red and Madison in his designer black and white dots! Gurumayi seemed to glide past in her usual majestic style, while Madison looked like an army major-general marching alongside with such determination and conviction, seeing himself, I'm sure, as the Guru's supreme protector. He seemed very sure of his elevated "station" in life. And I'm sure he also felt well above the mere human mortals around him.

I remembered what Gurumayi had said at her talk earlier that month.

On Tuesday the 30th of September, I was invited to give a musical performance for the Registration department at Atma Nidhi. I came up with the title for the show: "From Sydney with More Love" I turned up expecting a few people and was greeted by more than twenty smiling, welcoming faces!

I played the recording of the "Welcome Song" and then performed "I Know I am", then played the CD of "At the Heart of Australia" then performed "Muktanandaya", and a new song written at Shree Muktananda Ashram called, "Baba's Last Wish".

Everyone was crying and laughing as we were reminded of the Sydney visit with Gurumayi and its aftermath. I was requested to play an encore of "I Know I am" and everyone had a good last cry to finish up.

After the performance a lady come up and commented how my songs had words that you could really relate to.

Gurumayi & Madison the Dog - 30th September 1997

The first month was supremely wonderful. I was feeling very relaxed and absorbed in the energy of the ashram. On this day, I headed off to the temple at Anugraha. As I walked around the



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corner into the hallway to the temple, where I had seen Gurumayi walk by the other day, lo and behold, there was Gurumayi again, standing up at the other end of the hallway speaking to a newly arrived guest from New Zealand. Trusty Madison the dog was at her side once again.

I stopped and waited, realising Gurumayi may head my way.

All of a sudden Madison turned around, let out a loud bark and immediately started running towards me. I was mortified, and felt, “Oh no! He’s going to bark at me like some kind of intruder, and right in front of Gurumayi to boot”. I thought “*How embarrassing!*” I might add he didn’t have a very pleasant tone to his bark!

Madison came prancing down the hallway towards me. Everything seemed to go into slow motion and seemed surreal. Surprisingly, I remained quite calm inside as he headed straight down upon me, though I became quite resolved for the worst to happen and braced myself... But as Madison reached me, to my complete surprise he just kept running right on past me! I looked around and saw Swami Vasudevananda standing at the other end of the hallway. Madison had been excited by seeing “red”, in obvious recognition and delight of this familiar sight. I had somewhat misread the whole scenario.

Then I watched as Gurumayi also turned and started walking towards me. It was absolutely breathtaking in that moment of her movement as she turned - again everything turned into slow motion as it seemed grace glided serenely towards me. There was something magical and momentous that happened in that moment, even though I couldn’t quite fathom it at the time. Nevertheless, I was conscious of something magnanimous I had experienced at some other level within me!

I greeted Gurumayi as she came nearer to me. The hallway was relatively narrow and as she reached me she asked, “*Are you enjoying your stay?*” Now I can’t quite recall what I said in reply to this, but it was so enthusiastic it seemed to spark another question from Gurumayi, as she kept on walking past me, following Madison. She turned her head slightly and asked, “*What seva are you doing?*” I said, “*Garden*” and then, still walking, she said in the distance, “*It’s not too cold for you?*” and I said “*No, it’s wonderful!*” And then Gurumayi greeted Swamiji, who was patting Madison, at the door and continued walking around the corner.

Continuing Blessings of Grace

After this most sublime and almost “romantic” interaction between two long lost comrades, who had not seen each other for such a long time, I sat down in amrit writing up some notes. Swami Sevananda and Venkappa Ana were sitting right next to me talking and laughing, while Swamiji was having his dinner. I felt blessing upon blessing showering down upon me. I had just



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savoured the darshan of the Guru with a feast of shakti, and now I was being filled with the nectarine dessert of these two great sevites of Baba, sitting right next to me.

Majestic Flow of Grace

I started to contemplate that moment that Gurumayi turned towards me in the hallway. I realised whenever I see her, “there’s something that I can’t explain” that happens, just like the words of the song, “I know I am”, we sang for Gurumayi. The presence of her greatness just fills the atmosphere and is captivating!

On reflection of that moment, I tried to capture in words a description of that experience, something that attempts to convey the fullness of that moment. All I could come up with is that it was like coming face to face with the tumultuous power of a hurricane in full flight. Yet, simultaneously feeling gently caressed with the softness of a butterfly, while becoming engulfed in the intense heat of a solid wall of molten lava, firmly and securely grounded in the serenity and stillness of a mountain. *Simply indescribable in words...*

Absorption in the Guru

After this moment of darshan with the Guru I reflected how on my way over in the bus I had a very strong experience of becoming absorbed in the Guru, the inner self, a spiritual practice called Gurubhava. I had started identifying with the Guru as the basis of this practice.

I wondered what she was doing now, and tried to visualise it. I tried to stay open to her inner guidance and command. I wanted to become a pure channel for the Guru. This was the equivalent of saying my personality become a perfect vehicle of expression for my inner Self. This merging of my consciousness became a very powerful way of connecting with my intuition and inner power.

Celebrations Continue

On Thursday, 2nd of October I entered the temple for morning arati and it was packed! It was beautifully adorned with an abundance of flowers showering their colours around the temple and drenching everyone with all their beauty.

The temple was also filled with Swami’s. I realised once again that Siddha Yoga knows how to celebrate. It was Baba’s solar Mahasamadhi anniversary. It was also the start of Navaratri, with the Brahmins chanting every morning and evening for the next nine days. Three days each for Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati.



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After meditation, Guru Gita and breakfast, I did seva during the morning and then I spontaneously decided to go to the chant at 11.30am at the temple.

As I walked in the front door at Anugraha, at that very moment Gurumayi walked right past in the front entrance foyer. She stopped and talked to a lady in a wheelchair and then headed off to her quarters.

Siddha Yoga Children

The children at the ashram were amazing. As I sat in the temple chanting, a mother carrying her “brand-new, fresh” baby in her arms came into the temple and bowed to Bade Baba. She touched the sandals with her right hand and gently blessed her sleeping baby by touching it on the forehead. It brought tears to my eyes.

Then I looked to my right and towards the back of the temple was a three year old chanting, “Mere Baba Muktananda...” with great enthusiasm with her mother. And after the chant had finished, as I was getting my things in the shoeroom, I heard a five year old comment to his father, “There was sure a lot of shakti...”

It gives one great hope and vision for the future.

Prana Pratishktha Ceremony - An Historic Event

The prana pratishktha ceremony for the installation of the new murti of Bhagawan Nityananda was held on the weekend of the 4th and 5th of October.

I attended the haven fire ceremony, the ritual abhishek, which was held on the Saturday morning and afternoon in the Shakti Mandap.

During the day I was meditating and recalled a time back in 1991 when Gurumayi was in Melbourne. On two occasions when she was leaving the program she had stopped and touched me. One time she playfully gave my nose a wiggle with her hand and another time as she walked by she gave three gentle but firm taps to the side of my arm. I suddenly felt these taps were subtly saying, “*I’ve got something very special in store for you, but first you need to prepare yourself.*”

I also felt it somehow had to do with my lifetime studies of spiritual teachings, music and courses that I had been developing over the years. In fact, during my stay at the Ashram I had been very keenly contemplating how I could make all of this study of some use to the Guru?



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Newly Arrived Brahmins

Six newly arrived Brahmins made a total of eleven who were to be involved in the overall ceremony preparing the new Murti of Bhagawan Nityananda for the installation of the prana the next day. The entire ritual that day was captivating and the atmosphere was spaciouly beautiful in the Shakti Mandap pavilion and full of an uplifting air of sparkling vibrancy. Everything seemed more alive and more real!

I experienced a spectacular moment when one of the Brahmins standing up above the murti on a stand poured milk over Bade Baba, from the top of his head. I was sitting directly opposite facing him and as the white milk engulfed his entire body the multitude of lights in the Shakti Mandap caught the shimmering metal and liquid of the murti, making it sparkle with brilliant mini explosions of light. It was very beautiful and so exquisite it sent tingles up and down my spine.

Bade Baba was then very gently and caressingly dried off with towels by the Brahmins. He was made very comfortable with maroon cushions placed all around him, looking very regal, and he was then completely covered by a huge white shawl. He was asked by the Brahmins to go to “sleep” in readiness for the proceedings tomorrow. That same afternoon Gurumayi had supervised some of the other Brahmins to remove the prana from the existing murti in the temple.

Arati at the temple.

The next morning I arrived at the temple to chant the arati and to my surprise I discovered the murti of Babe Baba had been removed. In its place was a sealed silver vessel holding the prana or life-force of Bhagawan Nityananda. It was a staggering and mind expanding sight! It certainly gave a completely new dimension to the concept of a “Genie in the bottle”. It made one consider the true nature of all form, only as significant as the consciousness or life force that sustains and animates it into being.

We proceeded to do the morning arati and Upanishad mantras focusing on the vessel where Bade Baba was currently residing.

New Murti for the Temple

After meditation in the temple and then the Guru Gita in Muktananda Mandir, as I was walking up the hallway I looked towards the temple and saw Gurumayi was in there again, this time watching the new murti from the Shakti Mandap being moved into place in the temple. This was in readiness for the special prana pratishktha ritual to be held there that afternoon.

I went over to the Shakti Mandap after my dish-room shift in the morning to watch the remaining ritual be performed. When I arrived, Gurumayi was already sitting very still and focused in her chair watching the proceedings. The ceremony by the brahmins was to ask for blessings for



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the upcoming installation of the new murti. I spent the next few hours with Gurumayi listening to the Brahmins.

Towards the end of the ceremony, Gurumayi came forward to pour gold and silver jugs of clarified ghee into the fire. The flames blazed and flared and danced in ecstatic abandon, reaching up into the air. Needless to say it was spectacular to watch, especially Gurumayi's sublime attentiveness and unwavering focus in this simple yet awe-inspiring task.

The fire reached up into the air to purify the air and environment of the entire planet. I began to realise Baba's re-instigation of these ceremonies meant that the very air we are now breathing is blessed and we are taking in the prana of these fire ceremonies and we are being purified and strengthened as a result!

It was so uplifting and you could feel the fullness and openness of everyone's hearts and their devotion. We were watching a great event in the making and we were being taken to heights within our selves that were an absolute delight to participate in.

Gurumayi returned to her chair and the ceremony was concluded with Swami Ishwarananda saying a few words and then Gurumayi left and we were all invited to have lunch. I remained sitting, savouring the atmosphere in the Shakti Mandap, when Mia, always the bearer of good tidings it seems, came up to me and told me I had been invited to attend the ceremony within the temple and so after a light lunch I went to the temple.

A Sacred Ceremony with Gurumayi – 5th October 1997

The highlight of my visit without any doubt was the prana pratishktha ceremony for the installation of the new murti of Bhagawan Nityananda. It was held on the weekend of the 4th and 5th of October, 1997.

When I arrived at the temple I was escorted to a place to the side of Babe Baba in the temple. I was delighted because I could see right up to Gurumayi's chair at the front of the temple and also had a perfect view of the newly prepared murti of Bade Baba in his inner sanctum. The murti had just been prepared with a six-day yagna ceremony with the Brahmin priests.

The ceremony started with the MC briefly explaining what was about to happen. Then the Brahmins started with the Shanti mantras, and as I closed my eyes I instantly fell into a deep meditative state. After a short time I opened my eyes and looking around, there I was in this most holy of holy places with 12 swami's, 11 Brahmin priests and Gurumayi, who had also arrived during the chant and was now sitting in her chair.

It was like sitting in a shakti-atomic reactor of cosmic proportions!



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As the Brahmins were chanting I looked over towards Gurumayi and noticed she was writing and writing and writing. Then, just as Vivek went up to the statue of Bade Baba, the darshan girl hurried up to him and handed him a note from Gurumayi.

Everyone's eyes were fixed on this incident and we were gripped with anticipation as to what was happening. You can imagine the momentum that had started to build and in an instant was put on hold by the Guru. Time was suspended, with everyone holding their breaths as Vivek, still standing on the inner sanctum with Bade Baba was still reading the note from Gurumayi.

Finally, he turned and Viju came up to translate. Vivek started speaking, and it seemed Gurumayi had asked him to explain the specific details of what was about to happen in much greater detail. Gurumayi wanted us to fully appreciate the magnitude of what was about to happen.

Gurumayi also told the music people to start playing Om Namo Bhagavate Muktananda very quietly in the background.

Vivek, in his most inimitable and poignant style, very beautifully described the specifics of this most auspicious event. He explained the magnitude of the ceremony which was mind blowing - he said that we need to consider that the energy of solar systems from around the Universe, plus powerful deities and elements would be installed in the Murti of Bade Baba. He also told us how at a predetermined moment, which had been astrologically chosen as the most quiet time, the prana would be installed. He shared how we would need to be very still and have pure thoughts, especially at this moment!

And that's when all hell broke loose within me...

You know what happens when someone tells you not to think about a "Donkey"? Exactly! You start thinking about that exact thing you were told not to. At this point suddenly all of my fears, impurities, negativity's and doubts seemed to well up inside me. They seemed to surface from nowhere. It was like huge air bubbles in deep water that suddenly couldn't be held down any more and had to surface, no matter what!

It was overwhelming and I felt like I was starting to truly lose control of what was happening. I had to grip onto and focus on the mantra for dear life! I held on with every ounce of my will and effort against this upheaval within me. I was almost in a panic as I felt I was losing it. It was like everything was coming up to be cleansed away, whether I liked it or not. The heightened state of the awesome atmosphere in the temple plus the evocation of Vivek simply catalysed it!

I was reminded of the saying that love brings up everything that it's not!



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Although it seemed like an eternity it soon subsided and I returned to a calm and very still state where I could truly enjoy this sublime ceremony.

It was absolutely magnificent the way Vivek explained everything. Gurumayi had taken the atmosphere and understanding of the ceremony from its already profound state to another level altogether! Everyone seemed to have felt it - *everything had shifted!*

The depth and enormity of what was about to transpire had riveted everyone into the depths of their being. Those in Muktananda Mandir shared the same feelings, watching the proceedings on video.

After Vivek had finished sharing, Gurumayi came up to the Murti of Bade Baba and started being directed by Vivek. The most beautiful thing was to watch, in such close proximity, Gurumayi's interaction with Vivek in such a natural and beautiful way. She was so attentive and focused on his instructions. Watching the Guru in this way with such humility gave full meaning to the words, "Only one who obeys can command."

The absolutely overwhelming fullness of the overall ceremony was impossible to adequately describe in words. It was the highpoint of my stay. The privilege of being able to be so intimately involved in the same sacred space with Gurumayi was just so wonderful!

After an elaborate and meticulous process of installing the prana into every part of the murti of Bade Baba, and after the auspicious moment of removing the golden thread to formally install the prana into the murti, Gurumayi stood back at the front of Bade Baba and affirmed very definitely, "*Our Protector is here!*"

Gurumayi stood for some time, beaming with a radiance of love and light, emanating from her being. It was in gratitude and awe of her Guru's Guru. After this precious moment of divine solitude Gurumayi invited the Swamis to come up and greet Bhagawan Nityananda. The swamis rushed up like little excited and enthusiastic children on a Christmas morning to open their presents. As they came up, so reverently to Babe Baba, Gurumayi invited them to touch him. They all stood around him so reverently gently caressing him. They all had beaming smiles of delight, as Gurumayi looked on benevolently like a loving parent. Then she invited the Brahmins to come up and pay their respect to Babe Baba. They each came up one by one and offered flowers. Gurumayi then placed a large raduksha necklace over Babe Baba.

We then chanted "Wave Lights to the True Guru" (It was my first real experience of being an "Arati Girl" and to wave a tray. It was amazing to watch Gurumayi wave the candles with one hand throughout the entire chant. She held her other hand on her heart. Just incredible! Since I had previously watched the male pujaris use two hands at all times.



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After Gurumayi graciously invited the Brahmins to leave, she was obviously pleased with all the proceedings, and certainly the Brahmins. She said with a beaming smile as they were leaving, “*Bade Baba is pleased with the Brahmins.*” Gurumayi then went and sat in her chair and asked everyone to chant “Om”. What transpired next was completely indescribable, *so I won’t try!* Suffice to say it was very intense and ended in supreme bliss!

Gurumayi read Baba’s prayer from Play of Consciousness and gave a long talk. She called out over the microphone for Shambavi to come into the temple, and when Shambavi came running in, Gurumayi asked her to sing, “My Guru’s Protection”. Then Gurumayi invited everyone from the other hall to come into the temple and people started pouring in. When the temple was filled to the brim Gurumayi started the first evening Arati to the newly installed Bade Baba.

Gurumayi finally ended the ceremony by telling everyone how both Bade Baba and Baba, “*Loved eating and loved to feed, and everyone should now go to dinner!*” We started chanting Om Namoh Bhagavate Nityananda as everyone reluctantly started leaving the temple. I slowly packed up my asana and also reluctantly left.

“*What more can one say...*” I had spent more than four hours in palpable, close proximity with the Guru in the sanctity of the Nityananda temple, participating in this most profound cosmic, sacred ceremony.

A Serene Darshan

The next day I was in the Guru Gita, and normally I never leave until the end of the Guru Gita, no matter what! But for some very compelling reason I decided to go outside. As I was returning to the hall, just outside the temple, I looked outside the window and I saw Gurumayi leaving the Temple by the side exit in a beautiful long red overcoat. She looked like a princess, she was all by herself as she walked by very serenely pass the window, as I looked on from inside. There was this gentle morning mist floating in the air around Gurumayi as I noticed her breath greeting the chilly morning. In this serene moment of darshan I felt myself reaching into this most sublime state of being Gurumayi was in. *In that moment I felt absolutely complete.*

Gurumayi walked down the pathway and entered the side entrance and went into the amrit and through to the kitchen. I walked down to the foyer and Gurumayi emerged from the amrit. She opened the door to the receptionist and surprised them with a bright “Good Morning!”. They were absolutely delighted. Gurumayi then walked passed me again, down the main foyer area and then off to her quarters



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Fall had Arrived

On the 8 October I was Planting Tulips and daffodils at Atma Nidhi. The trees for the first time looked spectacular The bright oranges, reds, yellows amongst the greens and browns with the blue sky as a backdrop was a masterpiece of nature's artistic grandeur.

The Yagna

On the 11th October, 1997, a course called "Baba Muktananda: Shaktipat Guru" was held in the mornings while the yagna was started in the afternoons. Gurumayi attended the yagna during the afternoon. The fire was lit at 3.30pm and the head Brahmin priest, Sri Vivek Godbole, remarked, "*Agni has accepted our prayers by lighting!*"

The highlight of the second day at the yagna was the offering of blessings to young devis. Sixteen very young, very cute little girls, dressed so beautifully, were honoured with gifts and blessed by the brahmins as their parents looked on with delight.

On each of the days one of the invited reverend Brahmins, Sri Krishnamurti chanted in a special style. On Namah Shivaya on the 12th, Sadgurunath Maharaj Ki Jay on the 13th for Vishnu. Gurumayi was in the Shakti Mandap every day, with us for most of the afternoon. On the 13th day Vivek and Krishnamurti went up to Gurumayi for darshan and stood talking for some time with her. Gurumayi was obviously pleased with the yagna and the chanting being performed by the Brahmins.

I did pradakshina around the fire every evening.

On the 14th day the four Brahmin priests went up to Gurumayi. They all stood together, to the right of her, looking like small innocent children waiting reverently while Vivek spoke to Gurumayi for some length.

A Cosmic Flight out of the Blue

At the end of the each day's ceremony a particular chant was always sung and on this day during the chant I found myself suddenly slipping into a heightened state and was instantly transported off into the "cosmos" somewhere. I was so ecstatic from the chant and the atmosphere that had been created that I just completely surrendered myself to the experience and lost myself into the "flight".

As a result it became totally real. I was zooming along out amongst the stars - it so cool and I felt the wind in my face. I was standing while this experience was happening and I felt so elated even after I finally came back to earth and opened my eyes at the end of the chant.



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In the first day of the program, “Baba, Shaktipat Guru”, the highlight was a video segment of an interview with Baba from a show called “Everywhere” - like a good morning talk show.

The reporter introduced the segment by saying to Baba, through Malti (Gurumayi as Baba’s interpreter at that time), “With great respect and love I welcome you with all my heart.” Which Malti translated directly to Baba. Baba immediately and quite sincerely replied, “*That’s a very good welcome, I use it too!*”

The female reporter then asked “Do you have to give up your religion to meditate?” Well Baba launched into a response like a rocket ship. The video showed a collage of clips of his rapid fire explanation, the most delightful being when Baba stated, “...and do you have to give up your religion when you go to sleep?” The reporter ended by saying, with an amazed tone to her voice, “Well I guess you really answered that question!”

During a contemplation I realised how basically my entire life had been quite wonderful and that the only thing that could significantly stand out in this life would be to attain something like the ultimate goal of all lifetimes! My 25 years of involvement in quite a variety of major projects - all significantly different - had brought me to see a limitless capacity within me to accomplish anything I set my mind to do.

My life was filled with being faced with a situation where I had to totally believe in my ability to start from a complete unknowing of how to do something and trust I would ultimately work it out. I saw how this was preparation for meeting the Guru. It’s funny, when you realise you can create anything, you seriously consider what it is you want to create. The material manifestation process seemed trivial compared to venturing into understanding of the realms of super-physical consciousness.

I observed the potential for people to get “stuck” on the journey. I thought, “Don’t forget to get off the bus when you’ve reached your destination!” During the course I also defined my experience of Shaktipat as, “The most transformational moment in my life whereby I attained the capacity to transform from human consciousness to super-human consciousness”. During this afternoon I found myself installing Gurumayi, sitting in a lotus position, into my heart, throat, eye and crown charkas, then the lower three chakras as well. I started to get my first sense of consciously uniting and merging with the Guru and felt a glimmer of my sankalpa coming into reality.

On the 14th of October, during the chant, my tongue automatically rose up against my soft palate and then again during my meditation.



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Meditation in the Temple

I attended the Guru Gita as usual on the 15th of October.

