

Life, Love & Laughter

Stories about Gururaj Ananda Yogi by his students

*Edited by Jaisha Hooper and Priya Drews
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New Stories Collected by Preseela Feltenstein

*Edited by Jeffrey Carr
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*THE AMERICAN MEDITATION SOCIETY
July 2018
Thirty Year Anniversary of the passing of
GURURAJ ANANDA YOGI*

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FOREWORD

This collection of stories is intended as the seed of a future, more inclusive collection; in television lingo, it would be called a pilot. These stories, and the chelas who authored them, are not here because they are the best and the brightest or the most profound mirrors of Gururaj; indeed, some of the richest and most illuminating guru stories remain to be told, and before too long, I hope they will be written down also. This present collection is merely chapter one in an ongoing project.

Like any great spiritual master, Gururaj Ananda Yogi taught simultaneously on many levels. Obviously, many teachings were imparted in the words of his satsangs and preserved for us on tape. But he also continually taught those around him in other subtle, hidden and mysterious ways, which often did not become clear to us until years later. Half-jokingly, his chelas began to refer to the interesting experiences that seemed to erupt around him as "practices." These "practices" might occur on courses or even in route to courses, at the dinner table, in the hall or in airports. They were not always fun, though they sometimes could be. The essence of a practice was that one suddenly and spontaneously learned something; the practice, whatever it was, would break through a psychological wall or a veil of "conditioning" and trigger an awakening. Sometimes one was left only with a deep bafflement leading to a profound process of self-inquiry, and, if we were lucky or sincere, to an unexpected revelation. Usually, these teachings could not be put in words. One of Gururaj's most fundamental teachings was that in our quest for the divine we were to bow to no outside authority. Again and again, he told us to turn away from priests and prophets, "pedestal gurus" and "business gurus," and tune into the supreme wisdom of the heart. We ourselves are fully divine, he told us, we just suffer from a bit of amnesia. He even invited us to doubt him at every moment. Asserting that he himself, the compact, olive-skinned man in the shawl we saw in the satsang hall, was "more ordinary than ordinary." He exhorted us to be ordinary as well—often advising, "When you're human, be human."

Just in case we missed the point, and in case someone tried to worship him or consult him as an oracle, he would be sure to perform some little trick to deflect that person back to him/herself. Perhaps he'd behave like a boor or a mountebank or a peevish child, often strangely reminiscent of the ancient Indian descriptions of a guru: "One may be like a child, a madman, a king, or like one in a swoon, independent-minded like a lord hero... or like one who sells Veda for cash." The stories in this volume depict how this extraordinary ordinariness unfolded in daily life, frequently in venues that were themselves as ordinary, even prosaic or downright sleazy as possible. The Raj Yoga he taught and embodied in every thought, word, and deed would be revealed in someone's wall-to-wall carpeted family room, in airport cocktail lounges, at baggage claims, on the interstate, or in one-horse towns in Iowa --you name it.

The message: Life itself is full of the wonder of divinity in every moment, if we can but recognize it. To break through our barriers and resistance, Gururaj was a genius at employing what the Eastern texts call "skillful means."

He would dance and sing with us, paint pictures, spontaneously interpret dreams, kiss and hug us, lay his head in our laps, tell jokes (often distorting the punch line), give interviews to TV and radio stations that ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. He'd perform spontaneous, remarkable healings: dispense advice on marriage, recipes, or auto repair; correct our table manners, teach us the "right way to smoke", "open" our "third eyes" with the tines of a fork. He'd fall asleep in mid-satsang, perform weddings, run around airports flashing his VIP card, or make someone spend two days searching for a "missing check" that didn't exist. He went out to restaurants with us, got lost on strange city streets, and would summon people out of bed at 4:00 a.m. for healings. There is nothing on earth he wouldn't do to reach us with the astonishing force of his love.

The masks that he wore could be terrifying or clownish, austere or intimate, awesome, saintly, feeble, sagacious, penetrating, obtuse, smarmy, sickly, dark, glowering, magical, fun-loving, transcendently serene, stubborn, charming, patient, sweet, petty, stern, urbane, invasive, bullying, gracious, or staggeringly generous. In restaurants, he could act like someone's embarrassing uncle or brother-in-law; the next moment, he'd direct that penetrating laser-like gaze at you and present you with a perfect readout of your soul. You could not pin him down; just when you thought you'd got his number, he'd change shape, like the Greek god Proteus, and elude your grasp.

In many ways, he embodied the Indian tradition of the *avadhoot*, the god-intoxicated one. Traditionally, *avadhoots* are strange, highly disheveled, weird-appearing men or women who are drunk on God. They may wear no clothes; they may have Ganges mud caked in their hair; they may sing devotional songs to dogs. Though he didn't have mud in his hair and loved wearing a well-tailored English suit, Gururaj, like the *avadhoot*, was a mind-blowing force; the divinity flowing through him seemed too vast for the fragile shell of human personality. Strange things occurred in the charged field of his presence. Things would disappear inexplicably; other things that had been lost would be found; taxis or Indian dinners or ashtrays or checks sometimes would be summoned up out of nowhere, as if conjured by djinns. Sometimes one would fall into a sort of waking dream and see the subtle shapes of people and things, the haloes around them, the force fields between them, the thoughts in their mind, and the infinitely complex weaving of reality. Life would appear either marvelous or hilarious or both. And all this might happen while Gururaj was (apparently) delivering the most tedious or ponderous of lectures or (apparently) making no sense at all or (apparently) blowing the mind of a hapless reporter from a suburban Chicago newspaper.

How exactly he did this, how he worked his magic, no one knew. The best guess is that his ability had something to do with his radical and complete freedom. Beneath that shifting array of personae there was, we began to suspect no one home. Not that GR was some sort of zombie, but he was not attached to the self (the little "I" he was always talking about) and didn't care a whit about what happened to the package, what was said about it or thought about it, whether it looked good or not, whether it was well-thought-of. I, for one, had never met anyone like this before, and it changed my life.