Today was the finale for the five day yagna being held in the Shakti Mandap. The yagna had been held for the 50th anniversary of Baba Muktananda.

I walked past the temple towards the shoe-room. I looked to my left as I passed the temple and as I saw the murti of Bade Baba, I was instantly and strongly drawn into the temple to thank Bade Baba for the extraordinary time I was having. So I turned back and walked into the temple and to my surprise and delight I saw Gurumayi was sitting in her chair. I sat down to her right and I had the darshan of meditating with my Guru for 20 minutes or so.

Today was the purnahuti of the yagna, Gurumayi was garlanded by two sevites. It was amazing to observe the reaction of the Swami's. Swami Sevananda jumped to his feet and ecstatically called out "Sadgurunath Maharaj Ki Jay", exuding tremendous love and respect for his Guru. This came from the many scholars, Brahmins and long-time sevites at the ashram. It made you really appreciate and consider the level of greatness of Gurumayi that lies hidden to the naked eye. It was being revealed in the display of heart felt love, reverence and even awe of the Guru! A wonderful realisation that the MC stated was that this was the six months since the beginning of summer and the intensive was going to be the purnahuti of this entire six month period.

Gurumayi also stated in the intensive that it was the finale of the summer. I was so pleased because I realised my visit with Gurumayi had been during summer as Gurumayi had originally requested. In the course we saw how Gurumayi's pouring of the ghee into the fire was symbolic of awakening the kundalini. Gurumayi did this for one hour. The fire blazed and danced to spectacular heights of rapturous rhythms in response to the Guru's fuelling. God realisation is primarily dependent upon the direction and strength of our identification.

Perfect Devotion & Love

During my entire stay at the ashram I started to observe the amazing and inspiring interaction between the Swamis and the Guru. I sensed the highest respect and devotion that would pour forth from the Swamis towards Gurumayi on different occasions.

This absolute reverence also came from the many scholars, brahmins and long-time sevites at the ashram. It made you really appreciate and consider the level of greatness of Gurumayi that



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lies hidden to the naked eye. It was being revealed in the display of such heart felt love, reverence and even awe of the Guru!

At the end of the purnahuti of the yagna, Gurumayi was garlanded by two sevites. I was sitting near a few of the Swamis and suddenly I saw Swami Sevananda jump to his feet and cry out “Sadgurunath Maharaj Ki Jay” at the top of his voice with raised hands. He kept swinging his hands in praise and devotion for his guru. He was ecstatic in his acknowledgment and admiration of Gurumayi. The other Swamis all joined in. It was astounding to watch when you consider most of the Swamis have been around for 20 to 30 years, serving both with Baba and now with Gurumayi.

There was devotion, and it was absolute and crystal clear!

On another occasion, I watched the Brahmins go up for darshan. Sri Vivek Godbole, the head Brahmin, was on one side and the others were standing on the other side. As I looked from a distance, here were these incredibly learned, respected and highly acclaimed Brahmin priests who conveyed such purity and power, all standing so humbly, like little children in front of the Guru.

It made one truly realise the magnitude of the presence that resides within our beloved Guru. Although she is the embodiment of humility, her presence commands total reverence and devotion from people from all walks of life.

And then there is Vencappa, who served Bhagawan Nityananda, Baba Muktananda and now Gurumayi. His love and devotion for Gurumayi is beyond any bounds. It is just inspiring to watch and I had many experiences that brought me to tears watching Vencappa’s humility and reverence for the Guru.

When the sevites were placing the garlands over Gurumayi I noticed Venacappa standing in the corner of the Shakti Mandap towards the front and to the side of Gurumayi’s chair. I would have considered it a little unusual if it was anyone but Venacappa. It seemed he had some kind of “mission”

Sure enough, as soon as the sevites were walking away, Venacappa came straight up to Gurumayi and placed a necklace over Gurumayi. He was standing in the corner of the Shakti Mandap, obviously awaiting his opportunity.

Gurumayi, without missing a beat, immediately placed the garland just given to her back over Vencappa and gave him a big hug. She then said, “This is a legend. If you want to do pradakshina, do it around him.” Inferring he was a great fire.



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This was in response to some confusion from the MC that people could do pradakshina that evening and Gurumayi had clarified that since the fire yagna had ended, the fire was “closed” and so doing pradakshina would be pointless.

The other extraordinary thing, which was wonderful to watch, was Vencappa’s total obedience to the Guru’s command. Gurumayi innocently waved her hand towards Vencappa indicating he should acknowledge the applause from everyone in the hall. He thought Gurumayi was asking him to walk forward, and immediately started walking in the direction that Gurumayi had waved her hand, immediately obeying her “command”. He seemed oblivious to the acknowledgment of the crowd all he wanted to do was obey his Guru. Immediately Gurumayi called him back to walk out with her as she left the hall.

Yagna Purnahooti

As part of the yagna conclusion, while the other Brahmins were sprinkling everyone in the hall with blessed water from the yagna, Vivek was standing up next to Gurumayi blessing her with the water. He continued this for about 15 minutes, it was so beautiful to watch him dipping a mango leaf into the bowl of holy water and then sprinkling Gurumayi. When Vivek had finished he started walking back to the fire and on his way he spontaneously detoured to splash the swamis and a few of us off to the side. This was water that had been destined for the Guru. It seemed extra special. I saw droplets in front of me and instantly saw them as great prasada not to be wasted. I wiped up every drop with my shawl. The person next to me saw what I was doing and had a spark of realisation of the significance as well and also starting wiping it up.

On the first day of the intensive, the 18th of October, just as I sat down I received an inner message that another day in the chapter of my evolutionary progress was about to unfold. Today would be auspicious and tomorrow would be the culmination of lifetimes of evolution, This seemed to suggest the fulfillment of my sankalpa for the visit.

In the intensive Gurumayi spoke of how Shaktipat creates an alchemical change in people. You can see it in the way they walk. She spoke of how Vencappa had a major operation and there were complications caused by the doctors. Yet despite all the many, many years of exhaustive seva Vencappa had done, when she held his hand it was as soft as a baby’s hand. This was due to this alchemical change that occurs from Shaktipat.

On the 19th, although I was basically OK, I felt I was being ravaged by an abundance of viruses in the air. There were so many people with the flu, coughing, sniffing and spluttering. It



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was hard to keep a clear mental picture of health. I had taken my own method of prevention and my healing technique overnight and as I sat down I felt this slight presence of a tickle in my throat, so it was obviously there. It was like the flu was trying somehow to “grab hold...”

I quite unconsciously picked up the shawl that I had used to wipe the droplets. I immediately sensed and visualised, even with my eyes open, this golden light shimmering within and all around the shawl. It was distinctive and very clearly visible. I was delighted and amazed! I intuitively wrapped the shawl around my throat, which I had never done before, and in that instant my throat completely cleared. I noticed the difference and the tickle didn't come back for the rest of my stay.

After one break as I re-entered the hall I saw a spontaneous Darshan had started up. It seems Gurumayi had been simply sitting in her chair when a darshan commenced. I joined the line and bowed at her feet in my first formal darshan for six years. During the intensive, Gurumayi focused on how we should have “...an intense aspiration for liberation and the strength and depth of your faith in your master.”

Meeting with the Swamis

On the 17th of October I bumped into Swami Vasudevananda three separate times which allowed as to confirm our 11.30am meeting on Tuesday. This meeting had been specifically arranged at Gurumayi's request and it seemed she was making sure it happened!

I also bumped into Swami Ishwarananda at the amrit. He had taken my booklet on the Guru Gita and we were aiming to organise a time to discuss it. I saw him again the next day. Again it seemed the shakti wanted us to meet.

I had requested a meeting with Swami Apoorvananda to discuss some of my thoughts around the global teaching department and specifically relating to the Siddha Yoga mission. Swamiji was very responsive to having a meeting and kindly made some time available straight after the intensive weekend. On the 20th I met with Swami Apoorvananda at Anugraha.

I presented some of my views and Swamiji listened very intently and patiently to my sometimes over-enthusiastic points. We discussed them and Swamiji made some comments and we basically come to a middle ground of appreciating each other's point of view.



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Gurumayi's Blessing

I finally had my long awaited meeting with Swami Vasudevananda on the 21st of October. I was quietly excited about this meeting initiated by Gurumayi and as I walked into Swamiji's room I felt his genuine warmth but also sensed the pressure on his time. He stated he had to finish in 20 minutes since he was leaving with the Tour to Mexico next Monday and had so much to complete before leaving.

I decided to just stay focused and give Swamiji a detailed account of my experiences since meeting Gurumayi in 1991. I somehow felt it was like speaking directly to Gurumayi through Swamiji and as such, an opportunity of a lifetime. I decided to just see where it would go... It was like being able to tell Gurumayi of my experiences directly from my heart in great detail through the presence of Swamiji. It was so real and such an honour. I felt so happy to have this extraordinary opportunity.

As the story unfolded we both seemed to be enveloped in the golden light of shakti as we became immersed in the unfoldment of my experiences with Gurumayi and subsequent sadhana. It felt so sweet and nourishing to be relating these experiences to Swamiji. We lost track of all time, because over an hour later I got to the main point of our coming together, namely to pass on my gift to Gurumayi via Swamiji.

Presenting my Gift to Gurumayi

Prior to the meeting, in fact even before I had arrived at Shree Muktananda Ashram, I had struggled over how to best present the book to Gurumayi. I thought of many possibilities; having a glass box or a beautifully coloured cardboard one or a simply wrapping, but nothing seemed to quite gel or feel just right.

Finally, on the day before meeting with Swamiji, I put the book into my most prized possession, a piece of Baba's carpet from his meditation room in Ganeshpuri. I placed the book on the mat and closed up the casing and to my utter delight it fitted perfectly. I then added some of the dried flowers from the arati tray from Babe Baba's pranapatishka ceremony the previous week. The touch of bright fiery red, yellow and orange colour of the flowers provided an exquisite touch.

It looked just perfect!

When I slowly opened the package for Swamiji in our meeting he looked into the package and as he saw the brightness of the book's cover and the cover was fully opened he reeled back and explained he had felt a surge of shakti burst forth over his head from the gift.



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I had also felt this explosion of energy explode out as I opened the package. We sat transfixed and stared at each other for what seemed an eternity within a few moments of sublime bliss.

Swamiji then shared what an absolutely beautiful meeting it had been for him and we hugged and Swamiji kissed me very sweetly on the cheek. It was very gentle exchange of unconditional love.

The meeting with Swami Vasudevananda was a most powerful and shakti-filled meeting. We felt like we very deeply connected and a very strong bond was created. We became brothers of the heart, hugging each other with much love. We both had felt the full grace of the Guru's blessing in arranging this opportunity to be together. I felt very close to Swamiji and I realised this was now my second friendship arranged-in-heaven by the Guru.

Swamiji said he would take the gift immediately over to Gurumayi's secretary. Apparently when he had asked Gurumayi before our meeting what he should do with my gift she had responded by saying "We'll take it on the tour."

Over the next few days, every time Swamiji and I would see each other we would stop and thank each other for our beautiful meeting and say how precious it was to us. It had truly been a very special and deep moment in time with the blessing of the Guru's Grace. He told me that he experienced the explosion of shakti come from the gift when he checked the book before giving to Gurumayi's secretary.

Another significant aspect of our meeting was that Swamiji remarked that my next area of expression and focus in my life would reveal itself out of the shakti of my invitation to the ashram from Gurumayi and my stay there.

I felt his genuine excitement and interest as to what this could possibly turn out to be.

The Guru's Command - The Inner Voice

The next day, I dedicated the arati, the meditation in the temple and the Guru Gita to my discovery and clarification of exactly what the Guru's "command" for the next phase of my life would be. In other words, what the intelligence of my heart or inner self would reveal as my next direction.

It seemed like one cycle was ending and now another was emerging. I fell into a deep meditation after the Guru Gita. It was so deep and I had stayed so long that I was finally asked to leave by one of the attendants.



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I had breakfast and then set off to our regular morning garden puja at the garden shed, I stopped at the Hatha Yoga department as normal to leave my change of regular clothes for later. I walked into the foyer area. Spontaneously, quite out of the blue, I received a very definite and clear thought of what I should focus my efforts on in the next cycle of my life.

At that very moment as I turned around I looked at a picture of Gurumayi behind me on the wall as huge as life and it was Gurumayi sitting in her chair giving an “OK” sign with her left hand. This seemed a very “cute” but very obvious confirmation of my realisation!

It was to create the “School of Universal Thought”, an organisation focused around a course I had been developing for many years on consciousness and spiritual understandings. It had always been a great love for me to consider doing this. It now seemed the time had come.

Guru Gita - An Inner View

On the 23rd of October I met with Swami Ishwarananda to discuss my experiences that I had written on the Guru Gita, called “The Guru Gita - *An Inner View*”. (See Appendix 1.)

It was the first time I had spoken in depth with Swamiji and it felt the booklet was creating an opportunity to connect with him in a deeper way. I really appreciated the chance to speak with Swamiji as I had admired his talks for many years on the videos and intensives.

He felt what I had written on the Guru Gita was good and felt it was a great subject to be exploring in the way that I was. He made some suggestions of ways to approach developing the booklet. He encouraged me to continue expanding and refining the information.

I pointed out to Swamiji that the experiences in the booklet were all very real to me and from my own experience. While it will no doubt become clearer and richer as my exploration continues, I believed the essential nature of what I had experienced will remain as a basis for further deeper understanding. I felt my inner experiences in the booklet were consistent with the Guru's teachings in this area. I felt the ceremony of the Guru Gita will become recognised as the supreme mechanism of leverage for bestowing shaktipat by the Guru; *benevolent Grace in its most sublime natural form*.

I finished the letter I had been writing to Swami Apoorvananda and passed it on to him on the 25th of October and then onto Swami Ishwarananda a few days later. I also included a draft outline of the three year course for the “School of Universal Thought”.



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Special News

On the 26th of October I was sitting with Swami Vasudevananda going through my course outline for “School of Universal Thought” when Uma came up to me and discretely whispered in my ear that Gurumayi had received my book and had asked her to see me about it. I was obviously thrilled and shared this news with Swamiji.

Meditation Cave

I discovered the Meditation cave at Atma Nidhi on the 28th of October for the first time. It was so still and the atmosphere was awesome. The moment I walked in I was instantly drawn into a very deep inner state of profound stillness and serenity.

Meditating with the Guru

I thought about the sequence of events over the previous week or so with the gift to Gurumayi and my meetings with the Swamis. I felt I had received a very definite and clear message from my inner self to initiate the development of the “School of Universal Thought” and the particular three year course I had been working on for the last four years.

I felt this was somehow linked to the fact that through the Guru's Grace, and in one case her direct request, I had managed to meet with the three primary Swami's involved in the global teachings area for Siddha Yoga, Swamis Apoorvananda, Vasudevananda and Ishwarananda.

Later in the day I was sitting in the Amrit at Anugraha and I heard someone say that Gurumayi had just walked by but I hadn't seen her. I went out to the foyer and I must admit I was waiting around hoping Gurumayi might come back this way. After a little while of “loitering” around the foyer I saw Swami Ishwarananda with his asana under his arm heading off to the temple.

I immediately twigged as to what I should do!

I entered the temple and Gurumayi was sitting in her chair. I saw Swami Ishwarananda sitting to the side and I sat down as well. There was hardly anyone in the temple and we sat very serenely, savouring Gurumayi's presence for a short while.

In my meditation with Gurumayi I had a very a powerful experience around the quote I had embraced as a type of additional sankalpa towards the end of my visit at the ashram. It was a quote from Gurumayi that I had paraphrased into the possessive case; *“I have waited for many lifetimes*



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to come into the presence of my inner Self in the form of the Guru. Now that I had arrived I will never leave.”

I have since placed this quote above my bed under the picture of Baba, which I had drawn for Gurumayi as a gift.

Gurumayi left the temple and I did pradakshina around the temple and then headed down to the foyer near the main entrance. Gurumayi appeared again and walked slowly through the foyer in an easy meditative state. She was wearing a red overcoat as the weather had become very cold.

Visiting the Temple - a Wedding

On the morning of the 30th of October I felt compelled to go into the temple and sit for meditation. As I was sitting there meditating I unexpectedly became part of a wedding ceremony for two of the long-standing sevites at the ashram. It was very beautiful to watch and I again felt like Bade Baba had invited me. I was getting a full hit of the shakti in all its variety of forms.

Farewell Chant - 31st October 1997

On the morning of the 31st of October, the eve of Diwali, Indian new year, I was working with the garden team clearing up the autumn leaves, which had all left their tree abodes to grace the earth with all their fiery colours. I was at Atma Nidhi and a person walked by the truck and casually said, “*Did you know Gurumayi is in the noon day chant at the temple?*”

Now, I wasn’t exactly dressed for the temple especially with Gurumayi there. This meant I had to get changed and then to Anugraha via the shuttle which at first all felt a little too much considering the chant had already started. But I decided to just go for it and see what happened!

I rushed off and got changed, went to the bus stop, the bus was due at 12.00pm, we got to Anugraha at 12.10pm. I jumped off the bus and was a little surprised when no one else got off. I headed straight to the temple and as I approached the entrance of the temple I noticed people were overflowing right up into the back foyer area at the entrance! I remained centered on my "mission" and undaunted walked right up to the door and to my utter surprise the welcome person looked straight at me and said, “*You should go right in, Anatole.*” I didn’t even know the person so I assumed he had read my name tag. As I walked into the temple the pujari gestured for me to come in. To my delight, he pointed to the *last spot* in the temple, which was completely full to the brim with people.

Gurumayi was chanting with everyone just to my right. I was almost sitting by her side, just to the other side of the center aisle. I couldn’t believe my fortune and gave thanks to the Guru for the



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opportunity to be spending the eve of Diwali with the Guru chanting. Especially when they say that what you do on the eve of Diwali you will be doing for the rest of the year. We chanted “*Om Namah Shivaya*” for a short while and then we sang, “*Shiva Arati*” with Gurumayi. I sat in the temple, delighting in this golden opportunity, near the end of my stay at the ashram.

As we left we all received beautiful prasad and then I went to lunch. There was an abundant Indian bandara for Diwali New years Eve’s lunch which was a grommet’s delight. It was absolutely delicious!

The purnahuti of my final two days was an amazing blessing of benevolent grace, on top of an already, most extraordinary stay.

Focusing on the Chakras

On the 1st of November, Swami Ishwarananda came up to me and suggested in passing that I should “become aware of pranas.” I wasn’t sure what he meant but I connected this comment with the fact I had been intuitively and quite spontaneously linking various mantras with my chakras. Namely during “Om Shanti Shanti Shanti” I would link each of the word “Shanti” with my heart, throat and head chakra respectively, and “Sadgurunath Maharaj Ki Jay” with the sahasra chakra and when doing it three times, with each of the three layers of “petals”, that is, the knowledge, love and sacrifice petals in the chakra.

With the “Om purnamadah...” mantras each phrase was connected with the seven chakras from the bottom to the top. With “Hari Om Tatsat”, it was again the heart, throat and head chakras.

Gurumayi’s Departure on Tour

I attended the Guru Gita on the 2nd of November 1997, which was dedicated to the tour to Mexico and Palm Springs. Just after the Guru Gita finished, it was announced that Gurumayi would be leaving that day and there was to be a special farewell program in Muktananda Mandir at 8.30am and everybody was welcome to attend.

Gurumayi entered the hall in a very buoyant and joyful mood, nothing unusual I suppose, but there was an excitement in the shakti-filled atmosphere of the hall, all of us feeling on the brink of launching into the momentum of the tour. Gurumayi gave a long spontaneous talk. She shared how she was in the temple, earlier that morning and was listening to the Guru Gita. She felt it was so beautiful, even more so than normal and she couldn’t quite work out what it was. At first she thought maybe the trustees had brought in a choir, but then she thought no, they are too frugal for that. Then she considered “was it because we were feeling so good?” No, she thought are hearts are always soft and open. Then she wondered whether it was the engineers doing something extra special with the equipment. No they always did such a good job!



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She then realised it was because the men and the women were blending their voices so sweetly and we were all giving ourselves so selflessly to the chant and pouring out our love. Gurumayi continued explaining how we can store the shakti by always obeying the command of the Guru.

The overall talk was full of fun and she mentioned how she was enthralled with nature and the beautiful mist covering Shree Muktananda Ashram during the morning. She was full of exuberant enthusiasm. She looked like soft velvet and so deliciously radiant with light and love.

Then we chanted “Om Namō Bhgavate Muktanandaya” for about 20 minutes and finished with Joyta se Joyta. Gurumayi spoke some more, about our Golden Hearts and she said “Thank you, I love you.”

Gurumayi finally left the hall, walked through the ashram, and when she got out to her car at the entrance of Anugruha, Gurumayi stood looking at all the people gathered in the gardens and down the driveway. It started to rain and Gurumayi started chanting again. At one point she told some people to put down their umbrellas and get wet!

Then Gurumayi hopped into her car, Swami Sevananda waved the coconut and then the car drove off to a chorus of “Sadgurunath Maharaj Ki Jay”, going on and on for some time. Swamiji ran down the driveway following the car and leading the “chorus”.

The rest of the day was very sombre and very wet with rain pouring down its blessings!

Last Days of Completion

Quite unexpectedly, the 3rd of November was a beautiful sunny day! It gave me the perfect opportunity to complete all of my outstanding projects with garden seva. This felt fantastic, as it allowed me to finish all my loose ends in my seva before leaving.

On the 4th of November, I played the CD “At the heart of Australia”, the birthday gift to Gurumayi, for the garden team at our morning puja as a parting gesture.

I went for a walk along the “silent path” which was absolutely gorgeous. There was a light misty rain falling, which added a beautiful shimmering touch of sweetness to the fiery array of radiant colours still adorning some of the trees and covering the ground. You could see right into the forest because of the fact that most of the leaves had fallen, giving this crystal-like three dimensional look, making it look so splendid! The entire day was filled with many small blessed moments in nature.



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The walk was blessed just before I entered the path by three squirrels. They were quite large with long bushy tails. They continued their industrious preparations for winter, oblivious of my attention just a few feet away.

On the afternoon I had a relaxing time with a friend at his room, listening to the birthday CD and playing him "I Know I Am." He had a similar nostalgic reaction as the others and also asked for it to be played again, just before I left for the Arati over in the temple. (There seemed to be a pattern of having to play it twice whenever I performed it!)

Purnahuti of my Stay - A Vision

The purnahuti of my final two days was an amazing blessing of benevolent grace, on top of an already, most extraordinary stay.

These last days became quite magical, right down to simple mundane incidents. I had been wanting some brown shoe polish for over a week and on my way back to my room as I came up to my door I noticed a small round tin leaning up against the bottom of the door. I picked it up and it was brown shoe polish. I was completely surprised and discovered my room-mate had asked for it from a friend but then he didn't need it so he gave it to me.

My room-mate left and I laid down on my bed in my room and almost instantly this vision came to me of the splendour of the autumn leaves, similar to the beauty of the "silent path". The colours were very vivid, with oranges, yellows and reds. The colours seemed to evoke and exude the fiery colours of the Guru. I noticed I was in a very odd view point, that is, I was lying down. The vision was so strong and clear that it had fully embraced my consciousness and I had forgotten the fact that I actually was lying down at that time!

At that moment Bhagawan Nityananda's face appeared to my right, looking down, then Baba's face appeared directly in front and then Gurumayi's face appeared to my left. They were like surgeons looking down over me during an operation. I then heard someone ask, "Is he dead?" and Baba said, "No, in fact he's very much alive!" I felt he was inferring that I was now "alive" to my higher self for the very first time. This vision seemed to be a confirmation of all the experiences I had been having, telling me that I was undergoing a major shift in my state of being.

The rest of the entire day was filled with many small blessed moments in nature. I had my last walk through the radiance of the "Silent Path".

I was also thrilled to hear that the Guru Gita was to be in the temple for the first time for the last day of my stay. I was delighted! I was told it was not often that the Guru Gita was chanted in the temple so I felt it was simply another blessing from the Guru.



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The next morning I was up bright and early and after the morning arati I stayed for meditation. Just before the Guru Gita started I had an inner knowing that there was going to be something significant happen, somehow! I immediately became aware of the awesome energies, and a sense of their merging, of the presiding deity of the Guru Gita, the Deva of the Temple, the Deva of the crystal and the deities within the temple.

During the Guru Gita I had an experience of being installed into Bhagawan Nityananda and Bhagawan Nityananda being installed in me. I wasn't too sure what this meant or the sense of this, especially when I thought about it later, but at the time it simply seemed to make sense. After the last "Sadgurunath Maharaj Ki Jay" at the end of the Guru Gita I received an inner message that simply said, "*Something significant has occurred.*"

I once again made a final affirmation of the paraphrase of Gurumayi words, "*I have waited many lifetimes to come into the presence of my own inner self in the form of the Guru. Now that I have arrived I will never leave.*" I walked up to the murti of Bade Baba in the temple and as I was looking into his eyes I heard these words, "*I am here, You are here!*"

Examining these words now they seem quite strange, but I knew exactly what they meant at the time. I was in Bhagawan Nityananda and he was in my heart and we were one! It was an interesting experience of merging. Then the words, "It is done!" just kept repeating in my head as I did puja to Bade Baba and then did pradakshina around the temple, doing puja to Gurumayi's chair and then Ganesh, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Hanuman and then Baba's sandals. I became strongly aware of the flow of incredible cosmic forces between the crystal and the back of the Bade Baba. The energy was following back and forth with quite inconceivable power!

Contemplating these experiences a little later I realised that leading up to this day I had done the arati totally focused looking into the eyes of Bhagawan Nityananda for a number of days in a row. This seemed to be part of allowing this very deep experience to happen.

I asked Swami Ishwarananda if I could see him later in the morning to share these experiences and so I went over to Anugraha around 10.00am. I had a wonderful opportunity to lock these experiences into my being by sharing them with Swamiji, who I had also become very close to.

After this meeting I decided to do a last puja to Bade Baba in the temple. The moment I walked in the temple the words, "*It is done, We are One*" kept repeating over and over in my head.

I walked along the Silent Path for the last time back to Atma Nidhi, as I was leaving at 11.00am. I remembered back to when I had arrived at Shree Muktananda Ashram at the meditative hours of the morning.



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Returning to Australia – Paris Stop-over

I was returning to Australia via France and got off in Charles de Gaul airport. Originally I was going to stay in Paris a few days but decided to change my plans because I just wanted to be back home at the Sydney ashram.

I decided not to go into Paris and waited at the airport for my connecting flight. At one point while sitting in the airport lounge area I sat for meditation and immediately upon closing my eyes Bade Baba came to my vision and I started repeating “I am here, you are here”, the words from my early experiences in the temple back in the ashram. The next thing I remember was suddenly coming out of a very deep, very long meditation, having no idea how long it had been. I felt I had been engulfed in a cocoon of love and protection.

The rest of the trip, albeit a bit of a long haul, was also blessed. In Singapore I suddenly found a free voucher for the VIP lounge I could use to freshen up before my last leg to Sydney. It was wonderful to be in such salubrious surroundings, and I was rejuvenated and nourished with abundance flowing.

Without this mini-miracle I would have been an absolute wreck by the time I got to Sydney with three days of no sleep and no luggage!



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Arriving Home at the Sydney Ashram

I arrived home on the 8th of November. It was good to be back. I received a call from Pam, my Godson's mother. She happened to be visiting Sydney for the weekend and called to see if we could get together. The only letter I had received during my stay at Shree Muktananda Ashram was from my Godson, Alexander. It was a beautiful home-made card. His mum had written that it was, "his own words..."

He had pasted a dinosaur on one page. On the other he had a message written by his mum saying, "*Anatole, you can visit my place every day.*"

It was such a warming gesture and a heart-filled card from Alexander. I had had a very deep and heart-felt connection with Alexander since his birth. Whenever I spent time with him it was absolutely delightful and beautifully serene. (This was so consistent over such a period of years that his mother was even somewhat surprised as to our lovely and connected relationship.)

Visiting Lord Shiva

I had seen Alexander down in Melbourne a week before leaving for Shree Muktananda Ashram in August. During my stay I spent one afternoon playing with him. We invented this game where we built a spaceship out of cushions, boxes and blankets. Quite spontaneously I just mentioned to Alexander that we were going to "visit Lord Shiva on the other side of the Universe."

His responded with complete fascination. I'm sure he had no real idea what I meant but in some way the words sparked a note of interest and attunement. He just loved me saying it and we keep visiting Lord Shiva and travelling around the cosmos for the entire afternoon. We played for hours. He loved it and seemed to really imbibe the concept.

At breakfast the next morning I explained to him that Shiva was in the toast and the table and inside him and within his mum - that Lord Shiva was everywhere. He just seemed to understand and agreed. It seemed to hit a resounding and deep note within Alexander. He would go up to his Mum and say with great enthusiasm. "Lord Shiva's in the toast, mum!" Pam would smile in delight at his absolute conviction. And she smiled approvingly to me in my role as God-father, looking after her son's spiritual well-being, as I had been directed to do.

When I returned Pam told a story about how one afternoon just before dinner, Alexander was playing with Brendan, his three year younger brother. Usually they would be under Pam's feet in the kitchen at this time wanting her attention, but instead they were very quietly playing for quite



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some time. She looked down the hallway and noticed, both of them playing on the carpet. Some more time passed and they were still amusing themselves. So Pam became intrigued and went up to them and asked what they were playing, Alexander looked and boldly said, "We're visiting Lord Shiva on the other side of the Universe!" Brendan, his younger brother looked up and nodded his head in approval and with great conviction affirming his great interest in this activity as well.

Pam also mentioned that quite out of the blue she heard the other brothers calling, Brendan, "Babaji." When she asked why, they said they'd "heard Alexander call him that, and they all liked it so they decided to keep calling him, Babaji."

I was simply intrigued... I decided to keep reinforcing the theme with Alexander whenever appropriate.

Settling in at the Ashram

After taking my time to settle in at the Ashram, the "Viva Mexico One Heart Satsang" was held on the 30th of November 1997. It was quite an inspiration with Swami's sharing news of the Tour and a special report from the young people of Mexico.

I was sitting listening in the hall and amidst all the sharing a poem literally jumped out of me. I couldn't think with so much going on so it literally come straight from the heart, in fact it was called, "In One Heart":

In One Heart shines the light of the Universe.

In One Heart beats the love of the Universe.

In One Heart sounds the silence of the universe.

When One Heart joins our individual hearts

into one great family of love,

The Heart of Love is revealed through

the timelessness of eternity,

Expressing its infinite dance of changing forms while

Never-endingly holding the universe in place.

Always united in God's love as One Heart.



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“Guru’s Grace” - 28th November 1997

I had arrived home, back in Australia, and settled in at the Sydney Siddha Yoga meditation ashram. I decided to continue performing the Arati at 3.30am every morning in gratitude to Gurumayi for my stay at Shree Muktananda Ashram. I felt an enormous flow of benevolent and abundant grace with the entire circumstances surrounding the book I had taken to Gurumayi, including everyone’s involvement in the development, production and printing. I decided to meet with the printers on the 28th November and quite out of the blue they told me there would be *no charge* for the book. I was stunned and surprised with gratitude, as it quite a large amount. The Guru’s grace is never-ending.

The next day I was speaking with a close friend and he mentioned how he felt that when the book was officially published it would become my "*dylithium Crystal*", as per the energy source of the good ship Enterprise from Star Trek. He felt it would become my "power source" and it would drive, “The School of Universal Thought” project forwards. He also added I needed to look at what I needed to become to create “The School of Universal Thought”.

Letter to Gurumayi

I wrote a letter to Gurumayi on the 21st December 1997 and sent it with the Christmas gift. This was a song for Gurumayi sung by the entire community at the Ashram's Christmas celebrations.

I expressed my deepest heartfelt thanks to Gurumayi for revealing my own inner Self to me in the form of the Guru. I knew there was infinitely more to be discovered, yet I was very happy and content within myself and I looked forward to every day as it unfolded the continuing greater and greater presence of God.

I shared my experience at the end of doing puja and arati that morning at 4.30am. I told Gurumayi how I had been chanting the arati in the room she used as the Namaste room when she visited the ashram and the ashramites sang the song to her. The drawing of Baba is hanging in this room. As I pranam to her photo at the end of the chant I usually invoke my sankalpa that I had also given Gurumayi in this room as well. Today, as I pranam, I realised my view-point had changed within the wording of the sankalpa.

I realised that the sankalpa had been phrased from a personal point of view, looking upwards towards an ideal. I was now experiencing another perspective, I was looking “down” towards my personality. I no longer looked at being “*permanently established and aligned to the state of consciousness of the Guru, and the realisation of God*”. I was the Guru. I was God! I no longer was becoming “*...a perfect vehicle and instrument for the service and fulfilment of God’s Plan*.” I was now the source of God’s Plan! Then the final words I had heard in front of the murti



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of Bhagawan Nityananda in the temple on my last day of my stay came to me, “*It is done, We are One!*” and echoed in my mind.

Global Satellite Intensive 1997

During the global satellite intensive on the 29th December, Gurumayi told us during her meditation instructions that we were “mountains of consciousness”. As I was visualising this, Gurumayi continued by asking us to imagine a stream flowing from the tops of our heads, the top of our “mountain of consciousness”. I suddenly had this additional vision within me of receiving a beautiful hug by Gurumayi with such purity and love. The warmest of the feelings that arose initiated a sweet tear of joy to burst forth and flow down my face. As this happened I instantly thought of this as my stream flowing down the mountain of consciousness.

We sat for meditation for a considerable time and I became absorbed in the imagery Gurumayi had created for us, so much so, that even though my legs were really aching and I thought I couldn't sit crossed legged any more, in that moment I seemed to lose body consciousness and quite consciously became totally absorbed in the beautiful presence of my Guru. I felt immersed in the nectar of my inner self and the affirmation "I am That!"

Entering 1998

Toward the end of the intensive while we were chanting Gurumayi told us to chant to Baba for this last chant. She suggested we visualise Baba and imagine Baba listening.

I immediately saw a vision of Baba in my dorm sitting next to me. I started chanting to him and then we got up and walked down the hallway. I was dancing in front of Baba like an elf, bouncing along with so much joy, chanting away. We went down the stairs to the namaste room and Baba looked at the drawing of himself hanging on the wall, and said, “*Very Good.*” Then we went out to the fountain in the garden still dancing and chanting. Then finally down to the hall and Baba sat on the front chair while we all continued to chant. Then Baba got up with a tambourine and danced while we all continued to chant.

The Intensive finished, then the year finished with a spectacular new Year's chant at the ashram and we entered the year of 1998, the year of the tiger, my sign.

It felt like the year to “*become the fire.*”

- Om Guru Om -



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Visit to Gurudev Siddha Peeth

In April 2000 I visited Gurudev Siddha Peeth, the mother ashram in Ganespuri, India. I had decided to give this trip as a gift to myself for my 50th Birthday. Nine years since receiving Shaktipat with Gurumayi in Sydney, Australia.

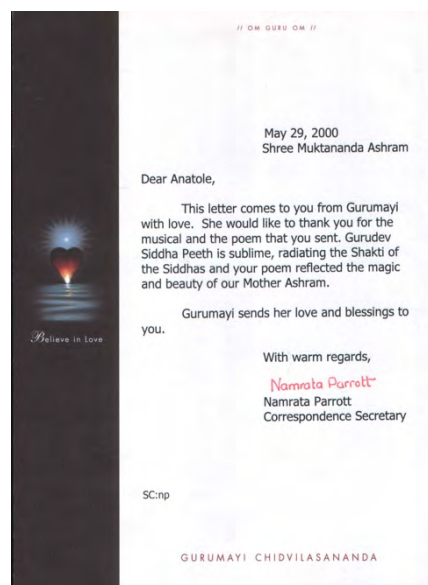
Meeting with Swami Kripananda

When I was there I asked Swami Kripananda if I could meet with her. I ended up having a most serene meeting with her outside in the beautiful gardens of the ashram. Sitting with Swami Kripananda felt like I was speaking directly with Gurumayi.

I had the opportunity to explain in detail what had been happening to me in my sadhana. I had produced a colour presentation of a musical I had been working on, dedicated to Baba Muktananda and a poem I had written about my experience of staying at the ashram, Gurudev Siddha Peeth (see over page.). Both were gifts for Gurumayi. After our meeting, Swamiji suggested I write a covering letter and she would get the gifts to Gurumayi.

On the 29th of May, 2000 I subsequently received the following response from Gurumayi. (see section below “Tradition of Gifts”).

“This letter comes from Gurumayi with much love. She would like to thank you for the musical and the poem that you sent. Gurudev Siddha Peeth is sublime, radiating the shakti of the Siddhas and your poem reflected the magic and beauty of our Mother Ashram. Gurumayi sends her love and blessings to you.”



//Om Guru Om //



“The Thunderous Softness of Stillness”
Gurudev Siddha Peeth

Walking in the gardens I am greeted by an ocean of sweet,
silent fragrances looking for an open heart to caress.
In each wave a delicate scented mist mystifies my senses
with a kaleidoscope of delights.

Gently I am coerced to relinquish my control as my heart is beckoned
to submerge into an even greater fullness of serenity.

Walking further along the path I meet each Siddha majestically manifesting
their magnificence:- I sense an artistry of ancient alchemy at play from
each of these sculptured master-pieces.

My eyes are invited to drink the succulent abundance of each
nectarian, magic moment with reverence and respect.
Then I am nurtured and nourished with a feast of blessings, radiating
endlessly from an infinite source of peace and solitude.

Each building, stature, tree, rock and indeed, every blade of grass
seems to have been divinely positioned by the touch of the Guru grace.
Her radiance shining through a stream of devoted devotees,
serving to serve with the highest aspiration.

The stillness crushes my sense with a thunderous softness as I go
within to where I am no more, yet reach the source of everything.
The echo of my heart explodes with an ecstatic rapture to reveal the
ripeness of being lost in limitless love.

I think what foolishness it is to attempt to express this immense,
unfathomable grandeur of the Guru's love.

But then I think again, would I be a greater fool not to believe in love...

Anatole Kononewsky
Gurudev Siddha Peeth 10 April 2000



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Tradition of Gifts

The gifts I gave to Gurumayi in Gurudev Siddha Peeth, via Swami Kripananda, started a ritual of sending gifts each year. This tradition of giving gifts was in fact started by Gurumayi way back on my birthday and diyva diksha on the 1st of April 1991 when she presented me with a shawl.

I continued this tradition when in December, 2000 I wrote to Gurumayi and told her the name of the book I presented to her in 1997 had the byline “Only Love Matters” added to it. I had also produced a CD of music as a Christmas present for her.

Letters from Gurumayi

Gurumayi always responded with her blessings via a letter. I received replies in 2000 and 2001 on the yearly message letterhead. In 2000 it was “Believe in Love”, and in 2001, it was “Approach the present with your heart’s consent. Make it a blessed event.”.

On the 2nd April 2002 I received a reply from Gurumayi as follows:

“Gurumayi received your CD, Only Love Matters, along with the loving photos, and she asked that I thank you on her behalf. It is wonderful to hear the love you express in your music and to revisit such wonderful memories in the Sydney Ashram. Gurumayi sends you her love and blessings. May your life always grow in the abundance of God’s grace.”





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Swami Dharmananda's Visit to the Sydney Ashram

Swami Dharmananda had arrived in Australia for the New Years Retreat in Canberra. After the retreat had finished he returned to stay in the Sydney Ashram.

During his stay at the ashram I started preparing this manuscript of all my darshans and communications with Gurumayi. I had taken these experiences from my journal I had kept since my first meeting with Gurumayi in April 1991.

When I had finished it I decided to share it with Swami Dharmananda. So on the 24th of January, 2002 I asked Swamiji if he would like to come around to my room in the cottage area. I prepared my room, lit some candles and the oil burner.

Swamiji arrived and sat in the lounge chair and as I handed him the manuscript, although he took it very lovingly, I noticed he was a little surprised. I discovered later he that was expecting something completely different. I often spoke with Swamiji of the latest things happening in my business, the latest invention or my latest contemplation. We always had great chats.

He started looking through the manuscript, and as he was reading it, he laughed; he seemed intrigued; he slowly became more and more absorbed as he kept on reading. He was taking his time and I sensed he was enjoying it. He finally commented on how filled with shakti it was. He commented on how wonderful it was to be able to relive the experiences of my darshans with Gurumayi through just being able to read it. We spoke of the power of journaling and making time for what is important. Documenting spiritual experiences reinforces the way we want to be. It allows you to revisit and consolidate the experience into your being.

After quite some time of chatting away we noticed a very beautiful energy had enveloped the room. It had been a very beautiful and special experience with Swamiji. He thanked me for sharing my manuscript and left.

Talk by Swami Dharmananda - 25th January 2002

The next day I visited a natural healer and chiropractor who I had been considering seeing for more than two years. He was very tuned in and I had a very high intention to clear some issues. We addressed an issue relating to holding back my full potential. At first this surprised me as I always considered myself as very enthusiastic about pursuing my dreams and ideas. However, I suddenly had the insight that what I considered to be my 'full potential' and what may actually be my full potential were probably two different things! I realised the obvious possibility that there was much, much more I could become.



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I therefore decided to become very open to that possibility. I felt very clearly that this year was the time to express it! (It also linked in with my astrology reading a few years ago concerning the significance of the year 2002 for me).

That evening I saw Swamiji standing in line for dinner in the Amrit and he asked me if I was coming to the program. Swamiji is one of the teaching Swamis of Siddha Yoga and was giving a talk in the program that night. I entered the hall and sat up the front in the lead-chanting group near Gurumayi's chair. Swamiji was introduced and got up to speak to us. He started relating his experience about being invited to visit someone who lived in the ashram and how he went out along the corridor, out to the cottage area of the ashram. At first it didn't quite click in that he was speaking about our experience the night before. I felt like I was listening to his experience about someone else. He continued how when he got to the room, the door was open, so he entered and was shown a manuscript containing the person's darshan experiences.

I was delighted to hear him speaking so deeply about his experience of our previous evening together. He then started relating his experience to what Gurumayi has been speaking about in Shree Muktananda Ashram over the previous three months. I slowly realised how powerful the experience had been for Swamiji and in turn this made me start acknowledging just how significant it had been for me as well. I was delighted that Swamiji was using our experience as the basis for his talk as it felt very special. As I contemplated the significance of the experience to me it became the catalyst for starting a new cycle of transformation within me.

Swamiji spoke of how he had relived my darshan experiences with Gurumayi through reading my manuscript and how it had reawakened the shakti of those experiences. He then mentioned how Gurumayi had stated we need to be able to receive acknowledgment and let it in, and by doing that it had allowed others the joy of giving. He finally stated that at the end of our time together he felt love, not a love for each other, *but just the essence of love*. I was deeply touched by his words.

His talk was a wonderful experience for me, although at the time I was not too sure just what it all meant, or where it was leading to. However, it definitely felt like a catalyst for me to acknowledge I was entering into a new phase of my life.

As I contemplated it further over the next few days it emerged as an extremely profound experience for me, full of blessings. I somehow felt I had undergone an important shift within myself. *The experience had truly enriched and empowered my being.*



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I also realised by sharing my darshan experiences with another person, via my manuscript, I had the wonderful opportunity of re-experiencing the beauty and power of those special experiences once again. *This was very beautiful!*

(I subsequently heard from a number of people that Swamiji had shared our experience in Melbourne, New Zealand, and Hong Kong).

On the 28th July 2002 at the global satellite chanting intensive, 'Enter the Domain of Light' in celebration of Gurumayi's birthday, Swamiji was giving a talk on the word, 'Tejasi'. During his talk to my surprise, he shared our experience once again, to the world. This time he truly captured the essence of the experience. What stood out for me this time was how deep and profound an experience he expressed he had had. He shared that reading the manuscript of my experience with Gurumayi he had had the darshan of Gurumayi as well and it had "affected him very deeply. Light streaming across from my eyes to him."