Now for a crucial point: The stories in this first collection happened to take place when Gururaj was walking around in a body. Notice, however, how often the most powerful awakenings and initiations occurred when the chela was physically separated from the guru. Without a doubt, it isn't necessary to have the physical package of Gururaj around to experience the radical shift in consciousness that he referred to as the big "I." The consciousness we called Gururaj continues to touch and teach each and every one of his chelas, like the sun that shines on all equally, through the force of gurushakti that is woven into our lives. The next collection will also include some of the wonderful and illuminating gurushakti stories of chelas who first met Gururaj in his formless form.

–JAISHA

THE LIE

It was my first course, in October 1977. I'd driven for miles through the Jaw Desert, the Arizona sun blistering my skin, because I'd heard that a spiritual master from India would be there. I wanted to meet this person who had prescribed the practices I'd been doing for the past six months.

Before the first satsang, Gita made some announcements that warned us not to "bother" Gururaj because he needed rest after his long travels. Then in he strolled, wearing a tan shawl; a slight, rather handsome brown-skinned man with salt and pepper hair. He sat down, methodically removed his shoes, and searched for the glass of water on the table next to him. He smiled and greeted us by putting his hands together in a prayer like position, then asked us to close our eyes to meditate. After a few moments he said, "Slowly open your eyes." I thought he meant to open our eyelids like the slow shutter speed on a camera, so I was peering at him through half-open slits as I followed his instructions.

As he began to talk about the Big Bang and the beginning of the universe, I visualized matter swirling and whirling to a point of impenetrable density. Then my mind started to wander, and I thought, "How does this little brown man sitting up there on that platform know all of this? Who does he think he is? Hal" He spoke about the dazzling beauty of the desert, saying he saw gold everywhere and the desert was sparkling with life. Funny I hadn't noticed any signs of life, beyond a few cactuses as I drove across that boring flat, lifeless stretch of land. "Does he need a new pair of glasses?" My mind wondered, "Where did he get his training? What are his credentials?"

I had never heard anyone speak of these things before. He even spoke of God, and I didn't think anyone should be discussing this subject in public unless they were a priest or a minister. Yet his divine wisdom seemed to awaken some cells in me that had been sleeping for lifetimes.

The next day, after the satsang, someone came over and whispered in my ear that Gururaj would like me to join him for tea. Although I remembered Gita s warning us not to "get too close," I assumed that "the master is in charge." When I arrived and sat down, I found myself sitting right next to Gururaj.

His presence was magnetic. I tried to make small talk and ask him questions but he seemed more interested in asking me questions. He wanted to know where I lived, how many children I had and how old they were. Out of the blue, he asked me if I ever spanked my five-year-old daughter. I was taken aback. A couple of days ago I had spanked her for misbehaving and had felt bad about it. Was it possible that he knew about this? Oh my God, I didn't want him to think I was an abusive mother! I began to stutter and stammer; I felt flushed, then did the unthinkable - I lied!

All of a sudden, a lightning bolt shot from his eyes into mine and penetrated the core of my being. At that moment, I knew that this man knew me more than I knew myself! Simultaneously, I felt both fear and trust. I knew I could

never lie to him again. I felt he knew my entire life history. I felt as raw and vulnerable as a rabbit that is about to be eaten by a predator. I wanted to thicken the walls I had built around my heart that protected me from people who criticized and judged me. How could anyone love me? If Gururaj knew about all the bad things I'd done in my life, I thought, he could not love me. But he gazed at me with the deepest compassion, love, and understanding; I felt total acceptance and a deep love coming from this spiritual master. That bolt of lightning illuminated the darkness in my soul, and I knew that my life would never be the same.

-DOOREENA

SAYING GOODBYE

In the summer of 1978, in Santa Barbara, I found myself sitting in a room of a hundred or so strangers waiting for somebody called Gururaj Ananda Yogi -somebody whose name I'd repeated over and over in meditation for three months of last winter. I couldn't remember mulling over the decision to come out here. Who the hell had made this decision for me anyway!?!

I spent most of my time on the course alone. My roommate would show up late at night and disappear first thing in the morning. She was part of the "in" crowd of chelas whose constant laughter and camaraderie I envied. And this guru of theirs was coddled, waited upon, and revered constantly by these Secret Service types who guarded him from us untouchables, who were not even allowed to enter the small kitchen where his food was being prepared for fear we would "contaminate" it with our gross vibrations. "Oh, great!" I said to myself -since everybody else was too blissfully busy to listen. "Another roped-off guru in my life -just what my subtle body needs."

I caught glimpses of him through half-closed doors or amid hovering bodies as he was escorted down the hall. I saw him in full view during satsang, and then all I heard were reprimands for my lifestyle. How did this man know what was going on in my life? How did he know that I was a married woman having an affair? Who was he to remind me of the worthlessness of my activities of late? Something eerie was going on.

One day, as we were all given little tests for some strange practice we were to be given, I saw a white dove and what appeared to be a communion host. Mmmm, peace and the supposed body and blood of Jesus Christ: Maybe there was more to this guy than I thought. I decided to open my mind and peek out through the crack. I searched for Laura, the teacher who had initiated me into these practices that last winter and her husband, Bob, and I reconnected with them between photo poses on the lawn. Little did I know how vital their presence would be for me in years to come.

I found myself thinking more and more about this person who commanded such attention: an Indian with an English accent, a guru without beard or bright colors, who ignored me but drew me close, who knew me better than I knew myself.

On the last day, I needed to be alone to figure out what had just happened to me. Waiting in the front lobby of the UCSB dorm, I watched as people hugged, handled their luggage, and hugged again. Suddenly there was excitement in the air. Gururaj had just appeared in the hall, looking so casual, so approachable, without the usual bodyguards. It was the first time I'd seen him this way. He looked like a professor winding down the year. A father sending his kids off to college. An abandoned lover looking for his own.