Guru Gita - 26th January 2002

During the Guru Gita on the next day I received confirmation of the above shift via a very powerful intuitive message arising from within me, which simply stated, "*I am a different person from today, everything has changed!*" I felt an extraordinary recognition within myself that the upcoming year was one of completion and fruition. I also received a clear direction for the title for the book I presented to Gurumayi back 1997 at Shree Muktananda Ashram.

Quantum Thinking Institute - 8th February 2002

Within a week I knew how I should start initiating the creation of the 'Quantum Thinking Institute'. I started working on a sophisticated computer presentation of information that would form the basis of providing a framework and structure for the creation of the Institute.

It finally seemed the inspiration received in Shree Muktananda Ashram in 1997, with the blessings via an inner confirmation by Gurumayi, was finally emerging into form. It was the creation of a lifetime of preparation for the project, "School of Universal Thought."

On the 8th of February I had my first Quantum Thinking coaching session with John Matthews, one of Australia's leading executive coaches and a close friend for many years. The Institute was officially registered as an entity on the 25th March, 2002, which I only realised while writing this, was the exact day we had darshan with Gurumayi in the Sydney ashram, five years previously.



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“Darshan” - 16th February 2002

The beauty of Siddha Yoga for me is how it also enriches the simple moments in my life. It allows me to see, often from straightforward situations, the wonder of life and connect me to my heart. This occurred in a very sweet, inner darshan experience on the 16th of February, 2002.

It was late on a Saturday afternoon in my room in the cottage area of the ashram. I had decided to extract all of my spiritual experiences from my journal over the years and bring it into one file on my computer. I was sitting at my desk. There is a rather large, beautiful black and white picture of Gurumayi, up against the windowsill right in front of me. The window is quite large with a deep blue curtain.

I started working intently at my computer, reading my journal when I saw these dramatic lightning flashes exploding outside behind the closed window with tumultuous thunder crashes following in rapid succession. I love lightning, so I immediately opened the window. The day was very humid and there was no rain, however the clouds had grown very dark and surreal. It looked very magical. It was wonderful. I continued reading my journal and became very absorbed in what I was doing and after a short while I suddenly sensed a haunting stillness in the air. I looked up and to my surprise, the curtain had formed a majestic, perfect semi-circle around me and slightly above my head. A subtle breeze had lifted the curtain, ever so slowly, that I had not even noticed it.

I was looking directly at the picture of Gurumayi in front of me and felt embraced by her love and the perfect symmetry of the curtain. The absolute stillness of the curtain hovering above and surrounding me was amazing. It seemed held there, as if by some magical force.

As the curtain slowly drifted back from behind me it softly caressed the top of my shaven head, still in perfect circular formation. This sent a tingling sensation through my spine and my entire body as I sat very still savouring the sweetness of its caress. The curtain fully subsided and I contemplated how delightful it was to have such a simple moment transformed into such a special experience. I was able to take advantage of these moments by staying still, being very present and taking the time to savour them. The capacity to do this has emerged very definitely from having the gift of the siddha yoga practices, such as meditation and chanting, in my life.

When I looked straight at the picture of Gurumayi in front of me once again, a huge grin came to my face as I became filled with gratitude. I also saw how we can take the wonder and beauty of the ashram into our lives and affect the people in our families and in our work-place in a positive way, wherever we are, at any time of our day by the way we are.



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Guru Gita, Radiating Light - 17th February 2002

My seva (selfless service) every Sunday morning is to do the lead chanting on the microphone for the Guru Gita. The Guru Gita is my most favorite spiritual practice, having done it at one time, every morning from the start to the finish, without missing a day, for more than three years.

After the Guru Gita on the 17th of February, 2002, I was sitting on the steps leading up to the Amrit speaking to a dear friend, when suddenly Aimee came rushing up to me and said with much excitement, *“I have to tell you something. You were ‘glowing’ during the Guru Gita!”*

At first I was quite taken back by her direct, matter of fact in this statement, but I also seemed to readily accept the reality of her experience. She explained that during the Guru Gita she looked up towards me and she saw me ‘glowing’ while I was doing the chant. She seemed very uplifted by the experience.

When I thought about it, I had felt especially focused and extremely present while doing the Guru Gita that morning and so I just accepted her experience as a fact, and thanked her for sharing her observation. I also felt very grateful for the beautiful energy with which Aimee had conveyed her experience, it was very sincere and genuine. I felt it was nourishing, nurturing and empowering all at the same time.

Upon further contemplation of Aimee’s experience over the next few days I felt it was a message from Gurumayi confirming the significance of my earlier experience with Swami Dharmananda.

Global Satellite Intensive - 31st March 2002

In early March I noticed that there was to be the first global satellite intensive with Gurumayi for this year. Upon further investigation I also noticed that the second day of the intensive was my birthday and also Easter Monday. I somehow felt these coincidences were also connected with my earlier experiences with Swami Dharmananda and were leading up to something significant.

On the 30th of March 2002 I decided to prepare myself for the intensive, “Renew your Spirit with the Power of Silence” by staying in silence and eating very lightly. (I also gave up coffee for this time - *a miracle*.) On the 31st of March 2002, the first day of the intensive, during the last meditation with Gurumayi I fell very deeply within myself. I felt a strong resolve to renew my conviction to realise my sankalpa that I had presented to Gurumayi on the 25th of March, 1997 at a darshan with all of the ashramites at the Sydney Ashram, namely:



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“To become permanently established and aligned to the Guru’s state of consciousness and the realisation of God so as to become a perfect instrument and vehicle for the service and fulfillment of God’s plan.”

I asked for Gurumayi’s blessings for this to be so.

I did this by faxing a hand written letter with the above request for her blessings to the ‘experiences section’ in the USA. I also very briefly outlined the special birthday darshans that I have had with Gurumayi since 1991. (See below). Primarily, I wanted Gurumayi to receive the above wish before my birthday. (*I knew just in sending the communication, Gurumayi somehow would get the ‘message’.*)

For the next day, 1st of April 2002, I would be celebrating the 11th Anniversary of receiving Shaktipat; my Birthday and also Easter Monday. This was the first time in 11 years that Easter Monday has coincided with my birthday. (It was also the second day of the global intensive with Gurumayi.).

11th Divya Dishya Anniversary - 1st April 2002

The day was very rich and as always, culminated with the finale chant with Gurumayi. As I entered the hall I wondered in what mysterious way, might Gurumayi acknowledge my letter . As soon as Gurumayi started introducing the chant, “Narayana, Narayana, Jaya Govinda Hare”, *at that moment I knew exactly how...* This was same chant that I had received Shaktipat with Gurumayi back on my birthday, Easter Monday 1st of April 1991, eleven years ago. I looked at the shawl I had wrapped around me and suddenly realised that it was the same blue shawl that Gurumayi had given me as a Divya Diksha gift on that auspicious day, eleven years ago. I felt I had come full circle.

A very deep, silent excitement started to well up from within me.

As soon as the chant started the words, “*Alignment, Attunement and Absorption*” came into my head. (These were the words I always used as my sankalpa for doing the Guru Gita, namely, ‘*alignment, attunement and absorption with the Guru’s grace*’). Almost instantly, the phrase, “*We are One, we are One,*” started repeating in my head, then almost as suddenly, a new phrase flashed potently into my mind, “*I AM YOU*”, as mentioned by Gurumayi during her talk.

This statement entered my heart like a thunderbolt and in fact my entire body shook strongly for a few moments after I felt these words echo through my body. I continued chanting and then the following words were added, “*From this day on, I am you. From this day on, I am you.*” I was



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taken aback by the strength, clarity and absolute resolve in the conviction behind the words. (It was very empowering and enriching.)

The chant continued to be beautifully orchestrated by Gurumayi, and at one point the females in the lead section started to sing a harmony with Gurumayi. This catapulted me even further into an ecstatic feeling of bliss and joyous rapture. Gurumayi then looked straight into the camera during the response of the chant and said the word, “Happy”. (I thought that was close enough for me to receive it as a secret ‘Happy Birthday’ wish, direct from my beloved Gurumayi, live via satellite from half way across the world.)

At one point in the chant it built to a fantastic crescendo and in an instant I was enveloped with an exhilarating feeling that found expression with the powerful words, *“I am triumphant! I am triumphant!”*

These words rose up from within my being and reverberated with enormous strength and celebration. Simultaneously I saw a stream of brilliant colours and light rise up around me, the colours of the intensive from the New Years message, deep blues and greens. This light seemed to form a crown-like shape as it radiated upward all around me. It was very beautiful and somehow it felt like it was all a part of the ‘new’ me.

At that moment I realised I would never be the same again. I also knew I now had to live up to this ‘new me’. I felt tasked to demonstrate and express the grandeur of this experience with absolute vigilance, dedication and discipline. It felt both like an enormous challenge and a wondrous blessing at the same time.

I also noticed that the main colours in the intensive were the same colours I had used to decorate my room in the ashram over the last four months. I first noticed this when I saw the painting for the New Year’s message and it was almost the exact replication of a beautiful handcrafted and hand-painted, silk doona cover, which I had made more than 12 months ago. I had this stacked away in my drawer until I finally decided to use it and placed it on my bed in early December, just before Gurumayi’s New Year’s message.

The other colours of deep blues, greens and orange seemed to replicate the exact visual and setting used in the intensive with Gurumayi in her orange robes in front of the blue and green background in the Universal Hall in California, USA. My room now takes me back to this experience in the intensive so much more powerfully because the colour combinations were so vividly similar. They seem to invoke the same vibration and feeling as the setting used for Gurumayi in the intensive.

Towards the end of the chant I felt inspired to continue my spiritual practice of silence in the ashram for the next 11 days in honour of this experience.



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It was certainly another extraordinary birthday to remember thanks to the grace and blessings of my beloved Gurumayi.

Vajra Sattva

I remained in silence in the ashram for 11 days. I attended meetings and everyone supported my decision to be in silence. I enjoyed the discipline of having to be very specific and frugal with choosing what and when to communicate by writing or gestures. I was also a little bemused with the response of some people. They would start whispering or be apologetic for making a sound. It was interesting to see how my silence made others aware of their level of 'sound'.

On the 6th of April, 2002 I was driving back to the ashram when I decided to stop to do some window-shopping. I discovered a beautiful Indian artifact shop. It was full of exquisite statues, jewelry and things. I was drawn to a gold and silver statue, the 'Vajra Sattva'. It was captivating and I couldn't stop looking at it. It was quite expensive so I decided to just buy some oils and music CD's.

I ended my silence a week later, on the 12th of April, 2002, and I returned to the Indian shop the following day. I asked the shop-keeper what the statue represented but he suggested I come back during the week when his son would be in and he could answer all my questions.

I dropped in the next day and spoke to the owner. He told me of that he had found the Vajra Sattva in Nepal. He explained how the artistry of portraying the expression on the face was very important; the ability to capture the essence of the being and meaning represented by the Vajra Sattva. He showed me the description of the meaning and I became more intrigued and drawn to the statue. Especially as it felt linked to the next stages of the Quantum Thinking Institute and the book.

I decided to contemplate a little more about whether I should buy it or not.

The next day, 16th of April, 2002 I couldn't get the beauty of the expression and the exquisite flowing shapes of the statue and its beautiful craftsmanship in gold and silver out of my mind. I dropped into the shop on my way home from the office again and decided to buy it. The shopkeeper gave me a number of books with explanations about the background to the Vajra Sattva statuette.

When I got home I placed the statuette under the window, directly opposite my puja. It looked perfect. I had a meeting with Paul Harvey regarding the colours for the book, '*Good God I Know I am – Only Love Matters*' (*) in a short while. It felt significant that the statuette had appeared for this meeting in my room.

Paul finally arrived and we had a very powerful connection and discussion around the purpose and intention of the image for the book. We had a very deep discussion and Paul seemed to be truly tuning in well to what I was after.



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He got very excited about working on refining the image. We wanted to ensure it captured the essence of the power I had inwardly sensed over the years.

The next day I read more about the Vajra Sattva and discovered it is the Bodhisattva of purification and represents the purity of awareness or ultimate reality, blazing in the glory of perfect form and symmetry. One arm holds a Vajra to his heart and another has a bell to his left hip. A Vajra is the thunderbolt or diamond that destroys all kinds of ignorance and itself is indestructible. The Vajra symbolises the masculine principle held in the right hand and the bell symbolises the feminine aspect, held in the left hand. The bell stands for wisdom. The bell and Vajra are inseparable ritual objects and together lead to enlightenment.

After reading all of this for some unknown reason I intuitively started playing with some of my spot lamps and experimenting with using them to highlight some the features in my room. I placed one over the Vajra Sattva and it felt it was immediately enlivened and illuminated with its gold and silver features shimmering and radiating luminously, captivating with its soft, flowing shapes and power.

I placed another light over the main puja picture of Gurumayi directly opposite the statue on the other wall. I started shifting items on my puja and I placed the large diamond crystal directly in front of the picture of Gurumayi. When I turned on the light above the diamond instantly these radiating streams of light appeared up on the wall behind the puja radiating from the picture of Gurumayi. They were in perfect symmetry surrounding Gurumayi's picture. It was just too beautiful for words and almost unbelievably enchanting in its simplistic, magical, majestic lighting effect.

It seemed the Vajra Sattva had awakened and empowered the diamond on the puja in front of Gurumayi and they were now linked across the room from one and the same source of power. The connection to the book, "Good God I know I am: *Only love matters*", with its main feature, a diamond; the Vajra Sattva having the literal meaning of 'pure diamond' and the diamond crystal in front of Gurumayi becoming enlivened with a radiance of emanating light, was just too amazing to contemplate. It felt so inspired and full of grace.

I lit some candles to do puja (worship). I turned to the Vajra Sattva statuette to wave the light of the candle and as I looked directly at the statuette I was immediately engulfed with a powerful radiance of energy emanating from the Vajra Sattva. It literally knocked me off balance with the enormity of its strength, yet it was indescribably subtle and gentle. I was overwhelmed and completely taken aback by the sheer awesome power I felt coming from the Vajra Sattva. It was almost too much to encompass and I had to compose myself to remain steady. Yet at the same time it was totally exhilarating, full of love and purity.

I felt the statuette had become a magnetic, vitalised and energised talisman of my inner Self, a pure diamond. It felt it had come to me as a true and magnificent gift of grace. *I now needed to unlock its secrets from within myself.*



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I also sensed the statuette had become intrinsically linked to the book, “Good God I know I am: *Only love matters*”. I also felt that the deity, Vajra Sattva had been installed as the overseeing and guiding Deva or Angel of the book.

I completed my puja and decided to journal this experience as an Epilogue to these darshan experiences.

Once again I was eternally grateful for these experiences of grace; *just perfect*.

Letting Go - 21st April 2002

At precisely 5.55pm I had an unexpected experience.

I was working on the ‘Quantum Thinking Institute’ presentation on my computer. I created a link to the data file of darshan experiences. Without thinking, I inadvertently deleted the entire data file. I had just written up of the previous powerful inner experience. I realised it was not in any backups and I knew I just wouldn’t be able to recapture the descriptions I had used when they were fresh in my mind. Plus there were changes I had made in the document, which I knew I couldn’t retrace.

As I slowly realised what I had done I felt a surreal experience of absolute painful panic starting to arise from the pit of my stomach! At first I caught this feeling in its tracks and stayed calm, as I could not believe it was possible that I had lost all that I had written. I methodically thought through all the possible options of reinstating the file. As each option dissolved one by one I slowly accepted the fact I wouldn’t be able to recapture the words again and I had lost the record of one of the most precious and important experience in my life. For some reason I felt an enormous sense of loss and started crying tears of utter loss. I felt like a huge part of me had just died. (In retrospect, I was a little surprised with the overwhelming strength of this emotional response).

After some time the thought arose in my head that everything has a purpose behind it and it was God’s will. I was obviously not meant to hang onto these experiences and sensed an acceptance within me of what had happened. In the next moment, I looked down at my computer and saw that I had saved a copy of this file the night before because I wanted to change its name. (I had only lost a small amount of editing and a few additions after all). The relief was incredible!

I contemplated the power of letting go. It seemed only when I accepted the situation exactly as it was, then the problem dissolved. I had experienced the power of this approach to problems throughout my life. I knew a part of me that I no longer needed had been set free. The strong emotions had been part of this release.

I thought, the Lord works in mysterious ways.



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PRASAD Australia

In November 2002, I became a director on the board of PRASAD Australia. The board chose to focus on supporting two main projects in the Tansa Valley in India

Watershed Development Project

Watershed management implies the wise use of soil, water and vegetation of a watershed to obtain production with minimum hazard to the natural resources. Watershed management aims to improve the standard of living by increasing earning capacity through offering all facilities required for optimum production.

Maternal Child Health Program

The Maternal Child Health Program began in 2002 with aim to ensure well being and reduced mortality rates of mothers and children in the Tansa Valley. It operates 6 days per week and provides care and education to pregnant women, women of child-bearing age, teenagers (boys & girls), infants, and children up to the age of five.

Living in the Ashram – 2003 to 2004

On the 7th February 2004 I submitted another proposal to the management regarding holding ashram retreats. I had put forward these proposals in April 1996 and again in May 1997 for a “Live-in Weekend” or retreat in the ashram.

In September 1997 we commenced regular “Ashram Weekend Retreats” as part of our annual calendar program. This weekend retreat focused on following and honouring the ashram schedule as created by Baba Muktananda. The ashram schedule has been referred to as “*Baba’s Masterpiece*” by Gurumayi. It was intended to provide ongoing monthly retreats to support the community.

I have always felt there is a great deal of potential in continuing to further maximise the great benefits of these Sydney Ashram Weekend Retreats within the Siddha Yoga community and the wider community in the Asia Pacific region.

I felt that these retreats could provide an excellent opportunity of creating a real focus to give a powerful boost to one’s sadhana. I also believed that they could also be used as a great support to the main annual teachings emphasis, namely:

1. New year’s Message as centre theme for study
2. Preparing for Intensives – alignment



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3. Encouraging one another to contemplate and study.
4. Preparing for the regional retreat and also for post-retreat support for taking personal responsibility for ongoing study.

Spiritual Centre of Power

I knew it was a great privilege to live in the ashram. It is a holy sacred place and a spiritual centre for the incoming and outpouring of the Guru's Grace. Baba says, *"The purer the visitors and residents of an ashram, the greater the manifestation of its power."* We are reminded of Baba's words from Ashram Dharma that says, *"The character of any place is constantly remoulded by the actions of its inhabitants."* This is an auspicious responsibility that should be continually reflected on by anyone who visits or lives in the ashram.

Baba also says, *"The more one follows the discipline of a sacred place, the higher will one rise, the more intense will be one's longing for God."*

My proposal for ashram weekend retreats proposed the following goals:

1. To have a more effective, consistent way of attracting new sevites?
2. To generate more enthusiastic, long-term sevites?
3. To be able to plan ahead for large seva projects?
4. To create a deeper, clearer and fuller understanding to new-comers around the purpose and role of the ashram?
5. To Create a more inspiring way of attracting "great-timers" to do seva in the ashram that is also more appropriate to their needs?

Seva Projects

Over the next two and a half years my family, spiritual practices, ashram seva projects, PRASAD Australia and business became a primary focus of my activities. I started to spend most days working outside the ashram. The ashram was the 'social life' component of my overall life. It provided my inner sustenance and nourishment for all of my outer activities.

A significant focus for me during 2003 occurred within a special seva project concerned with reviewing the operation of food services. This was done in my capacity as part of the Business Review Team. This ultimately resulted in the formation of a systematic process for developing a plan of action for what became called the 'Annyashakti' (the divine energy of food) team. The team produced a report on the 31 March 2003 for management consideration and approval for implementation. (See Item 2, Appendix 2)

The report proposed to facilitate the optimal operation, function and role of food services be created as a model that deals with the minimum and maximum number of people to feed, ranging from resident meals on the Micro level to organised retreats on the Macro level.

- Om Guru Om -



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- i) It was proposed to establish three layers of management for the operational implementations of Stage Two, based on the completion of Stage One, namely:
 - A Business Review Team
 - A Project Management Food Services Team
 - A Food Services Satsang Team
- ii) The Project Management Food Services Team in conjunction with the Teachings Satsang Team would develop strategies for shifting the culture and expectation towards seva of the community in the ashram.
- iii) The stage two of the proposal is tailored to cater for efficiency in running retreats.

In May, the National Manager produced a report regarding the progress of the project to date, which was also sent to Swami Apoorananda in Shree Muktananda Ashram for their information. (See Item 3, Appendix 2)

We created three teams to oversee Food Services:

- The Business Review Team - had the highest outlook, it aimed at identifying the ashrams business units and making them more profitable
- The project management team managed the roll-out of a Food Services strategy produced by the Business Review Team
- Food Services Satsang team performed the actual supervision of kitchen seva and rostering.

This powerful combination of teams allowed many new sevites to step into the FS area and to build new systems. The team wrote a food code, meal plans and explored new ways to handle the rosters. There were also links with the Satsang teams to include Food Services in the development of satsang content.

On the 14th September 2003 a special event was held for everyone who had ever been involved with food services in the ashram. It was a great coming together of everyone that had been involved in food services over the years. A very large, beautiful mural was produced for the kitchen along with the formalisation of the food code and dharma relating to the preparation of food in the kitchen. A special ceremony was performed to honour everyone and the divine energy of food, followed by a morning tea of delicious goodies.





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As we were preparing for implementation of our next stage in 2004 the managers decided to enter into a “pause and reflect” period for the overall operation of the ashram. The project was subsequently put on hold and unfortunately has not been reactivated.

The Tradition of Gifts

I continued the tradition of sending a gift to Gurumayi for her birthday.. This became a very tangible and practical way of feeling a physical connection with Gurumayi. It acted as an alternate to the joy of spending time with Gurumayi in her physical form. However I knew that the reality was that the inner form of the Guru, which resides so palpably and tangibly at the ashram was always available at the ashram to partake in and experience.

In 2002, I sent Gurumayi a DVD of the Sydney Ashram 20th Birthday celebrations, with a musical piece that I had composed. Her letter stated, “*Gurumayi sends you her blessings. May your life be filled with the abundance of God’s grace.*” The message for this year was, “Abide in Silence.”

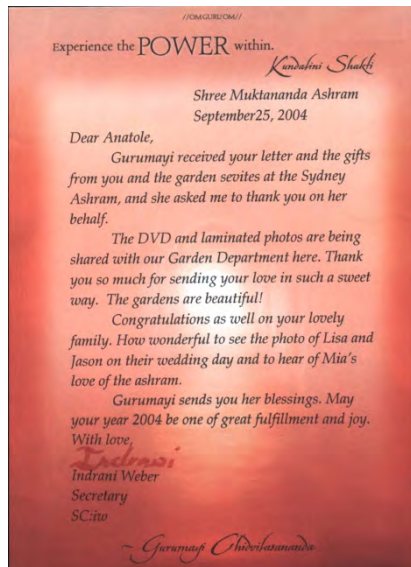
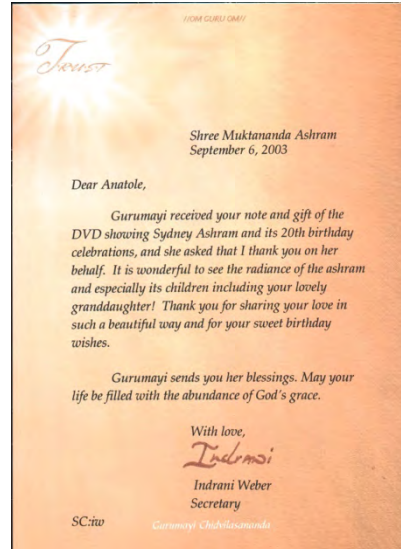
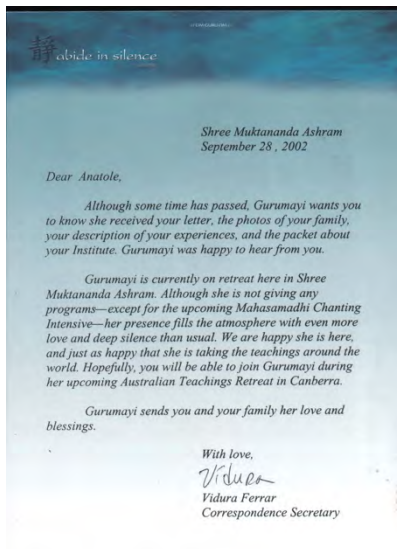
In 2003, I received another letter saying, “*Gurumayi wants you to know she received your letter, the photos of your family, your description of your experiences, and the packet about the Institute. Gurumayi was happy to hear from you. Gurumayi sends you and your family her love and blessings.*” The message for 2003 was “Trust”.



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In 2004, the message was “Experience the Power within. Kundalini Shakti.” I sent Gurumayi photos of my daughter’s wedding, with my grand-daughter as flower girl, plus a DVD of the Sydney ashram gardens underscored with a musical piece played by Swami Dharmananda on the Shakahuchi flute, and her letter stated, “Gurumayi received your letter and the gifts from you and the garden sevites at the Sydney Ashram and she asked me to thank you on her behalf... Gurumayi sends you her blessings. “”



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As highlighted in my last letter to Gurumayi, another great joy in my life was introducing my grand-daughter to the ashram. Mia loved the ashram from the first day she was there. She loved coming over regularly and staying in the ashram.

A Culture of Seva

I produced a discussion paper to stimulate interest in creating a new model for holding retreats at the ashram and creating a culture of seva. (See Item 4, Appendix 2)

Leaving the Sydney Ashram

I lived in the Sydney ashram for more than 10 years. I attended satsang every week for around three years, prior to moving into the ashram. I was totally committed to my Guru, the mission of Siddha Yoga and the spiritual practices of Siddha Yoga. I have felt really blessed and honoured to have lived in the ashram over this time.

My last day as an ashram resident was on the 19th December, 2004.

- Om Guru Om -



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Living in the Ashram

A personal journey along a spiritual path



APPENDIX 1

“The Guru Gita: An Inner View”

A Sacred Ceremony of Grace

- 1 -

The Guru Gita: *An Inner View*

A Sacred Ceremony of Grace

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A Short Treatise

"Sri Guru Gita -- An Inner View"



Kundalini Devi "The Kingdom of the Gods" by Geoffrey Hodson, 1952. (*) See page 10 below.

A Sacred Ceremony of Shaktipat Initiation

Draft

2 January 1998



DRAFT ONLY

Introduction

This short treatise on Sri Guru Gita explores a metaphysical perspective on the practice of reciting and chanting this sacred text. It is examined from a metaphysical point of view as a supremely sacred and powerful ceremony for providing shaktipat initiation. (Shaktipat literally means the 'descent of grace'.) This ceremony has the power to initiate the awakening of the kundalini energy by the Guru. (It includes the ancient verses of the Guru Gita and a number of other inter-related chants.)

The treatise is based on the experiences and observations occurred primarily towards the end of 1996, after chanting the Guru Gita every morning for most of that year while living in the Sydney Siddha Yoga Meditation ashram. It is without doubt the single greatest contributing factor to everything joyful, good and positive in my life!

The main scriptural text of Siddha Yoga is the Guru Gita, or "Song of the Guru" which explores in 181 verses the nature of the universal teacher and of the guru-disciple relationship. While it is thought to have been originally drawn from several ancient scriptural sources, the Guru Gita was introduced to Westerners by Swami Muktananda Paramahansa in 1972 as part of the ashram schedule in Gurudev Siddha Peeth, the mother ashram of Siddha Yoga near Ganeshpuri, India. Swami Muktananda, or Baba, had chanted the Guru Gita privately for many years and is credited with bringing it out of obscurity.

In "The Nectar of Chanting" he wrote;

"If anyone were to ask me which is the one indispensable text, I would answer, 'The Guru Gita.' This is so supremely holy that it makes the ignorant learned, the destitute wealthy and the scholarly fully realized. The Guru Gita is a supreme song of Shiva, of salvation. It is a veritable ocean of bliss in this world. It encompasses the science of the absolute, the yoga of the Self. It gives vitality to life. It is a harmonious composition; its 182 stanzas in varied verse patterns beautifully describe the importance of devotion to the Guru, his role, his nature and his distinguishing characteristics. If a person who is devoted to the Guru sings this song, he easily attains all powers, realizations and knowledge, fulfilling the aim of yoga".

Baba's successor in the Siddha lineage is Swami Chidvilasananda, known as Gurumayi. Gurumayi has continued the tradition Baba began and the Guru Gita is now chanted every day in Siddha Yoga Meditation ashrams throughout the world, as well as in countless homes and chanting groups.

All over the planet, Siddha Yoga students chant the Guru Gita. Wherever it is chanted, Sri Guru Gita automatically bestows its blessings.

Anatole Kononewsky, 2 January 1998



The Spiritual Power of the Sri Guru Gita

In essence, I believe that during the Ceremony of Sri Guru Gita we:

1. Invoke the actual subtle presence of the Guru via the mantra of 183 verses, the “Sound-Body” of the Guru.
2. In verse 120 we also invoke the powerful presence of the Kundalini devi.
3. Then we invoke the power inherent in the word, “Shaktipat” during the last verse of the Sadguru Ki Arati.

This is supported by the purity and intent of our singing, these inner energies under the direction of the inner Guru stimulate spiritual awakening to anyone ready and open to receive it.

Overall the three primary purposes for participating in the ceremony of Sri Guru Gita, of which the Sri Guru Gita text is the fundamental foundation, are:

1. Most importantly, a hitherto largely unexplained purpose of the ceremony of the Guru Gita, invokes the descent of grace or shaktipat, which awakens the inner kundalini energy that exists in every one of us. This is potentially the most extraordinary and profound legacy initiated by the Siddha or Shaktipat Guru, Swami Muktananda.
2. To generate a powerful, beneficent outpouring of *shakti*, or spiritual energy, for the upliftment of life. This benediction from the Guru is similar in many ways to the ceremony of the Holy Eucharist instigated by the Christ through the master Jesus.

“The entire ceremony of the Holy Eucharist may from this point of view be regarded as the construction and utilization of a magnificent machine for the liberation of force, and its direction for the helping of the world...” pg 14 C.W. Leadbeater

“Science of the Sacraments” Its main objective “...is to offer an opportunity for an especial downpouring of divine force from the very highest levels, and to provide such a vehicle for that force as may enable those Angel-helpers to use it for definite purposes in our physical world...” pg 15 C.W. Leadbeater “Science of the Sacraments”

3. To attune, align, strengthen, empower and hasten the development of the vehicles, which form our personality, for the use and manifestation of the inner Self. This is effectively achieved via the concentration and focus of our thoughts, desires and actions (words) on the specific sacred mantric syllables and our active participation in the entire ceremony.

When the Guru Gita is "sounded out" with purity, accuracy, and clear intent, we have the potential to evoke its full power. Inherent within this magical and mystical mantra is the manifesting of the subtle presence, or the sound-body, of the Guru, which is none other than our own inner Self. In fact, the Guru Gita itself is often referred to as the “sound-body” of the Guru.



The true power of chanting the Guru Gita comes from creating the subtle, or etheric, presence of the Guru wherever and whenever it is sung. This power is greatly increased when the Guru Gita is chanted with love and devotion.

Shaktipat Awakening

In my experience, the Guru Gita ceremony has the potential to produce the equivalent effect of the *shaktipat* awakening given in the meditation intensive designed by Swami Muktananda. Shaktipat refers to the “descent of the shakti”, an awakening by the Guru of the dormant kundalini energy within us. The shakti, or energy, fully activated and alive within the Siddha Guru, serves to spontaneously kindle our dormant, divine energy. This is dependent on various conditions being present in the intent, attitude and receptivity of the participants. It seems to me that the *sankalpa*, or will, of the Guru is to have the formal receipt of shaktipat within the context of the Intensive, and yet, the Guru Gita has the capacity inherent within its design to fulfill this same function.

The Guru’s will, no doubt, clearly determines the appropriateness and timing for all these things. Sri Guru Gita contains all the ingredients, from a ceremonial point of view, for initiating shaktipat if the participant is ready. I use the term ceremonial in the context of invoking spiritual light beings (see below) or Devas to work in co-operation with humanity for the highest good and for manifestation of the Guru’s will.

The Inner World

The mechanism for opening a door to the energies of higher worlds to flow into our physical world can be facilitated via an unselfish thought or a word of affection to another. It provides a temporary channel through which the force of those higher worlds can descend to the lower and allow things to be accomplished that otherwise may not have been achieved, for the upliftment of the planet. This entire mechanism is greatly enhanced through group effort. When there is a united, coordinated and aligned effort of a group, without any thought of personal gain or reward, the opportunity and ability to open up a channel for an enormous outpouring of spiritual energy is immense. (See Appendix.)



THE CEREMONY OF THE GURU GITA

This section describes an intuitive account of the overall ceremony of the Guru Gita. It is divided into six sections and these are related to each of the different texts chanted in the ceremony of the Guru Gita. I discovered that the overall chant is a well-orchestrated ceremony, or ritual, with profound ramifications. It revealed a scientific basis for the great power attributed to it.

The six specific parts each have their own function in the overall ceremony.

Over a period of time I also observed that there are a number of highly significant events which occur during the third and fourth sections. I believe the following experiences, which primarily occurred during 1996, are only the proverbial “tip of the iceberg” and the beginning of a far deeper understanding which I feel will inevitably reveal a glorious reality beyond anything currently imagined.

I hope the following exploration, with its basic observations and understandings, throws the first glimmer of light on this reality.

An Experience

In 1996 I decided to chant the Guru Gita every morning without fail, from start to finish, as my main spiritual practice while living in the Sydney ashram. By the end of 1996 I started to have glimpses of a deeper, inner understanding of the Guru Gita, and more importantly, to directly experience more of its “invisible” aspects.

While chanting one morning I found myself having a very interesting experience with a particular line, which is repeated in quite a number of verses in the main text. The line is “*tasmai srigurave namah*” which literally means “salutations to the Guru.” What I sensed was a brilliant explosion of light coming from within each person participating in the chant. It was as if the Guru or inner Self residing within everyone was being praised and these words evoked this response from within each of us as we sang them out. This explosion of energy added to the beauty and power that was evoked and collected by the presiding angel in building the “temple” of this ritual. It became obvious to me that this explosion was a result of the actual essence inherent within the meaning of this particular line. Since the Guru lives within each of us, the offering of our salutations to the Guru in the phrase “*tasmai srigurave namah*” naturally results in praising our own inner Self.

The effect of the atmosphere generated during the Guru Gita is profound and the benefit of just being in the surrounding area, let alone inside the Ashram itself, is immense. Yet to actively participate by providing the thought, emotional and etheric energies, through concentrated focus and one-pointedness, provides tremendous stimulation to the mental, astral and physical bodies. Every word creates a vibration or “form” corresponding to a particular colour at each level of thought, desire and etheric vibration and provides the means of adding to the service and work of the devas who joyfully participate in furthering the evolution of humanity and life on our planet.



Stage One: Invocation of the Presiding Deva

The Guru Gita ceremony begins with the invocation of the presence of the presiding great deva or angel. “*Om asya srigrugita-strotra-mantrasya Bhagavan sadasiva rsih.*” Om. Lord Sadshiva is the seer of the mantras of this hymn, Shri Guru Gita. “Nectar of Chanting”, Page 6.

In my experience, this entity seems to turn its attention to the proceedings immediately the first words are sounded as the overall chant commences. This result is produced with a very specific invocation. The importance of being in the room at the time of this invocation is that it seems to literally “plug you in” to the beingness of this presiding angel. This prepares us perfectly to gain the maximum benefit from the chant and, more importantly, enables us to be of maximum service in giving our own energy to the overall process and purpose of the ceremony.

I began to experience this presiding angel as an extraordinarily beautiful and powerful presence that “supervises” the energies of the entire ritual. This angel is very much related to the energy of the kundalini devi.

Straight after the invocation there is a short chant, performed in call and response fashion. This seems to serve the purpose of collecting the thoughts of those involved and starting the process of alignment of their personality vehicles through the synchronisation of our voices.

The personality consists of three aspects that express themselves through their respective bodies; the mental body, desire/emotional (astral) body and the etheric/physical body. These three bodies, while maintaining their distinct and independent qualities and functions, are integrated and interrelated to make up our personality. The blending and uniting of our voices begin the necessary alignment for our preparation for their involvement and active participation in the various sections of the overall ceremony.

This chanting in unison has a powerful impact, especially at the etheric levels of the physical plane. Sounds can have transformational power, particularly when they are high vibratory sounds and when a focused group chants in unison.

Alice A. Bailey says of the sacred sound ‘Om’,

“...sounded forth, with intent thought behind it, acts as a disturber, a loosener of the coarse matter of the body of thought, of emotions, and of the physical body. When sounded forth with intense spiritual aspiration behind it, it acts as an attractive medium, and gathers in particles of pure matter to fill the places of those earlier thrown out.”

“A Treatise on White Magic or the Way of the Disciple” by
Alice A. Bailey, 1934 p.140 Lucis Publishing Company.

We can now see the need for great care and conscious choice in what we “sound forth”. There is tremendous advantage in actively participating in chanting sacred vibratory names. When sound is invoked through the instrument of voice, this directly effects the etheric physical levels. When that sound is backed up with love, aspiration and clarity, tremendous power is added to the effects of the sound.



Stage Two: *Honouring the Knowledge of the Guru*

The second part of the Guru Gita specifically evokes the Guru's wisdom or knowledge. This is done with a chant honouring the Guru's sandals, which symbolically represent the seat of true knowledge and are of profound significance in attaining spiritual liberation. The feet of the Guru are regarded as sacred.

“Siddha Yoga holds that the inner guru's 'sandals' or 'feet' themselves contain the liberating power of the mantra. The inner sandals and feet are not physical objects, but rather manifestations of the guru's energy in the subtle body.”

“Meditation Revolution; A History and Theology of the Siddha
Yoga Lineage” William K, Mahony, 1997, page 270.

This part of the chant also acknowledges the power of the Guru within us and praises the mantra, the guru and our inner Self as one.

Stage Three: *The “Sound-Body” of the Guru*

The third, and major, section is sung in alternating fashion between the women and men. (I believe this is only for logistic reasons in sharing the amount of verses to be sung at any one time. It is a very powerful experience to chant all the verses oneself. However, I am sure it creates a very useful blend of feminine and masculine energies on the subtle, finer levels in the super physical worlds). This is the text of the Guru Gita, which involves the etheric creation of the Guru's actual presence. The presiding angel uses the energies of love and devotion at the mental, astral and etheric levels to create a beautiful, sacred inner temple, or vessel, of delicate and ethereal beauty. The text comprises of 183 verses. Verse 120 includes the invocation of the kundalini shakti within the presiding devi or angel. It seems to create a connection within us with this extraordinary energy in preparation for a very significant event in the next part of the overall ceremony. This event is predicated by the profound blessings of the etheric manifestation of the awesome power of the Guru principle in our midst.

During this section I have a sense of a sublimely beautiful and intricate cascade of crystalline shapes of quite ephemeral hues, being delicately built to form a solid expression of the Guru's presence. As the participants in the chant are singing, every sound becomes an integral part of this structure and the quality of the devotion of each devotee adds the “cement” or bonding to give depth and strength to this temple of love. The ability of participants to maintain an uninterrupted focus adds their mental power to the substance of this structure. Hence the importance of maintaining an inner and outer stillness while chanting the Guru Gita. Physical and mental movements disturb the profound activity of the devic energies building this glorious edifice, constructed in honour of the Guru presence which is being directly and consciously evoked during this part of the ceremony.



Stage Four: *Grace Bestowing Power of the Guru*

After the main body of text is completed, the fourth part of the ceremony provides the crescendo. In this section we are honouring the actual manifested etheric presence of the Guru, brought about by the power of the chanting just completed. A light is waved in front of the symbolic seat of the Guru and the presiding angel uses this time to gather the focus of love and devotional energies into itself, in preparation for channeling back a response a little later on. In the last verse of this section there is an enormous response and outpouring via the presiding deva and in conjunction with the Kundalini Devi, who represents an aspect of the Guru.

This response comes from the inner Guru principle, the true Guru. The response is designed to awaken the shakti within those present, commensurate with the accumulated energy generated by the group during the chant. I experience an enormous, far-reaching explosion of devotional and love energy that seems to influence the entire surrounding neighbourhood and city, depending on the efforts of the actual chanters. While this response is powerful even if there are only small numbers, it is exponentially increased as more participate in this spiritual ceremony. The last verse in this section is particularly powerful and it seems to me that it delivers the equivalent, as extraordinary as this may be, of the “shaktipat” experience given during the Intensive devised by Baba Muktananda.

This effectively means that the Guru has provided the means of awakening and further stimulating the kundalini energy in sincere seekers. It seems the benefits of this gift are directly proportional to the level of dedicated and focused participation in the chanting. This is further fueled by our love and devotion.

“Baba (Muktananda) says that the Guru Gita is itself the Guru, that it has the same grace bestowing power as the Guru.” Shree Gurudev Vani 1977 Vol 14, page 13

- Om Guru Om -



Darshan & Sadhana

Living in the Ashram

A personal journey along a spiritual path



DRAFT ONLY



Kundalini Devi “The Kingdom of the Gods” by Geoffrey Hodson, 1952 (*)



(*) The Kundalini devi

During Gurumayi's visit to Melbourne, Australia, at the end of the Darshan on Monday, 22 April 1991 in the evening, my eyes were transfixed on the Guru as she got up to leave. My whole being followed her intently as she started to walk straight towards me. As she walked by me she gently tapped me with her left hand, twice on my left arm, as if to acknowledge the level of my devotion and excitement about being in her presence. It was a beautiful touch, (excuse my pun), to the end of the evening program. I felt very much at peace by the Guru's simple gesture and a sense of a deepening connection with this strangely, yet beautifully extraordinary person.

A Special Meeting

On the 23 April 1991 I attended the program once again with a friend (Andy Walsh) who I placed at the aisle seat, based on my previous strategy for the end of Darshan.

Quite unexpectedly my friend was auspiciously taken up by the Guru and lead out to the back with her. Namely, as she walked out at the end of the program she reached out her hand to him and literally picked him up by lifting him out of the chair and taking him out the back.

In a few minutes I was also invited back as well. My friend is six foot two and 'four' feet wide, said he felt like he was 'floating' as he walked out.

Kundalini devi ~ "Seeing the Invisible" Presentation

As I walked through the door to where I saw Gurumayi standing with my friend, Gurumayi asked what I was carrying? I informed her it was the presentation on a program I was developing called "Seeing the Invisible".

Gurumayi gestured to be shown. Someone reached out to hold the album with both hands while Gurumayi turned the pages.

She started looking at the presentation which I told her it included clairvoyant observations of Angelic Beings and Deva. Gurumayi looked at each page, and noted with interest, as she came to the drawing of the Kundalini Devi.



I feel that the overall purpose of the ceremony of the Guru Gita is not only to invoke the presence of the actual Guru in etheric form but to give Shaktipat through the grace bestowing power of the Guru. Baba says;

'It (the Guru Gita) is most sacred. It is the Guru himself. The Guru Gita is the supreme knowledge which gives liberation. It is the easy way to attain God in this present age.'

Shree Gurudev Vani 1977 Vol 14, page 17.

Swadhyaya, which is the practice of chanting sacred texts, was said by Baba to increase our "...inner radiance, mental vigor and agility." Baba continues on to say that, "Swadhyaya embraces all aspects of yoga... Such practice of swadhyaya includes mastery of a posture (asana), a pose (mudra), gazing at a fixed point (trataka) and one pointedness of mind (dhyana)..."