I panicked. I wasn't ready for the one-to-one, face-to-face namaste exchange that appeared to be coming my way. I grabbed the phone on the counter I was leaning against "Oh really?!" I exclaimed into the receiver to no one. "That's wonderful!" I faked with convincing (to me) inhalations and exhalations. The thought of coming within inches of this masked marvel was suddenly all too much too soon! I wanted this kind of intimacy to be on my time, at my pace. I wanted some bit of control, having just lived a week without it. And he gave it. He knew that a flame too close to the face burns eyebrows. He knew it takes years for the ego to thin to clarity. But he primarily knew my life was his.

So, I didn't say goodbye to him that day in 1978. I regret that. I regret that I didn't run to him and wrap myself inside him. I regret that I didn't tell him all the things I tell him now. I regret that I continue to regret.

-MADHU

THE PHONEBOOK

One evening, on the road with Gururaj, we pulled into a Midwestern town where there was a university. Gururaj wanted to stop there and speak with some philosophy professors. After we settled into a nice hotel around five o'clock, he asked if I would like to see a miracle. Well, of course I did. He proclaimed that a miracle would occur.

We discussed going out to dinner and he said he felt like having Indian food. When I leafed through the yellow pages, however, I could not find any Indian restaurants in town. Gururaj said, "Go to the white pages and look up Patel." There was a long list of Patels. He selected one Patel and insisted that I dial the number. "Now, you just tell them that Gururaj, a great spiritual master from Gujarat has just arrived in town," he instructed me. "He would very much like to meet with them. Just tell them about me and that I am hungry and have not eaten for days."

I sat on the edge of the bed staring at the telephone book. All the Patels and their numbers were blurring together. I definitely did not want to dial up a stranger and convince them to come see my guru and provide him with dinner. But there was no escape. I was locked up in a hotel room with a hungry guru. So, the dialing began. The first Patel was not home, thank goodness. But under Gururaj's urging, I moved on to the next one who was home. I don't remember exactly what was said, except that I gave Gururaj a glorious buildup. Then he got on the phone ever so briefly and invited them to spend some time with him. No one could have refused.

Within an hour the room was filled with several Indian men and numerous containers of hot steaming, aromatic Indian dishes--warm basmati rice and chapattis wrapped in tin foil--a delicious multi-course meal. Gururaj ate with relish and held forth, providing the men with interesting conversation and a mini-satsang. As we packed up the containers, he gave special blessings, and the men left. I just shook my head in disbelief. Gururaj was obviously pleased. Though he never mentioned the miracle again, he watched me carefully to make sure that I got it.

I believe that he continually taught that life was full of everyday miracles. We can observe them all around us and create them any time. In this case, there was a need, and with a little intention and reaching out to others--strangers, in fact--the need was filled. No one was ever a stranger to Gururaj; every single human being was a friend and divine being. He was continually extending himself to others.

–VIDYA

DRINK THIS

One of the greatest experiences of my life occurred on a course with Gururaj in Pennsylvania in 1987--and it is recorded on videotape. I was an active alcoholic at the time. In the middle of a satsang Guruji called me up to sit next to him. Then he asked Roopa to bring him one of his syringes (with which he used to give himself insulin injections for his diabetes). Without comment he stuck the needle in the vein of his left arm and withdrew some of his blood, which he then mixed with a glass of water at his side.

"Drink this," he said to me, and I did, without a moment's delay. He told me it would help with my drinking problem. And it was the beginning of the end of my drinking . . .

I had lived alone since my divorce in 1984, and my drinking increased over the years until I admitted myself to the detox unit of the hospital in December 1987. I spent Christmas eve there and attended AA meetings. After I left the hospital I didn't have a drink for 37 days, and then I started to drink again.

On May 17, 1988, I was working on a rolling-type scaffold about eight feet above a concrete floor. The wheels were supposed to be locked in place, but suddenly the scaffold shot out from under me and I was in free-fall, upside down and backwards. The first thing to make contact with the cement was the back of my head and my right elbow. I had a shattered rotator cuff tear which later required three operations. The back of my head hit the cement so hard that the blow knocked out four of my teeth, caused permanent damage to my spine at the back of my neck, and set up a permanent ringing in my ears. The accident was a blessing and a sorrow. As a result, I never have to work again and will have an income for the rest of my life. On the other hand, when I finally got home from the hospital, the telephone rang. It was Ramu, calling to tell me Guruji had died.

While I was in the hospital, however, I was diagnosed with alcoholic hepatitis and high blood pressure (240/120). Guruji had predicted both these ailments. About a year earlier, during a healing, he told me, "You were going to die in a year of a liver ailment and a heart condition, but because of this healing, your life has been extended by ten years." Then he removed his socks and said, "Here, put these on." I did, and I still have them. They are grey and very soft.

Though I tried to stop drinking, I could not. By December, 1988, I still had all these problems. On the morning of December 10, I went to a dentist, who took one look at me and got out his blood pressure cuff. I was 240 over 120 again! He said he couldn't work on me and I should see a doctor. I did not.

On Monday morning, December 12, 1988, my physical therapist convinced me to see a doctor. While driving over to my doctor's office, I realized that it was over; to drink was to die. (At the time I was drinking a fifth of whiskey a day). I parked my car, switched off the engine, closed my eyes, and pictured Guruji in my mind. I said, "Guruji, I

have tried to quit drinking and I can't. Now they tell me that I will die if I do not stop. I need your help!" I sat there in the silence for a few moments and then went into the doctor's office.

Guruji has said that when you totally surrender to a situation, it sets up a force that draws the solution to you. I haven't had or wanted a drink of alcohol since that day, December 12, 1988. Only later did I learn that it was Guruji's birthday.