Then Baba says, "This is concentration of high order, since all mental energy is collected and directed toward mantras - reciting, hearing and seeing them." And finally, Baba says, "One then enjoys the flow of love released by the mantras."

The spiritual ceremony of the Guru Gita revolves around the sublime, yet supremely simple premise of verse 100 within the Guru Gita, which states:

"The essential nature of everything is worthy of being known. It is said that the mind is knowledge (because knowledge is obtained through the mind). One should consider knowledge to be identical with the object of the knowledge. There is no way other than that (to liberation)." Guru Gita, Verse 100.

This verse is saying that our focus on the innately creative and manifesting power of the mind or "knowledge" creates an identification with that knowledge, and thus provides the means by which we can achieve the full realisation of the goal of liberation.

In other words, through the one-pointed focus of swadhyaya, of chanting the Guru Gita, we are identifying or aligning ourselves with the vibratory or energetic state of the Guru. And since this is the essence and actual presence of the Guru, we are following the easiest, most effective path for attaining the state of liberation already attained by the Guru.

The last line of the Guru Gita text states, 'This is offered at the feet Shri Gurudeva.' This is saying that we have evoked the presence of the Guru, via the chanting of the entire Guru Gita text. To end this great Mantra, we now surrender or offer our efforts and ourselves to the knowledge and wisdom of the great Deva of the Guru - the presiding Deity of this great sacred ceremony. The feet of the Guru, as previously stated, represent this wisdom and knowledge.



Summary

We therefore create the sound-body of the Guru with the Mantra of the entire Guru Gita text, which also includes the invoking of the presence and power of the Kundalini Devi. And then finally we invoke the power Shaktipat in the last verse of Sadguru Ki Arati with the word “Shaktipat”.

This is by virtue of the fact that “*knowledge to be identical with the object of the knowledge*” or the power of is within the statement or mantrika shakti of the actual word “Shaktipat”.

Over all this time, I have grown to believe that the Guru Gita revolves around the sublime, yet supremely simple premise of verse 100 within the Guru Gita. What I feel this verse is essentially saying, is that knowledge and form are two sides of the one coin, namely, knowledge is inseparable from the object of that knowledge.

In addition, since the Guru Gita literally means the ‘song of the Guru’ or the ‘sound body’ of the Guru then the Guru Gita, is in fact, the mantric sound vibration that invokes the presence of the true Guru or our innate inner higher Self, (these being one and the same thing). We therefore see that through the one-pointed focus of chanting of the Guru Gita we are effectively identifying or aligning with the vibratory, energetic state of the Guru or our inner Self. And since the Guru Gita is in essence, the actual presence or ‘sound-body’ of the Guru then chanting it basically provides an efficient and powerful path for attaining the sublime state of liberation of the Guru by invoking this energetic identification and alignment to our inner Self.

Stage Five: *Celebration of the Gods*

The fifth section is an exuberant celebration of the Guru’s presence with the invocation of many aspects of God. In this short but lively chant done in call and response fashion between the musicians and the audience, the participating devas continue sending forth their outpouring of blessings from the Guru to the community. This greatly enhances the radiating energies into the surrounding community and the wider distribution by these Devas and their helpers for supporting the uplifting of the world.

Stage Six: *Affirming our Unity with the Guru*

The sixth and final section of the ceremony concludes with a beautiful and very powerful affirmation of our perfection that arises out of the perfection of the Guru. We affirm our oneness with the presence of the Guru.



Epilogue

The Guru Gita is an amazing opportunity to cooperate with the devic energies and perform incredible service to ourselves, the world, and perhaps the entire universe. The Guru Gita is establishing and bringing the “thought form” of the Guru or inner Self into physical reality. I believe that anyone who has the chance to perform this ceremony is truly participating in God’s work, providing the highest service to humanity. As the thought form of the Guru is established and grounded in etheric physical levels, then the experience of the Guru becomes more and more accessible to anyone aspiring to experience their higher Self in that form. One of the main purposes of the Guru Gita is to manifest the Guru within you, as you.

Guru Gita Dharma

The Guru Gita has a clear *dharma*, or ‘right action’, providing a very definite method of chanting the text and protocols pertaining to leaving during the text. It seems to me that walking in or out during the text needs to be done with great awareness and sensitivity and with tremendous respect and reverence. The reason is primarily to do with the disturbance this may cause at etheric levels. If the person is very sensitive and respectful, then this is greatly minimised.

Another point applies, particularly for the sixth and final section. I remember reading that most of our results often come from the last little remaining part of our effort. This statement seems to have relevance to the last section of the Guru Gita. Leaving before the last small section of approximately two to three minutes, seems to me like walking out on most of the potential result by simply not putting in the last little remaining part of your effort. It’s like walking 1000 kilometres to a delicious gourmet feast and then not eating it when you get there.

On a practical note, a regular rhythm set by the harmonium player accompanying the chant - not too fast or slow - allows for a comfortable breathing pattern to be established and is an important ingredient in building the energy within this ceremony. It also supports a clear and complete pronunciation of the text to be maintained throughout the chant which affects the nature of the “forms” built on the superphysical levels. This enhances the power of this form and assists the creating of an enormous energy for uplifting humanity and life via the participation in this most sublime ceremony of service and grace.



APPENDIX

Inner World of Spirit

Kundalini Energy

Swami Muktananda was largely responsible for the re-instating of many of the ancient sacred ceremonies of India. These ceremonies were becoming lost in their tradition due to the lack of their practical application. In particular, the sacred tradition of the Yagna fire ceremony was under threat of being lost.

The nature of the yagna is described by Sri Vivek Godbole, a Brahmin priest, as follows,

“In order for everything to be gained in this universe, there must also be giving. We seek peace, we seek prosperity, we seek so many blessings in our lives. If we wish to gain such great gifts we must also give something great. This is why we have the fire sacrifice.”

Lakshmi - Narayana Ceremony Booklet.

The yagna is an outer manifestation of the internal ceremony related specifically to the awakening of the sacred kundalini fire within everyone of us. The yagna ceremony is performed under the auspicious blessings of Lord Agni. It is said when the fires are set alight for the start of the Yagna, it is a sign that the Lord has accepted our offerings on behalf of God.

“Agni controls not only the fires of the earth and rules the mental plane but he is definitely associated with the work of arousing the sacred fire, the kundalini.”

“A Treatise on White Magic or the Way of the Disciple”
by Alice A. Bailey, 1934 p390-391 Lucis Publishing Company.

This arousing of the sacred fire or awakening has hereto only been made available in rare instances and in very specific circumstances. It is a very sacred initiation of extraordinary ramifications for the unfolding of higher states of awareness and consciousness in the individual. As such, it is vital, in fact, this awakening of the kundalini energy is only possible at a physical level via the transmission of grace by a qualified meditation Master. Namely a true meditation Master or Guru that has been given the Power of Shaktipat. The power to awaken the Kundalini energy within the initiate. This power is only achieved through extraordinary and extensive preparations for this role.

This gift of Grace is very auspicious for humanity because as we begin to access the heart of love within us, everything becomes possible. We rediscover this inner Self as the source of all understanding and knowing. It is the natural mechanism within the make-up of a human being



which provides us the means to become truly Galactic Beings and join the “wider community’ of the Universe.

The fascinating thing is, what is beginning to be discovered by our leading scientists has been experienced by the great sages of the Ancient Wisdom for many thousands of years. In fact the scientific discoveries are verifying the 'invisible' processes of the spiritual journey we are all on - whether we are conscious of it or not. At this time in our evolution as a humanity we are being presented with a clear unprecedented choice to consciously participate in this journey.

Lord Agni oversees all applications of fire, and therefore heat, through hosts of Devas and nature spirits. If we examine the innate power of fire and heat at this time for civilisation to maintain the quality of life, *if not life itself*, we gain a deeper appreciation of the importance and availability of heat as it manifests through the devas and nature spirits who bring about the applications of fire and heat into being at a physical level from a metaphysical level. This is all under the overall direction and control of Lord Agni. It must be forever remembered, naught manifests at a physical level that doesn't have its source of manifestation at inner, metaphysical levels!

Science will begin to make major break-throughs in all their endeavours when this basic premise of understanding is recognised and applied to their explorations and applications! Fire is but the outward manifestation of an inner “fire” of illumination. Fire gives heat, and heat precipitates gestation, growth, expansion and consummation. All this gives subtle hints as to the true nature of the magnanimous energy that emanates from and through Lord Agni. The far reaching impact of Lord Agni's grace is wonderfully highlighted when we look at all the applications requiring heat that have become essential to the quality of our lives .

“...the denser forms of gaseous life, termed often salamanders, the elementals of the fire. These are directly under the control of the Lord Agni, Lord of the mental plane, and, in this mental age, we have the element of fire entering into the mechanics of living as never before. Eliminate the products which are controlled by heat and you will bring our civilisation to a stop; you will bring all means of transportation to an end and all modes of lighting; you would throw all manufactories into the discard. Basically again, these fiery lives, are found in all that burns, and in the warmth that holds all life formation on earth and causes the flourishing of all living things.”

“A Treatise on White Magic or the Way of the Disciple”
by Alice A. Bailey, 1934 p.389 Lucis Publishing Company.

In the West we refer to angels and nature spirits. We often talk about the spirit of a place or a thing or a person. In the Hindi language, and the more ancient Sanskrit, one word is used as an umbrella term for all the different spirits: *deva*. In Indian culture there is a deva for everything,



from a blade of grass, to the entire planet. Devas work both with thought and inspiration. There are devas of good communication, devas of justice and devas of religious ceremony. I use the word deva throughout the rest of this treatise to describe the invisible spirits that are involved in the chanting of the Guru Gita.

The creation of sound and music provides a wonderful illustration of how devas create form. It is the devic element which bridges vibrations into the form of sound. The invisible devic fabric takes the intention of sound and gives it form. (William Bloom.)

The Deva Kingdom

The primary role of devas is to provide a bridging link between the metaphysical and the physical. The deva kingdom is on a parallel evolutionary path with humanities. Nothing comes into physical reality, without the supervision and direct involvement of the devic kingdom. The sooner humanity understands and accepts this, the sooner we will be afforded tremendous opportunities for solving and healing many of our self-inflicted ills. However, there are very definite and strict guidelines under which this link can be consciously made. Much is dependent on the purity of our intent and purpose. In this arena, the "game" is played on God's terms and in these realms of endeavour there are no exceptions to the rules.

The devas participate in every conceivable area and level of manifestation of God's Universe and beyond, from stupendous cosmic heights to the smallest microscopic levels. They are waiting, with infinite patience, for the time when there will be closer, cooperative, conscious effort between the two streams of evolution. The devic kingdom works at a state of consciousness that is at one with the blueprint of God's plan. One particular class of devas work ceaselessly in the specific area of bringing forms into manifestation at a physical level.

The Manifestation of Form

The creative impulse for form to manifest at all levels of life can only exist in conjunction with the express direction of devic beings. All form comes into being through two inter-woven, inter-related interacting combinations of intelligent life; the impulse of will, directed from the essential nature of humanity and the instinctive, all-knowing bridging capacity of the deva kingdom, via their innate attunement to the perfect flow with which energy can manifest within form levels, according to God's plan.

Devic essence, having spiritual attunement with God's plan, and the quality of the dynamic, creative human impulse are the two cooperative parts needed to create everything that manifests at all levels of life. The implications of this are staggering and far-reaching.

The Goal of Liberation

The gift of the Guru Gita, initiated by Baba Muktananda, is immense in its ramifications for both present and future. Its simplicity, in relation to its potential outcomes, is stupendous. It is said to hold the key to self-realisation and liberation. In the Guru Gita it is stated:

“One whose goal is liberation should repeat it regularly. He attains the splendor of liberation. One who repeats it with the desire for enjoyment will, indeed, get the fruit of his wish.” Guru Gita, verse 150

Latent within the ceremony of the Guru Gita exists the power to evoke the mantric sounds which enable us to attain the ultimate goal. It is based in scientific and metaphysical soundness of meticulous beauty. The presiding deva of the overall ceremony plays a vital part, with the role of maintaining the integrity of the ceremony and maximising the benefits generated.

Ceremonial Devas of White Magic

Ceremonial devas are those beings who have become attracted to human beings during the course of their evolutionary journey. This may have occurred through their association with areas where prayer, meditation or holy rituals have occurred for long periods of time. For example, a deva may have spent time in an area where human beings were in the habit of meditation or praying and therefore may be drawn to work with humans in the future as the deva evolves.

There is an entire class of angels that work in the area of spiritual ceremonial service where humans are directly involved. Every spiritual ritual or ceremony invariably attracts their attention and involvement.

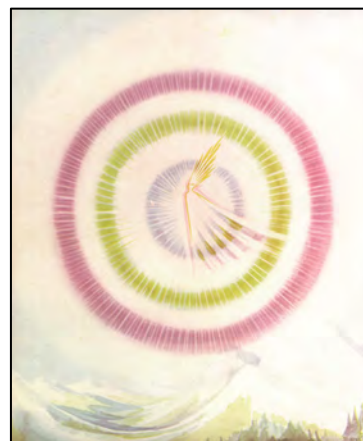
Many landscape devas, who reside near holy temples or places such as monasteries, churches, mosques, convents, sanctuaries or ashrams, may become attracted to the generation of devotional and aspirational energies. They also may become associated with human beings in the specific area of ritualistic and ceremonial *white magic*. This allows those worshippers who have *mastered the strict requirements of preparation* mentioned earlier to utilise these magnificent beings to *propagate their requirements* through various signs, mantric sounds and rituals.



A Mountain God



Lord of the Tree Ferns



God of a Snowclad Range

“The kingdom of the Gods” by Geoffrey Hodson 1952



The state of meditation in a human being is, by definition, a state whereby we are trying to bridge the illusionary gap of our seeming separation from our own inner higher Selves and recognise our natural state of perfection through unity consciousness. This is beautifully described by William Bloom who notes that the vibratory states achieved during meditation "...are similar in resonance to the plant shoot bursting forth from seed." (*) Meditation is a vibration the devas can instantly recognise, respond to and be sympathetic with.

These ceremonial devas, "...understand that the object of spiritual ceremony is to invoke and to attract helpful energies for the participants and for the environment." "Devas, Fairies and Angels - A Modern Approach" William Bloom 1986.

And so, it is in the ceremony of the Guru Gita that the presiding deva, with the Guru's grace, instinctively knows the Guru's intent or sankalpa and is fully occupied in "...creating an energy channel through which can flow energies such as pure enlightenment, unconditional love and clear spiritual purpose. It is the work of these devas to help construct this energy channel and to enhance and to increase the grace and energy that can flow." "Devas, Fairies and Angels - A Modern Approach" William Bloom 1986.

I believe that devas also play a role in the ceremony of the Siddha Yoga Meditation Intensive. Their involvement provides an explanation for the mechanism by which the sankalpa or will of the Guru is carried out in each Intensive. The untiring deva servers facilitate the capacity to hold many Intensives simultaneously around the world without the necessity of the physical presence of the Guru.

The devas serve as channels for and administrators of the shakti during the course of the program. They ensure that every individual receives exactly what is required, according to their level of progress and evolution. They supervise the actual metaphysical process of kundalini awakening at super-physical levels within the individual. They ensure the Guru's will is done, within the perfection of Gods plan, bringing about the manifestation of Christ consciousness through our alignment with our true inner Selves.

In his book *The Kingdom of the Gods*, Geoffrey Hodson includes an illustration representing a 'kundalini deva' he glimpsed while meditating. He says; "Like all basic forces in nature, kundalini is the manifestation of an intelligence, an archangel in fact, though of a nature beyond human comprehension". (See Figure above.)

Scientific Basis of Sound

Science tells us that sound, and in particular speech and singing, is fundamentally vibration. Each sound creates vibrations in the air as physical energy *and also at more powerful and far reaching levels*. Alice A. Bailey, in her monumental work



In the “Treatise on Cosmic Fire” stated,

“Through speech a thought is evoked and becomes present; it is brought out of abstraction and out of a nebulous condition and materialised upon the physical plane, producing (could we but see it) something very definite on etheric levels. Objective manifestation is produced... Speech is literally a great magical force, and through knowledge of the forces and power of silence and of speech, can produce effects upon the physical plane. ...this knowledge in the form of Words of Power and of those mantrams and formulae which set in motion the hidden energies of nature and call the devas to their work.”

A Treatise on Cosmic Fire” by Alice A, Bailey, 1925, Lucis Publishing Company

Note that the use of the term “etheric levels” relates to the finer vibratory states of the physical plane, which is made up of seven sub-divisions; solid, liquid, gaseous, and four etheric states. These etheric states are vital to our existence and form the basis of all manifestation from superphysical levels into the physical plane.

Every day each one of us uses speech as casually as breathing, little realising our inherent power and the effect we are having on every aspect of our well-being and quality of life with the words we choose to speak. The innate magical power within speech begins with “in the beginning was the word...” and its sound is still manifesting the universe. When we understand the power of focused intent and one-pointedness behind the utterance of sound, we realise its implications for us at an inner level.

“A man speaks, and a very diversified mantram is the result. The energy thus generated swings into activity a multitude of lives, which proceed to build a form for his thought... At this time, man sets up these mantric vibrations unconsciously, and in ignorance of the laws of sound and of their effect. The occult work that he is carrying on is thus unknown to him. Later he will speak less, know more, and construct more accurate forms, which will produce powerful effects on the physical levels.”

“A Treatise on Cosmic Fire” by Alice A, Bailey, 1925, Lucis Publishing Company, page 786

Are you beginning to sense the awesome power of chanting high vibratory mantras that have been made *chaitanyam*, made alive, by the will of the Guru? As we become aware of the power within an ancient text like the Guru Gita we can begin to imagine how it is potentially transformative.

If we contemplate what, in fact, is sound we find that it certainly isn’t “solid” nor “liquid”. And while it uses air (gas) as a means of expression, it certainly isn’t a gas either. So, what is sound? It strikes me that it is etheric matter, made manifest in our three-dimensional space of solid, liquid and gaseous matter. It is interesting that while speech embodies our thoughts and desires, it is also the 'evoker' of these inner energies onto the physical plane.



The three lowest physical sub-planes are in fact the result of the four higher sub-planes. Etheric matter is really the “principle” matter in the physical world - solid, liquid and gaseous is but a “coat of paint” or an outer covering in these dense aspects of the physical plane - reflecting our true physical etheric nature. In fact, using our intuition to contemplate the above statements, one may discover one of the basic inner secrets of physical manifestation.

Swami Muktananda stated that every letter in the Guru Gita is a powerful mantra and always recommended its recitation. During a period of two years of reciting the Guru Gita almost every morning, I began to experience insights into what was happening at subtle levels during the chant. To me, this intuitive perception seemed a more real way of gaining knowledge and understanding than studying knowledge in books. Is it not within ourselves that most of “life” really happens, in any case?

The mantra of the Guru Gita contains very powerful vibratory words, and I became aware that a far greater result was being achieved, at deeper, superphysical levels, than I could perceive. I believe the Guru Gita has a powerful, long-term and expansive effect on everything and everyone open to its power.

In addition, chanting the Guru Gita every morning in the temple of a living saint - the sacred Siddha Yoga Ashram - seemed to heighten my experience of the inner significance of the chant. I slowly gained a deeper recognition of how the chanting of the Guru Gita was part of a sacred ceremony. This resulted in a powerful uplifting effect for the people involved, the immediate surrounding community and, at deeper levels, the entire planet, if not further afield, beyond anything I ever imagined was possible.

Geoffrey Hodson describes the effect of a place of worship on the surrounding environment; “A remarkable Buddhist Shrine, known as the Borobudur, was built on the Island of Java, some eight hundred years ago. This is an immense stone structure, with scenes from the life of the Lord Buddha beautifully carved on the sides of the four great galleries. This Shrine has become a place of pilgrimage and is regarded by many as a center of spiritual power.

Investigation revealed the presence of a very great presiding Angel, conservator and distributor of the power of the Shrine and source of potent spiritual forces which flow over the Island of Java and the surrounding seas.”

- Om Guru Om -



Darshan & Sadhana

Living in the Ashram

A personal journey along a spiritual path



DRAFT ONLY



Angel of Java "The Kingdom of the Gods" by Geoffrey Hodson, 1952

- Om Guru Om -



Darshan & Sadhana

Living in the Ashram

A personal journey along a spiritual path



APPENDIX 2

Sydney Ashram

Proposal & Reports

Supporting the Vision & Mission of Siddha Yoga

- Om Guru Om -



Darshan & Sadhana

Living in the Ashram

A personal journey along a spiritual path



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- Om Guru Om -

“Honouring the Guru Within”

A Weekend Retreat

A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE
OF SIDDHA YOGA

A PROPOSAL

*Preparing Australia for
Gurumayi's Tour.*

Stage One.

THE SYDNEY ASHRAM GURUSEVA
COORDINATION TEAM

30th April 1996

“Honouring the Guru Within”

A Weekend Retreat

Overview

Following the success of the “*Honouring Baba Day*” which was created in preparation for the “*I Met Baba - Reunion*” it is proposed to continue the momentum by offering a very special “Weekend Retreat”. This Retreat would utilise existing resources and the current Ashram schedule. It will be held over the weekend to provide both long-term devotees and new people a real way of “connecting” with the experience of Siddha Yoga in all its fullness and glory - with great enthusiasm and certainly singing God’s glory!

It would act as a focus for bringing the entire Siddha community together and attracting people from all over Australia, even from around the world, to visit the Sydney ashram for “*Honouring the Guru Within*”.

“The more one follows the discipline of a sacred place, the higher will one rise, the more intense will be one’s longing for God.”