–BALOO

THANK YOU, LOVE

It was at the course in Wisconsin. This person named Vidya, who had given me my full practices, came out and announced that "they" needed help washing dishes. The course was being held on a college campus and there were lots of people there, not just our group. Assuming the main kitchen needed help, I thought, "The hell with that." But another meditator from our area told me that it was Gururaj's dishes they were talking about and that she was going to help because that meant you could be around "him." I don't remember what I thought about being around Gururaj, but I decided to go with this woman with whom I seemed to have a potential friendly connection.

At the appointed time, we went to his cabin. I don't recall now ever washing dishes, though maybe we did. But then Vidya came out and ushered us into his dining area. The only chair available was right behind him. I sat down pretty much ignoring what was going on and feeling very out of place and shy. I was sitting with my leg crossed over my knee. Suddenly he turned around, put his hand on my leg, and said "Hi."

Feeling very shy, I smiled and said "Hi." He turned back and never said another word to me. Some time later, maybe another day, maybe later that day, I was invited in to where he was having tea. A small group of chelas filed in and sat down. He started to talk. Outside, someone was mowing the lawn and it was very disruptive. Gururaj announced loudly, "I could quiet that lawn mower with just a thought!"

I thought, "Yeah, do it then." He didn't.

He was having a drink, and his glass was almost empty. He asked if someone could get a refill. I said I would, picked up his glass, and went to the kitchen. Vidya was there. She told me how to fix his drink. I fixed it and suddenly I was overcome with love and a desire to serve. Tears came to my eyes. I stood there choking them back until I could go back in the room. I set his glass down in front of him and sat back down. He was talking and didn't seem to notice the drink. He continued to talk but still did not drink. Finally, another chela pushed the drink closer to him and said, "Here's your drink, Gururaj." He smiled, and, beaming at her with obvious gratitude, said, "Thank you, Love."

I didn't feel resentful then and I still don't. It struck me then as a humorous way of teaching, and it still does.

-SUTRIYA

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH YOU

I would have loved it if Gururaj had said or done bizarre things to me, but I guess I wasn't up for the more heavy-duty treatments. He was always very straightforward with me, usually more or less in the "Let's talk man to man" mode. In fact, this was a phrase he actually used in one of our first encounters. On my first or second short course, I scheduled an appointment to see him. While waiting, I spent my time talking to a more reluctant chela about the importance of meeting the guru. I said how wonderful it was going to be, what a rare privilege to encounter a genuine spiritual master, et cetera. And, sure enough, she got the full treatment of embraces, mystical communions, earnest utterances of "my darling, how lovely," plus a spiritual name: the full meal deal.

Now, admittedly, I was not as cute or maybe as endearing as some lovely young female chela, and maybe my mixture of skepticism and deep earnestness was less appealing than an encounter with a more straightforward devotee, but I was expecting some variation of "At last my son, you have come!" What I got was a little Indian man smoking a cigarette. He promptly offered me one, made himself comfortable, invited me to do the same, and then started in like a well-intentioned businessman uncle. "What can I do for you? Let's talk man to man...." I was so taken aback that I started mumbling something about wanting to get a decent job. This was pretty idiotic in retrospect, but it was at least an honest portrayal of my state of mind. He looked at me seriously and assured me that a better job was just around the corner, then started hustling me toward the door.

Here it was, my encounter with an enlightened master coming to an abrupt and wasted conclusion, so I quickly started babbling about the state of my chakras. My dear wife, in one of her attempts to help me out, had said that she perceived some sort of blockage or damage in some part of my "subtle body." This had worried me, so I tried to forestall my abrupt rejection from the guru's presence by asking about possible damage to the chakric system. He just looked at me with just a hint of impatience and said, "No, no, there's nothing wrong with you!" and pushed me out the door.

So, what did I get from that? I got that however much I want to profit from spirituality, to improve myself with spirituality, to add to my repertoire of information about spirituality-- this is going to be a fruitless exercise. There is really nothing to gain and nothing to fix. There's nothing at all wrong with me.

-JEFF

THE LESSON

I never knew what would happen when Gururaj and my family spent time together. Any one of them might act up and I'd be left dealing with "their" messes. One of Preatam's visits in particular stood out. He spent about four or five days at our house during a time when our nine-year-old older daughter was going through a very difficult period, doing poorly in school and acting out socially. My husband and I were at our wit's end. One evening she was supposed to be home from her friend's house around 5 PM. As time passed, and sunset turned to a pitch-black sky, our concerns grew from mild annoyance to panic. Preatam sat around the kitchen table with us, not saying a word, just watching the drama unfold--our pacing, the frantic phone calls to friends, parents, et cetera.

We were just about to call the police when Lauren casually walked in. Just as Mark and I were getting ready to scream at her, Preatam took over. Speaking to her lovingly but firmly, he told her to take off his shoes. I couldn't believe my ears. "I wanted to strangle Preatam. "No, not now!" I screamed silently to myself. "No games now, Preatam! Mark will have a fit. Be quiet. Let us handle it!" He paid no attention to my silent requests. The master was directing the show. Lauren WAS going to attend to him.

Lauren had a hard time untying his shoelaces. The more frustrated she became, the more lovingly Preatam spoke to her and guided her. As Mark watched this scene, the veins in his neck visibly bulged and pulsated. He looked into my eyes with incredible disbelief. Then Preatam asked Lauren to polish his shoes. She didn't know where the shoe polish was, so one of us had to get it. Preatam got each of us involved in physically doing something for her. Lauren started crying, and he then instructed her in the art of polishing shoes. All of our attention was on polishing the shoes, not the fact that she had all of us in an uproar just a few short minutes ago.

So, what's the lesson? It probably had something to do with where to keep our attention -on love and instruction instead of anger? The next day Mark and I had an appointment with an educational therapist, whom we were consulting because Lauren wasn't doing well in school. We had set this appointment up months ahead of time. The dilemma: Do we leave the guru? We had to make a choice: the guru or the therapist. What a choice! I figured the guru was going to be with us for quite a while, and we had to do what was "right" for our daughter. Forget the airy-fairy, spiritual stuff; we wanted to be real. So we went to the therapist. (I look back upon this and laugh and laugh. I can't believe I left the presence of a guru to take my family to an unenlightened woman who probably had more neuroses than I did!) Preatam let us go and never said a word about it. When we returned, he asked us about what happened and seemed to be so interested in what the therapist had said. Every time I think about this, I chuckle. How patient he was with me.

He truly gave me the space to be where I was instead of pushing me to a point that I probably would have left him. However, as the years went on, he wasn't so gentle with me. He seemed to know when to give me the space to be me and when to push me out of an airplane to skydive knowing I was afraid of heights.

-GOMILA

I COULDN'T LEAVE

The first year or two I was around Gururaj he pointedly ignored me, or so it seemed. Then, at some point, he began to pay attention to me constantly, whether I wanted it or not. Wherever I turned, he was behind me, beside me, talking to me, kissing me, smiling at me, fondling me.

The first time I became aware of this was at a weekend get-together at the house of some chelas in Washington, D.C. These chelas had invited over a bunch of "very spiritual" acquaintances, conscientiously pure New Age people who spoke a lot about light and love, to meet their wonderful guru. Well, you can imagine! Gururaj spent this evening doing everything in his power not to ingratiate himself, and we never saw the light-and-love people again. My impressions of that night were of a bunch of people milling about, a banquet being served for hours, and Gururaj walking around joking with people, disappearing upstairs for a while to do impromptu healings and popping up again like an elf. It got very late and, like the Energizer bunny, he just kept going.

My memory of that night is wrapped in a sort of gauzy membrane, as if I was stoned, with the scene broken up into bright, shimmering puzzle pieces that refuse to cohere. I remember Gururaj hovering around me like a besotted suitor, kissing me, looking penetratingly into my eyes, holding my hands. There was a long, passionate kiss in the hallway, in front of dozens of puzzled onlookers (including the light and love people, I suppose). Although I was embarrassed, I was also entranced by the way the energy was heating up, jazzing up, everything seeming to spinning faster and faster, so that we all seemed to be moving in some amazing lucid dream. Gururaj announced to the multitude that I was his fiancée and that we were getting married, and he took a ring off my finger and slipped it on again as if we were standing before an altar.

At the same time that he was "marrying" me, I could feel that Gururaj was simultaneously twiddling with everyone else in the room. I marveled at the way he could work on a dozen levels at once, while sending out this laser beam straight to my heart, and scrambling my circuits so that I saw just him and me in the room. I suspect that this was happening to many others, too, and that each of us had the illusion that we alone were Radha dancing with the god Krishna, as in the Hindu myth. At times I'd think, "Jeez, what am I doing here with this totally out-of-control Indian man?" But there was this intoxicating feeling and I felt I couldn't leave.

The next day I had to take the train back to New York City. After an hour or so I looked up from my book and realized that I was in a really strange state. I couldn't seem to find any solid ground underfoot, and I was becoming disoriented and paranoid like someone on a bad drug trip. There was nothing solid or familiar to hang onto. The personality I had carefully cultivated for some thirty years was crumbling and dissolving like a sandcastle eroded by the sea. The scenery around me was as alien as if I'd landed on the surface of Mars. I blamed it on the book I was reading at the time and for many years believed that the author was extremely powerful to be able to induce such a

mental state in me. Later, I reread this writer and discovered he wasn't all that great. It wasn't the book. And this would happen again and again around Gururaj as, for a few minutes, or days, or weeks, he removed our veils and showed us a new world.

–JAISHA

DO NOT TRY TO POSSESS ME

It was hard to get a handle on Gururaj. "Do not ever try to possess me," he intoned one night as we sped along an M-something highway in England from High Leigh towards Liverpool, going at least 83 miles an hour in Charles's comfortable large sedan. All I could see of Gururaj was his silhouette popping in and out of view in the headlight glare of cars on the other side of the railing, the light bouncing briefly off his oily coffee-toned skin or flashing through his graying hair. Mostly I saw a black shape of head and shoulder with a shawl over his Nehru jacket.

He had spoken to Gita, just before getting into Charles's car, in a tone that was harsher than his normal kind tone with her. He seemed to be pushing her away from him because she was trying too hard to control him. "Do not ever by to possess me, for I can never be possessed. Don't fence me in!" He hummed the song, slightly off-tune, as if to lighten the weight of his words.

I remember thinking that if I ever got a chance even to try to possess Gururaj, I must remember this moment -our car racing through the night with a few glowing green lights on the dashboard indicating M.P.H., time, and fuel, the passing headlights illuminating Gururaj's head in silhouette, the ominous warning tone: Do not ever try to possess me. Don't fence me in. I understood right there and then that one does not lasso a Guru.

-ROOPA

THE CIGARETTE

I remember the time some of us delivered Gururaj from the meditation retreat at Techny Towers to Chicago for his important lecture at Loyola University. There happened to be some time to kill before the talk, memorable due to the pictures I took of Guruji standing at the back of Praseela's station wagon. He was wearing his white "guru shirt," which made him look like a dentist on a break, except for the beads. And I remember being very impressed to find Charles Shaw meditating right outside the lecture hall, while throngs of chattering people arrived. How could anyone possibly meditate within all that chaos?

Gururaj gave his lecture that afternoon and spoke at great length about the "cosmic orgasm" that created the universe, to an audience consisting primarily of older, graying, short-haired women. Now, having been treated to the same topic on the retreat the week before, we were not particularly embarrassed by this. But it wasn't until later that we realized Gururaj had been speaking to a room full of plain-clothes nuns.