Swami Muktananda, Ashram Dharma

“Honouring the Guru Within”

A Weekend Retreat

There are three main benefits from having the “Honouring the Guru Within” Weekend Retreat:

1. Long-term members can be offered something with a little more depth, and more importantly, a “vehicle” to connect with the Ashram that has clearly defined boundaries. Namely, something they can plan well ahead and know they only need to commit from Friday to Sunday, and can then resume their outside activities. *(I feel we will attract far more long-term devotees, more often with this type of structure...)*
2. New people often take a long time in experiencing the wholistic nature of Siddha Yoga before they are ready to offer themselves to a regular Guruseva practice. By offering a weekend where they can experience all the aspects of Siddha Yoga in the context of the Ashram, they are more likely to be inspired with enthusiasm to understand and give themselves whole-heartedly to Guruseva which is in fact *the only way it works*.
3. we can plan Major Seva Projects well ahead and have them carried out on a regular basis, (not in a Panic at the last minute.) These projects would be a primary focus of the Retreat.

The added impetus to this Retreat is that it would have the inspiration of Gurumayi’s upcoming Tour behind it to give it real Shakti and meaning.

“Honouring the Guru Within”

A Weekend Retreat

Summary

*The important thing to realise about starting
“Honouring the Guru Within” Weekend Retreats
is that we really not creating anything new!*

The retreat is about following the Ashram schedule; offering the spiritual practices and adding a few existing programs, as appropriate into *a very powerful combination*.

“Honouring the Guru Within” will help maintain a inner focus for everyone coming to the Ashram. It will imbibe the essence of Ashram Dharma and the Gurukula.

The Sydney Ashram was opened and blessed by Gurumayi. This means the blessings of a *living* Siddha Guru reside here. The only Siddha Ashram in the world to have that honour. This presents the opportunity. for connecting with the *inner Guru* - the true goal of Siddha Yoga.

The Ashram is a bright shining diamond radiating out its light for seekers to see the extraordinary opportunity of receiving Shaktipat from the Guru. A primary role for the Sydney Ashram.

Everyone would be welcomed in participating in “Honouring the Guru Within” - Trustees, Managers, Team leaders, coordinators, sevites. Together we could generate great enthusiasm, love and joy for the Guru that is here all the time! She is here in a far more powerful form within our hearts.

The weekend Retreat: “Honouring the Guru Within” would simply create the vehicle for facilitating the community to “*tune in*” to Her “*wavelength*”.

“Honouring the Guru Within”

A Weekend Retreat

The Next Steps...

1. Approval by managers.
2. Select members and initiate meetings by
“Honouring the Guru Within Coordination Team”.
3. Determine dates and prepare detailed Weekend
Retreat format and requirements.
4. Have Information meeting with Ashramites.
5. Start preparations & commence promoting.

“Honouring the Guru Within”

A Weekend Retreat

Appendix A

Proposed Weekend Retreat Schedule

Friday

Registration & Moving in.	5.00pm to 6.30pm
Dinner	6.30pm to 7.00pm
Orientation	7.00pm to 7.20pm
Nama Sankirtana (Fast Chant)	7.30pm to 9.00pm
Swadhyaya Orientation	9.20pm to 9.45pm
• Guru Gita	
• Arati	
• Rudram	
• Shiva Arati	
• Shiva Mahimnah.	
Lights out	10.00pm

Saturday

Meditation	06.15am to 07.00am
Breakfast	07.00am to 07.45am
Guru Gita	08.00am to 09.30am
Guruseva	10.30am to 12.30pm
Special Project for new people	
Regular Devotees can:	
• Coordinate the teams;	
• Join the teams or	
• Do other specific seva.	
Lunch	12.30pm to 1.30pm
Ashram Dharma Study Group	02.00pm to 2.30pm
Study/Contemplation in silence	02.30pm to 3.30pm
Introduction to Siddha Yoga	04.00pm to 5.30pm
Evening Arati	06.00pm to 6.20pm
Dinner	06.30pm to 7.15pm
Satsang - Public Program	07.30pm to 9.00pm
Lights out	10.00pm

Sunday

Meditation	06.15am to 07.00am
Breakfast	07.00am to 07.45am
Guru Gita	08.00am to 09.30am
Hatha Yoga Basics	10.30am to 11.30pm
Lunch	12.30pm to 01.30pm
Nectar of Guruseva Program	01.30pm to 03.00pm
Special Puja/Finale celebrations:	
• Explanation	3.00pm to 3.30pm
• Puja Ceremonies	3.30pm to 4.15pm
• Finale	4.15pm to 5.00pm
Sankirtana: “Om Namo Bhagavate Muktanada.”	
- Gurudeva Hamara Pyara	

Darshan

- Om Guru Om -

Sydney Siddha Yoga Meditation Ashram

PROPOSAL TO MANAGERS

18 May 1997

Ashram Weekend Retreat

Goals

1. To have a more effective, consistent way of attracting new sevites?
2. To generate more enthusiastic, long-term sevites?
3. To be able to plan ahead for large seva projects?
4. To create a deeper, clearer and fuller understanding to new-comers around the purpose and role of the ashram?
5. To Create a more inspiring way of attracting “great-timers” to do seva in the ashram that is also more appropriate to their needs?

Overview

“The more one follows the discipline of a sacred place, the higher will one rise, the more intense will be one’s longing for God.”

Swami Muktananda, Ashram Dharma

It is proposed to present a very special “Live-in Weekend”.

- The Ashram Schedule was set up by Baba to provide a vehicle for seekers to attain spiritual awakening and the supreme knowledge.
- A live-in weekend based on the Ashram schedule would create a focus for honouring the Guru within, the essence of Siddha yoga.
- At this time it is a very commonsense approach to be utilising existing resources and focusing on following the Ashram schedule.
- No new programs are required for this week-end.
- The weekend could provide both “great-timers” and new-timers a great way of “connecting” more deeply with the experience of Siddha Yoga by simply following the existing Ashram schedule.
- It would create an existing structure for introducing new people to the essence of the purpose and operation of the Ashram. (A bird’s eye view!)
- “Great-timers” can be offered a more appropriate “vehicle” to connect with the Ashram on a regular basis that has clearly defined boundaries.
- New-comers can experience the wholistic nature of Siddha Yoga.
- New-comers can experience all the aspects of Siddha Yoga in the context of the Ashram. *(They are then more likely to be inspired with enthusiasm and give themselves whole-heartedly to Guruseva, which is in fact, the only way it works.)*

- We can plan Special Seva Projects well ahead and have them carried out on a regular basis, (not in a Panic at the last minute.) These projects would be one focus of the weekend.
- We do not need any significant additional strain on our current resources.
- It would be held once a month with various simple additions to create a cohesive, informative and meaningful experience for new comers,
- It would create a way for “great-timers” to immerse themselves more fully into the ecstasy of spiritual practices for a specific weekend.
- By having these weekends every month (*say the last weekend of every month*) everyone can plan ahead to choose the most suitable time for them.
- It could be a catalyst for igniting the fire of Guruseva and Spiritual Practices within seekers.
- A Coordination Team could be made up of the myself, the Ashram Coordinator and a representative from Teachings.
- There would be limited places available (say 6 to 10) and there would need to be an awareness of the ratio of new people to “Great-timers”.
- The live-in weekend could also stimulate a greater interest and awareness for new people to attend the Ashram on a regular basis.
- It would also provide an understanding of what it is to live in the Ashram.
- It would give an “inoculation” for anyone thinking about living in the Ashram for a longer period.
- It would develop a stronger base of the community with a greater understanding of Ashram Dharma.
- The live-in weekend is mainly about following the Ashram schedule.
- The live-in weekend would create a time for everyone to participate and become closer as a community by spending time living in the ashram for the weekend - Trustees, Managers, Team leaders, coordinators, sevites.
- *We do not need to create anything new with a Live-in weekend!*

Suggested Live-in Weekend Schedule

Friday

Registration & Moving in.	5.00pm to 6.30pm
Dinner	6.30pm to 7.00pm
Orientation	7.00pm to 7.20pm
Nama Sankirtana (Fast Chant)	7.30pm to 9.00pm
Swadhyaya Orientation	9.20pm to 9.45pm
• Guru Gita (primarily)	
• Arati (primarily)	
• Rudram	
• Shiva Arati	
• Shiva Mahimnah.	
Lights out	10.00pm

Saturday

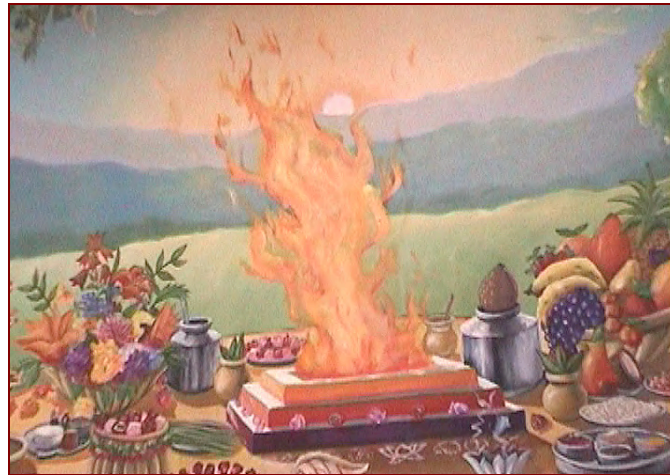
Meditation	06.15am to 07.00am
Breakfast	07.00am to 07.45am
Guru Gita	08.00am to 09.30am
Guruseva	10.30am to 12.30pm
Special Project for new people	
Regular Devotees can:	
• Coordinate the teams;	
• Join the teams or	
• Do other specific seva.	
Lunch	12.30pm to 1.30pm
Ashram Dharma Study Group	02.00pm to 2.30pm
Study/Contemplation in silence	02.30pm to 3.30pm
Introduction to Siddha Yoga Program	04.00pm to 5.30pm
Evening Arati	06.00pm to 6.20pm
Dinner	06.30pm to 7.15pm
Satsang - Public Program	07.30pm to 9.00pm
Lights out	10.00pm

Sunday

Meditation	06.15am to 07.00am
Breakfast	07.00am to 07.45am
Guru Gita	08.00am to 09.30am
Seva Project <i>Continues...</i>	10.30am to 12.15pm
Lunch	12.30pm to 01.30pm
Hath Yoga Program	01.30pm to 03.00pm
Amrit Break	03.00pm to 03.30pm
Special Finale celebrations:	
• Master of Ceremonies (Staying involved)	03.30pm to 03.45pm
• Finale	03.45pm to 05.00pm
Sankirtana: "Om Namo Bhagavate Muktanadaya." - Gurudeva Hamara Pyara	
Darshan	

Food Services Operations and Profitability Preliminary Assessment and Overview.

STAGE ONE REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS



Business Review Team

31st March 2003

Food Services Operations and Profitability Preliminary Assessment and Overview.

STAGE ONE REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

Contents

1. Executive Summary – Stage One Recommendations
2. Stage One Report - Establish the Basis for Creating a Pricing Policy
 - A. Meetings
 - B. Writing the Food Code
 - C. Create the parameters for menus
 - D. Additional meetings
 - E. Details - Stage One Recommendations

1. Executive Summary – Stage One Recommendations

- i) It is proposed to establish three layers of management for the operational implementations of Stage Two, based on the completion of Stage One, namely:
 - A Business Review Team
 - A Project Management Food Services Team
 - A Food Services Satsang Team
- ii) The Business Review Team will continue to operate at a strategic and advisory level. The Project Management Food Services Team will be responsible for the coordination and implementation of Stage Two action steps with the support of Holly Davis and Kumuda MacDougall as advisory consultants.
- iii) The Project Management Food Services Team will also support the establishment of a Food Services Satsang Team who will be directly responsible for the efficient and ongoing operations of food services.
- iv) The first role of the Project Management Food Services Team will be to create a detailed strategic action plan based on Stage One recommendations and proposed Stage Two actions as per original proposal. These would be prioritised in consultation with the ashram management.
- v) It is proposed that a special promotional event be created by the Project Management Food Services Team to launch Stage Two. This event will be focused on supporting the creation of the Food Services Satsang Team. It will also act as a way of honouring and acknowledging everyone involved with Stage One and inspiring the ongoing changes proposed for food services.

The strategy is to create clearly defined projects that sevites can commit too. Each project will ask for a commitment over a fixed time period based on an yearly schedule.
- vi) The Project Management Food Services Team in conjunction with the Teachings Satsang Team would develop strategies for shifting the culture and expectation towards seva of the community in the ashram. This is with the view of increasing the understanding, involvement and number of sevites.
- vii) The stage two of the proposal will be tailored to cater for efficiency in running retreats and so that the day to day running of the Ashram will become much smoother and more efficient.

2. Stage One Report - Establish the Basis for Creating a Pricing Policy

A. Meetings

- Interview current and past sevites who have worked in food services to establish how things are currently done.
- Find out specifically what is working for them, and what is not working as well as they would like it to.
- Enrol current food service sevites in the value of being involved in this review and the implementation of the proposal.

There were two meetings with current and past sevites to establish what is working and what is not working.

MEETING # 1 - OCTOBER 27TH 2002

OBJECTIVE

TO ESTABLISH THE CURRENT STATE OF FOOD SERVICES

INVITED

REBBECA, DESMOND, SHUBRA, LYNNE, KAREN,

PRESENT AT MEETING

SHUBRA, LYNNE, KAREN, DESMOND

SEPARATE CONVERSATION HAD BY HOLLY AND REBECCA BY PHONE

HELD BY

VIKKAS, ANATOLE AND HOLLY

Summary

We established what the current context is within food services and we looked at the different area related to FS and individuals key frustration's in those areas.

Once this was delivered we asked for the big picture and the vision was for each person. This inspired a great deal of positive feedback. And we recorded each person's vision. The points from the first meeting see Appendix A.

MEETING # 2 - NOVEMBER 17TH 2002

OBJECTIVE

TO FURTHER ESTABLISH THE CURRENT STATE OF FOOD SERVICES AND TO BEGIN TO DEVELOP A NEW CONTEXT UNDER WHICH FOOD SERVICES COULD OPERATE.

INVITED

REBECCA, DESMOND, LYNNE, SHUBRA, KAREN, AND NERIDA

OBJECTIVE

DESMOND, LYNNE, NERIDA, AND KAREN

HELD BY

VIKKAS AND HOLLY

Summary

The second meeting was a review of the first and then an enquiry as to the gap between where we wanted to be and where we are now. We looked at our experience when we are operating from the current context and what we would need to generate to operate in the vision context. These are the items identified as above and below the line in Appendix B.

We also looked at the impact on us and others of our operating below the line and asked what was missing that would make a difference in that area

2. Write the food code.

A proposed food code is a viable and consistent system for the purchasing, storage, production and sale of meals. This will give us the information needed to know what increase in profit is attainable and it will also lay the foundations for a new system of operation. I propose this be done in a small group with 2 other food service sevites

See Appendix C.

3. Create the parameters for menus.

See Appendix D.

4. Additional meetings

MEETING - DECEMBER 10TH 2002

PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING WAS TO ESTABLISH WHAT SERVICES WOULD BE OFFERED AT THE ASHRAM IN FUTURE.

ATTENDED BY:

TONY, SHUBRA, NERIDA

HELD BY

VIKKAS, HOLLY, AND ANATOLE

Our third meeting was to receive feedback from specific sevites in this area as to what services the Ashram would offer and how it could do this.

It became clear that what needs to be created first is for the current operations to be made effective and consistent. There needs to be clear, basic systems and procedures

implemented and for there to be a person in command that will create a hub for effectively utilising and inspiring sevites in the kitchen.

We propose that some simple systems be implemented and that all-existing systems in use in other Ashrams be reviewed and used to create the basis of operations here. There has been considerable work done in Melbourne ashram that can be utilise in Sydney.

It is important that the Sangam be included in the development of the next phase for what food services might offer and how. It is clear that it is vital that the community own this area for it to work.

MEETING - DECEMBER 17TH 2002

PURPOSE: TO REVIEW FINANCIALS

ATTENDED BY:

TONY

HELD BY

VIKKAS, HOLLY, AND ANATOLE

The fourth meeting was with the business review team and Tony to discuss the financials, In gathering this data it was clear that at present there is insufficient detail to determine profitability with any accuracy.

See Appendix C

5. Details - Stage One Recommendations

Overall Objective of Food Services

To facilitate the optimal operation, function and role of food services be created as a model that deals with the minimum and maximum number of people to feed, ranging from resident meals on the Micro level to organised retreats on the Macro level.

NOTE: For the purposes of this report

B. Annapurna: refers to meals that are produced in the Ashram kitchen for sale to the community.

C. Residents' meals: is a separate category.

D. Amrit: refers to items provided by the bakery for sale to the com

Stage one recommendations are to form a foundation for the implementation of Stage two milestones, as per original appropriate proposal, namely:

STAGE TWO – Original Approved Proposal.

- A. Identify a basic ingredient list that includes the bulk of ingredients required for menu production. This will then be reviewed to create
- Ingredient lists
 - Supplier lists
 - An indication of turnover
 - To help eliminate those items that have limited uses or limited shelf life.
 - Compile a collection of easily produced recipes that any sevite could consistently reproduce.
 - Identify and list every ingredient currently in stock by area.
 - Create a system to record left over food and wastage.
 - Assess requirements for portioning and replace existing utensils for portioning so that consistent portioning is assured.
 - Establish approximate hours a week spent preparing and cooking meals.
 - Identify the optimal number of sevites required to produce meals when cooking for residents, Satsangs and Bandharas.
 - Allocate an hourly rate to sevites work, based on the award for a second cook, and kitchen hands that do food preparation.

Micro Recommendations from Stage One

We therefore recommend that:

- Establish the Food Services Satsang Team.
This team will meet weekly to plan and review how food services are operating.
- We recommend the changing of the name of food services to put the past in the past with the old name and develop a new relationship with this area.
- A Project Management Team is required to work with food services team to guide and support it through changes. The role it serves will be to link the both the micro and the macro levels.
- A Stipend or Food Services Coordinator will head the Food Services Satsang Team and oversee:
 - the coordination of the kitchen.
 - Oversee the implementation of systems and processes.
 - Increase the profitability and the Shakti.
- The role and responsibilities of the Food Services Coordinator and remuneration package will be determined during Stage 2.
- The Project Management Team will develop a job description for this position with roles and responsibilities.

Financial Data collection and Income

- We recommend the development of a financial model template.
For this we need the current reality on income, expenses and profitability
- We propose that at present there is insufficient financial data kept to establish which are the areas of income that provide the most profit in food services.
At the moment all income is collected through either the drop box or the till but there is no indication as to whether the money is from main meals, desserts, bakery or drinks.
- We recommend that there be separate till buttons allocated for the sale of Chai, Drinks, Amrit, Annapurna so we can establish where income is derived.
- We recommend a further increase in the price of meals to \$10 for a standard meal
- Begin a process of aligning the sangham with these outcomes and involve the community
- Begin to implement systems and structures

Expenses

It is apparent that the financial information on purchasing is inadequate for detailed analysis.

- We therefore recommend that simple data sheets be employed immediately to assist in the gathering of information on expenses.
- Tony has offered to supply data collection sheets that food service sevites can be easily trained to use.
- Cash return for suggested items need semi accurate records for preferably 3 months but even 1 would help.
- Proportion of income received from the sale of: meals, amrit, drinks, intensives and retreats to be clarified.

Macro Level Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

1. The Project Management Food Services Team in conjunction with the Teachings Satsang Team would develop strategies for shifting the culture and expectation towards seva of the community in the ashram. This is with the view of increasing the understanding, involvement and number of sevites.
2. The stage two of the proposal be tailored to cater for efficiency in running retreats and so that the day to day running of the Ashram will become much smoother and more efficient.
3. Management and the executive plans an ongoing yearly programme of in-house retreats. Retreats are a draw card and could be held:
 - Once a month for the weekend, culminating in a community chant and dinner on Sunday afternoon and evening.
 - Retreats could include a One-day intensive or Learn to Meditate course.
 - Weekly retreats could be held around major calendar events and approximately once every two months.

NOTE: Income from Retreats estimate:

100 meals x 3 a day @ \$10 per meal = \$3,000 income per day

4. This utilises the main 'asset' of the Foundation: 'the Ashram building and facilities' and creates a huge financial advantage, as there is no increase in overheads.
5. The building is currently very under utilised capital asset of the foundation and therefore return on this asset can be significantly increased. Programming a yearly schedule of retreats this way could cause a general increase in the attendance at other times in the ashram.
6. Retreats appear to be highly financially profitable with efficient and productive food service planning.
7. Retreats allow us to plan and implement food services with greater accuracy.
8. Sevites are drawn to the Ashram during retreats and they are keen to be trained in food services.

Overview of Benefits

1. The Ashram Schedule exists now and can be used as the pathway for holding retreats without a great deal of change..
2. Retreats accelerate the community's appreciation, understanding and connectedness with Siddha Yoga and the daily schedule. This could greatly assist people developing and maintaining the practices.
3. Planning retreats would inform management of the numbers of people attending the Ashram and this creates the perfect opportunity for sevite training and the time for sevites to involve themselves in-group projects such as big cleaning jobs or in the garden or painting or whatever else is needed. This work could then be scheduled and planned for.
4. Retreats also increase sales in the bookshop.
5. Regular in house retreats could take pressure off the Sangham and families to go to retreats, as they are currently expensive events.
6. Once profitability has increased it may be possible to decrease prices and attract family's making it more accessible to them to utilise the Ashram.
7. Seva as a spiritual practice would be a part of retreats and the introduction of seva slips would be natural and could be continued as a regular practice.

It is proposed that retreat attendance would be an integral part of residents in the ashram. Special programs could be created in this regard. Please note there is a notably difference between living in the ashram on a day to day basis and the focused attendance at a Retreat.

Siddha Yoga Ashram - 19th September 2003 Annyashakti Satsang
MC: Vicas • Director: Anatole • Offering Ritual Holly
Lakshmi Puja/Kitchen: Subhra • Foyer/Amrit: Jo/Lyn/Susie

6.45 Pre-satsang meeting in hall.

7.15 Doors open. – OFFERING RITUAL AT DOOR TO HALL

- Woman at door dressed in sari to create air of sacredness as people make offering and enter the hall.
- **Chant - Shree Ram Jay Ram** live in Hall as people enter.
- Slide show of Baba on screen
- **Lights low.**

7.35 MC WELCOME & INTRO to “Jyota se Jyota”
lights up.

7.38 CHANT: Jyota se Jyota

7.44 MC SHARE

- Offering ritual explained
- Annyashakti explained
- Dharma reading
- Intro chant and video of last Sunday Celebration

Lights low.