Afterwards, we took Guruji and his entourage to a spacious, well-known vegetarian restaurant. A large sign on the wall proclaimed that this was a no-smoking restaurant, which in 1983 was very unusual. Ten to fifteen of us sat at a long table, the only patrons in the place. About that time, I was dying for a cigarette, and had to leave the assembled company to go outside to smoke it. When I returned, Gururaj was in the process of demanding an ashtray from the Pakistani waiter. Vidya and others were busy meekly explaining who Gururaj was, but it was clear that the waiter needed no explanation and rushed off to procure Guruji his ashtray. As Guruji now was having his smoke, I figured it was safe for me to light up, too; it was, after all, an open-air restaurant. But the minute I applied flame to cigarette, the waiter came over to me, making it plain that I was not going to be smoking inside that restaurant that day. It was not for many years later that I realized the lesson in this incident- that a totally free person can have or do anything they want.

- PRIYA

THE MIRROR

In 1982, while on tour with Gururaj, I began to see him as a mirror. The first incident occurred in Cincinnati. We were all packed and ready to load the suitcases into the car to leave for the next town when he suddenly said, "Where is my watch?" After searching the house unsuccessfully, he opened his neatly packed, well-organized suitcase and began tearing through everything, making a terrible mess.

Gururaj was very well organized; he knew where everything was and he took in everything around him. Therefore, his behavior seemed peculiar. Visibly upset he began ranting on and on about the lost watch and burst into a terrible sweat. Soon he was dripping and mad as a wet hen, and clothes were strewn all over the floor.

I stood there mesmerized, watching the play, disbelieving my eyes. I had never seen such behavior and could not make heads or tails of it. As I observed and tried to assist in the search, I wondered what I should be learning from this ordeal. Gradually, I became aware that I was watching my own disorganized self. His suitcase now looked more like mine, a total mess. I would always lose things and then get upset. I began to be amazed that it was as if I was watching myself in action. "Oh God, is it really that bad?" I asked myself. Yes, it was. I knew my inefficiency and disorganization was an annoyance to him, and this is what it looked like. I actually thought he must have hidden the watch. I still don't really know about the watch, but in those moments he was the perfect mirror for my disorganized behavior.

–VIDYA

THE GOLDEN LIGHTER PRACTICE

Gururaj loved to put his chelas through what we used to call "the Golden Lighter Practice" which was; "I've lost my golden lighter. We have to drop everything and look for it." On one trip, he did the golden lighter practice at every house we visited several times. He'd get everyone crawling around on their hands and knees searching for the missing lighter, and the outcome was always the same. The lighter always turned up in one of the pockets of his pants.

So, not being too dumb, the next time it would happen, we chelas would raise our hands and say, "Uh, Gururaj, we know where the golden lighter is." And he'd say, "No, it's not there. I've looked through my pants three times, and no one else is allowed to go through my pockets. Don't touch my pants!" And again we'd ransack the house searching for it, and 98 percent of the time it would be in the pocket of the pants hanging in the closet. But he'd insist on going through this whole search routine -sometimes lifting up everything in the house and opening all the drawers. There was no getting out of it.

He must have felt we needed that lesson a lot to go over it again and again. He must have seen that we didn't know that which ignites the golden light within you is not to be found anywhere but in your personal possession. It's there all the time; it can never be lost. But we go through the process of acting as if we'd lost it, wasting our time running all over the place looking for it.

-ROOPA

ADDING IT TOGETHER

It was the day after a large California course in which we had a number of foreign chelas in attendance. Gururaj, Vidya, Roopa and I were sitting around our dining room table. Gururaj took out a whole handful of money and pushed it across the table to me. "Count that," he said. So, I dutifully sorted all the dollars into one pile, the pesetas into a pile, the Canadian dollars into a pile, the Danish money into a pile, and the South African rands into a pile. Then I totaled them in their separate piles. I handed him the totals. He said, "Now add those up." So, I carefully went through the same process again and handed him the totals, though I was a little angry about his having doubted me. He said, "Now add those together."

I said, "You can't add those together. They're altogether different. They don't have similar values."

"Add those together," he insisted. I was getting really angry, as I always did when he simply would not understand.

"I can't add those up!" I said loudly and emphatically. They're all different."

"Put those together and add them up!" he demanded.

This went on for a few more minutes. I was getting increasingly angry and loud in my pronouncements and he was getting equally loud and insistent in his demand. Finally, I gave up and added them all together and presented him with the total saying "Ok, here you are. X amount (I don't exactly remember the total) of whatever."

"There," he said smiling.

There are so many ways that he taught us that it takes all of us together to make the whole chela body.

-SUTRIYA

BEING TAKEN CARE OF

Gururaj: utterly aware, yet like the flower, utterly unaware, or simply paying no attention to his gift. No self-involvement there, "My, I am lovely this morning!" -except as a teaching for us. He could don his fancy dress with the best of us -or go off in the morning without even washing.

I remember the day we were to have lunch at Harriet's home and then attend a play. How long had she worried and planned about how to serve a luncheon to the guru? How many calls had I received about what he eats and what he doesn't, would this be right, would that be right? Worrying, planning for weeks ahead.

Gururaj came downstairs about nine AM saying, "We must leave now. Get in the car." His hair hadn't been combed; he looked like he'd slept in his clothes and gotten up hastily. "But no, Guruji," I said, "the play isn't until two o'clock. It takes only an hour to drive there, or even less. We certainly don't have to leave now!" My mind raced around looking for a way out of this. The luncheon: all of Harriet's carefully prepared food, all the time and effort she'd put in. How could this situation be saved?

It couldn't of course. When the guru said, "Go," we went! No amount of protesting would help. We were off, leaving Harriet alone to do her own "practice."

Then for our "practices." First, the drive. The traffic was terrible, I'd never seen it so heavy. Sujay, as the driver, was beside himself. He fussed and fumed and cursed and spouted. There was no containing his consternation. I sat in back thinking, "Sujay, why are you so concerned? Guruji's here. You know everything will be fine!" Amazing how much easier it was to see this when it was someone else worrying about the time!

We arrived at the airline offices to exchange Guruji's tickets, and Sujay and Guruji went in. What should have taken 15 or 20 minutes stretched into well over an hour. Who knows what practices the poor, unsuspecting airline office workers were being put through? Vidya and I waited in the car, meditating and enjoying each other's company.

By the time we arrived at the theater it was about 1:45 PM - just time to grab a bag from Burger King and take it in with us. Nothing like burgers in the front row of the balcony while the play is going on!

Watching Evita with Gururaj that day was probably the foundational lesson he taught me. It was like the canvas on which all the other lessons were painted. I became very involved in the play; it seemed as if my life were being acted out on stage. Gururaj sat next to me. I had the awareness at a deep level that every move he made, literally every breath he took, was for me, for us. He would turn toward me, turn away, put his arm around me, put it down. He would take a breath or let it out completely in synch with whatever I needed at the time. I had a sense that he did not hold anything back, not even the rate of his breathing to satisfy his own needs or desires.

How often in those days he would answer a need I hadn't spoken. I remember standing in a room next to the satsang room. I was near the table with books for sale, I think, but I wasn't looking at the books. He veered off from his course down the hall and came in and asked if I was all right. He had sensed my need for reassurance even though it wasn't strong enough for me to even remember what it was about All I remember is feeling a deep sense of being taken care of, an awareness that he would always be there if I needed something, no matter how slight.

–PRASEELA

BEING WHO HE IS

On my first or second course with Gururaj, he was doing mantra checks -a good thing, as it happened, since he and I were pronouncing my mantra very differently. As usual, he acted the straightforward businessman uncle (or Godfather, really, since this is more the way I thought of him) as he chatted to me about this or that. I asked him about past lives and some other stuff that I can't remember. He answered straightforwardly, with the assurance that comes not from opinion or book knowledge but from deep personal experience.

In response to some question of mine, he said that as a result of sticking to my spiritual practices I would eventually become "Jeff-Ananda." He chuckled as he said this, but this has come to have deep significance for me. He did not say I would "merge with divinity" or "become enlightened and at one with the universe." He didn't even say that I would "become united with the inner guru." He said I would become Jeff-Ananda.

Roughly translated, this means "He who finds Bliss in Being Who He Is." Not in some disembodied cosmic enlightened state, but as this somewhat overweight, preoccupied, mustached, middle-aged college professor/artist guy. In other words, I would find enlightenment in this body and this personality right here, not in some other special way of being or believing. As a Buddhist sutra puts it, "This very body is the Body of the Buddha."

–JEFF

WRITE ABOUT ME!

There was the feeling around Gururaj that anything could happen. An airport lounge patron might metamorphose into a harpy, with wings and a sharp beak, and, crying caw-caw-caw, flap over to the bar with her notepad in her beak. Your insides might fall out or your secret innermost thoughts might be projected above your head in a cartoonish thought balloon.

You never knew what he might make you do, how he'd put you on the spot maybe give you some humiliating task to perform. Once, while Gururaj was staying in Washington, he spent the entire weekend working on Jagriti until he got her to phone the governor of Maryland, or maybe it was the lieutenant governor, and tell him that a great wise and learned professor/guru from India was in town and would like to talk to him. (Maybe he was mirroring all the Washington power-and-influence vibes.) I recall that somehow this all went on at about 11:30 at night, yet somehow Jagriti got the governor or lieutenant governor to agree to a meeting. Gururaj lost interest almost immediately, as soon as he'd gotten Jagriti to do his bidding. She had to call the governor's office the next day and cancel.

In the first years I knew him he would come over to me, take my hands in his, gaze soulfully into my eyes, and, trembling with emotion, say, "Write about me!" At the time I was a staff writer for a section of Good Housekeeping magazine that featured articles like "How to Travel with your Pet." I did not know how I could possibly write about Gururaj, how to convince my boss to run a piece like "Enlightenment: Is It for You?" So I'd say, "Uh, okay, Gururaj, and he'd gaze at me silently for a few more minutes, while he read my mind and no doubt saw that I had no intention of writing about him. But he never gave up. The next time we met he'd keep trying to reach me, gazing at me lovingly and saying gently, "Write about me."

I never did, of course -until now.

-JAISHA

APPEARANCES

When I first started attending meditation courses, I felt like a third thumb, so I decided to do something so I'd feel more a part of the group. Since I love to iron, I volunteered to iron Preatam's clothes every morning. Now I realize the tremendous shakti inherent in just handling his clothes.

One morning, when we were all up in Woodstock for a June course, I got up very early-6:00 AM- and decided to go iron. Just in case I might run into the guru, I made sure to have my mascara on. (I'm laughing so hard I can't write.) I was peacefully ironing away when who should come toddling out of his bedroom but Gururaj himself. He was balancing a teacup in one hand, his teeth were loose, and his hair stood on end like a fright wig.

He walked right up to me and said, "Donna, my dear, we're just one big, happy family--no need to put on appearances." I could feel every eyelash coated with mascara and wondered at the time why I felt embarrassed and he didn't.

-DANUSHA

HIS HAND NEAR MINE

I remember being with Gururaj on airplane passages between courses. How thrilled I would be to see his hand near mine, the homey, familiar soft brown of his skin -a foreign skin color from the province of Gujarat -with a few sparse hairs on the fingers and back of the hands. Through those hands passed waves of love; invisible, vibrating, inexplicable, realer than dirt.

As long as that left hand, that right hand, were on board, I didn't care where the plane flew, whether it ever landed, or even if we crashed. To look at Preatam's hands as the plane lifted us thirty thousand feet above the earth was to feel utterly safe and fearless; to know myself at peace in the hands of life itself, my creator, and the source of my life.

I never thought of it that way then, of course. I'd just look at Preatam's hands and feel an odd, poignant twinge like a curlicue of motion in my belly beneath my navel, like joyful electricity or a dog jumping at a door to greet its beloved master. Looking at his hands, with their veins standing out ever so slightly, a well-ironed cuff nearby on the wrist, with a gold cufflink winking out from under the sleeve of a finely-tailored suit, I felt all was well, and I felt myself at the center of the navel of the Universe.