7.50 CHANT **Shree Ram Jay Ram**
Lights stay down.

8.35 PLAY VIDEO

lights up.

8.32 MC explanation

Lights low.

- Giving your Blessings in Kitchen after program.
- Mention keep the stillness as you leave hall/ directions will be given.
- A flower will be given for you to offer to Lakshmi in kitchen.
- Intro meditation.

Lights down & very soft tamboura.

8.33 MEDITATION

8.58 Gong x 3 times -- PLAY VIDEO (announcement)

9.00 Darshan Music - Play Mahalakshmi Stotram

- Lights low in foyer.
- Two ladies in sari offer flowers as people leave hall (outside in foyer).
- Person at top of stairs directing people to corridor to kitchen.
- Candles along corridor to kitchen
- Person at doorway to kitchen monitoring traffic flow to kitchen.
- Everyone assisting to keep stillness and sacred atmosphere.
- Offer prasad chai as you enter Amrit through double doors.

APPENDICIES

Appendix A.

MEETING # 1 -- OCTOBER 27TH

TO ESTABLISH THE CURRENT STATE OF FOOD SERVICES

INVITED

REBBECA, DESMOND, SHUBRA, LYNNE, KAREN

PRESENT AT MEETING

SHUBRA, LYNNE, KAREN, DESMOND

SEPARATE CONVERSATION HAD BY HOLLY AND REBECCA BY PHONE

HELD BY

VIKKAS, ANATOLE AND HOLLY

PART A -- CURRENT CONTEXT

JUST HERE

JUST FEEDING PEOPLE

HUB OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION

CRISIS

MISSING STRUCTURE & SYSTEMS

FOOD HAS IT'S DRAWING POWER

NO LEADERSHIP

SCARCITY

COOKING COURSES

HARD WORK

SPONTANEOUS

SHIP WITHOUT A RUDDER

PROFIT

INCONGRUENT BETWEEN QUALITY OF INGREDIENTS & TEACHINGS

JOYFUL SEVA

STUCK IN THE OLD
HIDDEN
MISSING IMMENSE OPPORTUNITY
CONTINUITY
DHARMA SLIPPING
NOURISH THE BODY B4 SPIRIT
FRAGMENTED
COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS NON-PARTICIPATION & APPRECIATION
LOVE AND CREATION
NOT INVITING
SUPPLIERS

PART B -- KEY FRUSTRATIONS BY AREA

AS AN ASHRAMITE

NUTRITION
MORE VARIETY

IN SERVERY

INCONSISTENT PORTION SIZES
INCONSISTENT ATTITUDES & DHARMA, NO SERVERY CO-ORDINATION FEEL
UNSUPPORTED

WHEN COOKING

GETTING QUANTITIES RIGHT
ENTHUSIASM
LACK OF OVERVIEW & CONTINUITY
WASTAGE
A SOCIAL PLACE
KITCHEN NOT CLEAN

WHEN ORDERING

OVER-ORDERING
WHO SUPPLIES WHAT WHEN?
WE NEED MORE VARIETY OF SUPPLIERS
NO PRICING STRUCTURE FOR MEALS

WHEN ROSTERING

NO ROSTER
RESOURCES
IRRESPONSIBLE & LACK OF COMMITMENT

AS A CUSTOMER

CANNOT GIVE FEEDBACK OR SUGGESTIONS
INCONSISTENT QUALITY
ODD PRICING
NOT ENOUGH VARIETY

AS AN EDUCATION

LACK OF READINESS TO LEARN OR ASK QUESTIONS
EGOTISTIC SELF-EXPRESSION
NO TRAINING OR SUPPORT IN COOKING/MENTOR

OVERALL:

NO RELATIONSHIP WITH FINANCE PEOPLE/NON-MANAGEMENT OF AMRIT TILL
LACK OF EASE WHILST DOING SEVA
NO WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
MESSY, UNTIDY DESK

PART C -- THE VISION

TO BE ABLE TO BUY OUR OWN FRESH PRODUCE – COMPLETE CONTROL
OUR FARMS & FIELDS → GRAINS/VEGETABLES WITH ORGANIC FARMING METHODS,
DAIRY PRODUCTS
COMMUNITY VALUES → HEALTHY HUNGER
EACH MEMBER OF COMMUNITY IS THAT “THIS IS MY ASHRAM” AND THEREFORE I AM
ACCOUNTABLE
LOVE & POWER WOULD BE EXPERIENCED BY ALL WHO ARE ASSOCIATED WITH FOOD
SERVICES
FOOD SERVICES IS THE SHAKTI GENERATOR OF COMMUNITY
TO ESTABLISH RELATION WITH FINANCE TO CREATE VARIETY AND ABUNDANCE
AVAILABLE TO THE COOKS AND FINALLY TO THE COMMUNITY
TO HAVE SPACE TO HAVE FUN CHEESES, YOGURT, SPROUTS, BREAKMAKING ETC.

TO ON/STAFF PROFESSIONAL INTERNATIONAL SIDDHA COOKS
MY SERVICE IS A VEHICLE FOR GOD'S GRACE IN THE CREATION OF FOOD
HERB GARDEN
EDUTIONAL INSTITUTION AROUND FOOD SERVICES FOR OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY EG,
AYURVEDIC, NUTRITION, HEALING, RETREAT
FULL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/PARTICIPATION IN THE PREPARATION, CLEANUP &
SERVING OF FOOD
CONTINUITY AND EXPANDING AWARENESS OF SIDDHA YOGA THROUGH FOOD SERVICES
SEVA IN FOOD SERVICES GIVEN AN EXPERIENCE OF GOD, OF THE TEACHINGS AND THE
GURU
CREATIVITY, COURAGE AND COMMITMENT THAT'S WHAT WE ARE CALLING FORWARD
FOOD SERVICES IS HIGHLY PROFITABLE FOR COMMUNITY
YEARING IN THE COMMUNITY TO EAT FOOD IN ASHRAM AND YEARNING TO OFFER SEVA
IN FOOD SERVICES
THAT ALL OF FOOD SERVICES AREAS ARE TAKEN CARE OF WITH GREAT LOVE
SEVITES ARE WELCOMING, OPEN TO LEARN AND TEACH AND WORK TOGETHER
THE FOOD IS BALANCED AND NUTRITIOUS AND VARIED
THERE IS DEDICATED PLANNING OF THE MENU
TO EAT IN THE ASHRAM IS TO EXPERIENCE THE GURU'S LOVE
THE FOOD IS WELCOMING AND DRAWS PEOPLE HERE AND IS PART OF THE WHOLE
EXPERIENCE OF THE ASHRAM – ASSOCIATE FOOD WITH BABA eg SOUR CEREAL
SERVE THE COMMUNITY, NOT THE INDIVIDUAL
“FOOD IS GOD” BABA
FEED THE PEOPLE
FOOD IS THE WELCOME
WHOLE COMMUNITY EATS WITH REVERANCE
THAT THE WALLS ARE DECORATED WITH TEACHINGS AND ARE AN INTEGRIAL PART OF
AMRIT
A COMPUTER → DOCUMENTATION DAILY AND HISTORIC RECORDS
HAVE A COUPLE OF GREAT FINANCIAL DONORS FOR AMRIT DEVEOPLMENT
FOOD IS PREPARED WITH REVERANCE, FOCUS, JOY AND THE HIGHEST INTENTION
THAT THE ASHRAM CONTRIBUTES TO AND PROMOTES SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES
TO HAVE BUDGET FOR EXPERIMENTATION OF PRODUCTS
TO RESOLVE COSTING OF MEAL
TO HAVE ONGOING FOOD STUDY GROU[
TO HAVE MAN-POWER AND RESOURCES FOR BANDHARA'S FOR ALL SIDDHA YOGA
RESIVALS
FOOD SERVICES TEAM – STRONG TEAM WORK, GREAT EASE, PERFECT ALIGNMENT,
TRUST, CONFIDENCE, SHARED RESPONSIBILITY – STRONG RUDDER – GOOD WIND - GRACE

Appendix B.

MEETING # 2.- NOVEMBER 17TH 2002

TO FURTHER ESTABLISH THE CURRENT STATE OF FOOD SERVICES AND TO BEGIN TO DEVELOP A NEW CONTEXT UNDER WHICH FOOD SERVICES COULD OPERATE.

INVITED

REBECCA, DESMOND, LYNNE, SHUBRA, KAREN, AND NERIDA

PRESENT

DESMOND, LYNNE, NERIDA, AND KAREN

HELD BY

VIKKAS AND HOLLY

ABOVE & BELOW THE LINE - BEHAVIOUR, THOUGHTS & ACTIONS

WHAT IS NEEDED IN THIS MOMENT

MYSTERY NOT KNOWING

BIG BREATHE SELF

RELAXED WITNESS

SPACIOUS

RESOURCEFUL

VEHICLE FOR SHAKTI

OPEN

GRACE

TEAMWORK

GENEROUS

GIVING

COMPASSION

LAUGHS

EASEFUL SHARED

CREATIVE

RESPONSIBILITY

BIG HEARTED

RELATEDNESS

DIRECTION

KNOWLEDGE

ALLOWING GOD

NO CHOICE

SMALL SELF

DOER

SCATTERED/DANGEROUS

FRAGMENTED

CONFUSION

TIGHT (IN EVERYTHING)

FAILURE

MEAN

LOTS & LOTS OF INSTRUCTIONS

IT'S ALL ABOUT ME

FEAR OF PHYSICAL DANGER/

OWN SAFETY

CONTRACTED

FEAR OF FEAR

BLAME

BEING CONTROLLED

FRUSTRATION

OWNERSHIP

HAS THE ANSWER

WATCHING OVERBEARINGLY

MASS FOOD POISONING

HEPATITIS

OWN RHYTHM

FEAR OF NOT KNOWING

IMPACTS OF OPERATING FROM BELOW THE LINE:

JUSTIFY, OVER-COMPENSATE, GUILT, OVER-WORK, FRUSTRATION, RESENTFUL, HIDING,
CAN'T RECEIVE, LOSS OF VITALITY, HEALTH, EASEFULNESS, MAINTENANCE, BACK-FOOT,
EXHAUSTING

WHAT'S MISSING THE PRESENCE OF WHICH WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

WORTHY & EQUAL

FREE & CERTAIN

STEADINESS

EMPOWERED TO MAKE DECISIONS

RESPONSIBLE, BEING THAT IT IS UP TO ME

THESE SUGGESTIONS HAVE COME OUT OF THE 2ND, 3RD AND 4TH MEETINGS.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATING THE VISION

TEAM TO FORMULATE STRUCTURES WHO MEET REGULARLY

EMPOWERED TEAM LEADERS TO ENACT DIFFERENT STEPS IN TH

AN EMPOWERED RATIFIED PROCESS

TEAM LEADER
A MANAGEMENT MODEL
AN ORGANISATIONAL CHART
REGULAR FEASTS
Saptahs
Fund Raising
Community Dinners
FIX DISHROOM
TWO HEARTS IN THE ASHRAM – HALL & KITCHEN
FULL PAID STRIPEND. ? ACCOUNTABLE
TASTY, NOURISHING, WELL PRESENTED FOOD
SIMPLE
MELB
LIMP WITH S.M.A. SEVITE EXCHANGE
CLEARLY WRITTEN UP KITCHEN DHARMA DISPLAYED
TO FORMULATE A DOCUMENTED DISCIPLINE
for FOCUS AND RITUALS
for PREPARING FOOD
TO DOCUMENT RITUAL FOR SERVING FOOD
DISCIPLINE & GRATITUDE IN EATING FOOD
COOKING COURSES
SEVA SLIPS GIVEN TO PEOPLE WHO COME TO ASHRAM
REGULAR WEEKLY ONE HOUR PLANNING SATSANG ALL APPROPRIATE TEAMS INVOLVED
WITH FOOD SERVING
FINANCE
MENU PLANNING
ORDERING/BUYING
FORMULA – CLEARLY DEFINED SYSTEMS THAT CAN BE FOLLOWED BY ANYBODY
RECIPE BOOK
REGULATED PORTIONS
- PRE-PORTIONED
SEVITES
“BABA: WELCOME THEM, FEED THEM, SEND THEM TO MEDITATE”
STRUCTURE
ENJOYMENT & JOY
SET PRODUCTION OF A PRODUCT
A CHANTING KITCHEN
RULES & REGULATIONS

FULL TIME STAFF MEMBER
AWARENESS
CLEAR COMM'N & DEMONSTRATION OF SACRED, BLESSED FOOD
USER FRIENDLY FOR SEVITES
RESPECT
KITCHEN SUPERVISOR
OVERSEER
QUALITY, QUANTITY
NO MEAL REPITITION
KNOWLEDGE IN FOOT
SEVA
INSTRUCTIONAL
RESPECT FOR FOOD
WE DO OUR OWN DRYING
SACREDNESS AROUND FOOD (COM AWARENESS)
THERE IS A STAFF POSITION DEDICATED TO FOOD SERVICES
DOCUMENTATION EVERYDAY
WHAT
VOLUME
COST
OUR MENU BABA ASSOCIATION
UP-TO-DATE INOVATIVE RECIPES IN THE BAKERY/QUALITY AWARENESS
MENU PLANNING/REGULAR ROTATION INTO FUTURE SEASONAL
EASEFUL & ACCESSIBLE FOR SEVA EXPERIENCE
ESTHETIC ENVIRONMENT
CAFÉ-STYLE PRESENTATION
REFRIDGERATED DISPLAY CASE WITH A DOOR
CAPACCINO MACHINE
KITCHEN THAT OPERATES DAILY
FOOD TO TAKE AWAY (SIDDHA RECIPES)
SIDDHA YOGA RECIPE BOOK
MEALS AVAILABLE NIGHTLY
SIDDHA PACKAGING

Appendix C.

Proposed food code

The object of food production within the Ashram is to:

2. Convey the privilege it is to create meals within the context of the Siddha Yoga teachings and an opportunity for a deeper relationship with ones self and God.
3. Ensure that the teachings are respected and reflected in every portion of food and the food is regarded as a transmitter of the Ashrams dharma.
4. Establish that Food Services is a profit center for the Ashram and provides valuable funds for the upkeep, maintenance and improvement of our center.
5. Provide nourishing balanced meals to residents that are produced with love and care taking into consideration the sustainable care of our planet.
6. Ensure that all meals that are produced within the Ashram are made from high quality ingredients that include:

Meals made from fresh ingredients

Organic flours and grains

Ingredients that are free from genetic modification

Ingredients free of artificial additives, including colouring, preservatives and synthetic flavourings.

Any leftover items that are suitable for service will only ever be reheated once.

All food is cooked in stainless steel pots or cast iron.

We rotate stock carefully to ensure that food is fresh and has the highest possible nutritional value

Our menus are designed to ensure that all meals offered provide a varied and balanced diet.

- No meat, fish or eggs are used in any of our meals.
- When meals contain wheat or dairy foods these are clearly identified on the menu boards or labels
- Left over meals are contained in purpose made containers and clearly labelled with the name and date the food was made.
- Prices reflect the cost of food production and the purchasing of these quality items.
- What is offered at the Ashram
- Meals that include a wide range of cultural influence and meals that have a traditional link and significance within the Ashram. I.e. Baba's favorites, Gurumayi's favorites etc
- Breakfast, Lunch and dinner 7 days a week. Available to residents and those members of the community that phone to book a meal one day in advance.
- The food is served from a line, canteen style.
- Meals are served on plain durable crockery that is appropriate for the portion sizes that are determined.
- Meals are served in consistent portion sizes small and large portions are available and are priced accordingly.

Appendix D

Proposed Menu Format

Menus are seasonally based and rotate regularly to avoid repetition.

We provide at all Satsangs the choice of:

- B. A soup small 200mls or large 350mls
- C. A salad of raw &/or cooked vegetables small or large
- D. Dressing per 30ml portion
- E. A protein-based dish that includes vegetables small 200mls or large 350mls
- F. A grain dish small 120mls or large 200mls
- G. Condiments per portion according to type
- H. Dessert each according to type

Each component of the menu is individually priced and these prices are standard until further notice.

This allows people to choose the items they want at the budget of their choice.

Sydney Siddha Yoga Meditation Ashram

DISCUSSION PAPER

Prepared by
Anatole Kononewsky

“Creating a Culture of Seva”

Revised

13th March 2006

Background: *The Sydney Ashram - its Own Identity*

The Sydney Ashram has its own unique mode of operation in the global scheme of Siddha Yoga ashrams. It has allowed a flexibility in creating a combination of ashram living and worldly involvement in the outside activities. However, it is important to keep a balance between your “worldly” life and the ashram schedule.

Alignment & Purpose

The blessing of living in the ashram creates a “pull” to adjust your “worldly” life to the ashram schedule and in doing so, making the two, one and the same. Living in the ashram is definitely about taking the shakti, imbibing the teachings and then making them part of your everyday life, where-ever you are, and what-ever you are doing.

Ashram Weekend (Seva) Retreats

There is still a great deal of potential in maximising the benefit of holding ashram weekend retreats to the general Siddha Yoga community.

In this regard, I would like to recommend the consideration of having regular Ashram Weekend (Seva) Retreats, as initiated back in 1997 (see attached). These retreats are obviously uniquely different from the experience of the normal, ongoing living in the ashram. They provide an excellent opportunity of creating a real focus to give a powerful boost to your sadhana.

I believe the benefits from having regular weekend ashram retreats are:

1. To have a more effective, consistent way of attracting new sevites?
2. To generate more enthusiastic, long-term sevites?
3. To be able to plan ahead for large seva projects?
4. To create a deeper, clearer and fuller understanding to new-comers around the purpose and role of the ashram?
5. To Create a more inspiring way of attracting “great-timers” to do seva in the ashram that is also more appropriate to their needs?

Live-in Weekend Retreats were implemented over 1997/98.

Spiritual Centre of Power

The ashram is a holy sacred place and a spiritual centre for the incoming and outpouring of the Guru’s Grace. Baba says, *“The purer the visitors and residents of an ashram, the greater the manifestation of its power.”*

We are reminded of Baba’s words from Ashram Dharma that says, *“The character of any place is constantly remoulded by the actions of its inhabitants.”* This is a auspicious responsible that should be continually reflected on by all the ashram residents and indeed, everyone who comes to the ashram.

Satsang - Chanting - Meditation - Guruseva

It is said that satsang prepares you for chanting, which prepares you for chanting, which in turn, prepares you for meditation, and all three prepare you for Guruseva.

The Ashram Schedule

“The more one follows the discipline of a sacred place, the higher will one rise, the more intense will be one’s longing for God.”

Swami Muktananda, Ashram Dharma

1. The Ashram Schedule was set up by Baba to provide a vehicle for seekers to attain spiritual awakening and the supreme knowledge.
2. The Ashram schedule creates a focus for honouring the Guru within, the essence of Siddha yoga.

Creating a Culture of Seva in the Ashram

1. The underlining teaching of ‘seva’ is that it should be freely offered without any covert external pressure and/or wish for reward.
2. For example, when I lived in the ashram our Saturday seva projects were an excellent model for doing seva. (A great initiative by the managers!) The way it works is that people turn up and open the “Seva Projects Book” and whatever is detailed there by the managers was done.
3. This would be great to encourage members of the community to also participate in these seva projects.
4. The expectation and requirement for ashram residents doing a specified amount of seva is a very good thing.
5. I propose that it would be very useful to explore how this same expectation and requirement that has been established over the years for the ashram residents could be formally extended to the entire community in appropriate ways.
6. Namely, everyone who comes to ashram regularly should be required to do a fixed number of hours per week.
7. I highlight that other ashrams around the world all generally expect everyone who comes to the ashram to do an appropriate amount of seva!
8. I strongly believe that it is proper for everyone (not only the ashram residents) who comes to Sydney ashram regularly to be required to perform an appropriate and specific amount of seva.
9. We may well ask why there isn’t the same expectation and requirements for seva to be done by everyone who comes regularly to the ashram, as there seems to be from the ashram residents?
10. Just consider if everyone was required to do say, 3 hours per week then with only say, 50 people this would amount to other 150 hours per week of additional seva to support the ashram.
11. This would make a major difference to the running of the ashram!

Weekly Satsang Format

However, in considering changing the “culture of seva” in the ashram I suggest a review of the existing weekly satsang format. We must examine whether it contributes to the creation of the current attitude and culture towards seva, because while the satsangs are a wonderful experience in their own right, the weekly format does not seem to really support the opportunity for doing seva? People are rushing in before the satsang and socializing after the satsang. It seems it is difficult to cut across this activity.

On the other hand, having regular (monthly) ashram weekend retreats, of which, seva is a natural, fundamental part of, are far more conducive to experiencing the grace of seva and changing the long-term culture.

In conjunction with these retreats we could have regular special-focus satsangs.

RECOMMENDATION

To this end, we need to also take the initiative for the creation of a permanent “Seva Registration Area” that is visible and centrally located. It is the first thing that anyone experiences when they enter the ashram. This sends the clear message as to the importance and respect that we have for this sacred practise of guruseva. It demonstrates the prominence that it holds on the Siddha Yoga spiritual path. (The foyer area could be an ideal place for the Seva Registration Area.)

In essence, it becomes a formal, natural requirement and expectation of coming to the ashram regularly to register for undertaking a specific amount of seva per week.

The main communication to put forward to everyone coming to the ashram is as follows:

**If you come to the ashram on a regular
basis please register here for seva.**

This would be done at the registration desk where an appropriate Seva is discussed and allocated to each person.

This would become established as the new and accepted culture of seva in the ashram.

**"The ashram is a furnace that
burns with the fuel of our spiritual
practices, igniting the fire of
love within our hearts."**

Anatole Kononewsky
11th December 2004