—ROOPA

THE FIREFLY

Jeff and I lived in St Louis for four years. Though those years brought us lifelong friendships and our first contact with Gururaj, I still missed home and the east coast terribly. Day in and day out, I actively yearned to leave. As I watched U-Hauls arrive in our student neighborhood and load up or unload and drive away twice a year, I counted the days until we would do that, too. At the beginning of the fourth year, Jeff decided to leave his teaching job at the end of the year. We planned to just take off and see what happened back east.

In November, we met Gururaj for the first time. In June, I went to a five-day course at Lake Geneva; I totally adored my guru and loved AMS. In July I was deliriously happy to be packing up the apartment. We would leave as soon as Jeff finished his summer teaching.

Then, one hot humid night after a long evening talk with a colleague, Jeff came home and said, "let's take a walk. I want to tell you something." Off we went in the dark to sit together on a park bench under the streetlights facing the darkened children's park. He excitedly put forth a plan to stay here, and buy a house -a plan that was not very reasonable, given that his teaching job didn't pay enough for us to own a car or even heat the apartment we had. His bad salary was a major motivation for wanting to leave. He was very enthusiastic but I was in shock! I didn't say much, but in my heart and mind a loud universe-filling cry went out: "Gooo-Rooo-Raaaaaaaaj!!!!!"

While he continued to talk, I saw a lone firefly light up directly across from our park bench. I just watched it while Jeff went on. It quietly blinked on and off and gently circled the large and very dark park, until it came to rest in the leaves directly above my head.

I said nothing. Jeff quieted down. We walked home. The crisis had passed, and I don't think we ever discussed it again. Soon we were merrily back to packing, filling our own little U-Haul, and leaving St. Louis forever. We hit the open road and ended up living for one wonderful year on the Connecticut shoreline.

Gurushakti has continued to change form for me, in subtlety, complexity and rotundity. But I call this early and powerful experience "G.S. 101" because it was such a simple, sweet and direct response of my earliest years as a meditator.

—LORIETA

THE BOON

I was anxiously awaiting Preatam's arrival in the United States, feeling like Cinderella awaiting the Prince to take her to the ball. The last time Preatam was in the United States he had promised me a boon, something I had wanted my whole life. He told me I would be ready to receive it the next time he was in the country.

I couldn't eat or sleep. For months before Preatam was due to arrive, I'd become very consistent in all of my spiritual practices. I did not miss any meditations. I was elated. Preatam, my boon bestower, was coming to town! He was staying at the house of a man who was doing research on Preatam's healings at his clinic. The man lived two minutes from my home, and Preatam would alternate his time at the researcher's house and my home. This night Preatam was to have dinner at my home and, when everyone left, bestow the boon.

After dinner, he went into a long monologue about Christ. There were many people there and as usual, all eyes were focused on Preatam. Finally, he turned to me and said, "Sorry, lovey, this material is too important for me not to share with others." I don't remember a word he said. I was getting antsy by the moment. I had fasted, showered, and dressed all in white to prepare for the boon. It is always hard for me not to eat when I smell food, and I was irritated that I had gone without eating for no reason at all!

As he was getting ready to leave, Preatam pulled me aside and said goodnight to me. He told me not to worry. After the healings at the clinic tomorrow he would bestow the boon on me. I was disappointed but trusted that tomorrow would come and I would receive my heart's desire. I felt foolish that I was annoyed at him. Of course I could wait an extra day.

Well, the next day came, and I received a phone call. Gururaj was too busy doing healings and he couldn't meet with me until after the intro talk at a hotel that evening. Again, I was disappointed but didn't lose hope. Again, I fasted, did my meditation practices, showered, and wore white. After the intro talk he came over to me and said the hour was very late and dinner was waiting. He had to go over to this his hosts' home for dinner and didn't want the dinner to get cold. By now, I was ticked off! How many other dinners went cold before he decided to eat? Now, after being with him for so many years, I realize he had set me up big-time. I can laugh now, but at the time it wasn't very funny.

Furious I went into my meditation room, slammed the door, ripped up all the pictures of Preatam I could find and cursed at him. I ripped off my white clothes, throwing them piece by piece around my room. "Forget it," I said to myself. "I don't need him anymore." I sat down to meditate and after a short time, I received my boon. It was incredible! I don't know how long I was in meditation, but it was quite a while, and the whole time I was in ecstasy. It was 1:00 by the time I was able to come out of meditation, and then I called up the home where Preatam was

staying to inform him he didn't have to come over as I had received the fullness of the boon. Vidya gave Preatam the message and told me that he said, "The nature of a guru is to give."

Ten minutes later, he and Vidya appeared at my doorstep. We went into my family room, where we drank scotch and he offered me a cigarette. I said no; I had stopped smoking seven years ago. He insisted. I gave in and had a cigarette. A while later, he had me lie down on the couch and gave me another spiritual practice. It felt like an initiation. The rest of the night, until 4:30 AM, Preatam, Vidya and I spent timeless time together. I was awake to the living presence of love.

For a week, I was in a different state of consciousness. Then, when I went to visit Preatam in Bourbonnais a week later, I became totally grounded. Preatam was giving another intro talk at the Andersons' house. Reporters, nuns and others were there. Preatam was in rare form, cursing, drinking, and shouting. I saw myself shrinking from his loud, aggressive, obnoxious behavior. I totally withdrew from him and was totally turned off. The week before he was the living presence of love; now he was a monster.

The teaching? He bestowed the boon on me when he wasn't present so that I wouldn't become attached to his personality. Also, it's easy to be love when you are in its presence, but can you keep your heart open in hell?

-GOMILA

THE EXPERIENCE

I found myself sitting in a normal, uncomfortable chair at a course in Chicago, on the second of three consecutive courses during the summer of 1987. I didn't care one iota what the material world dictated to me concerning family responsibilities. I was determined to attend all the summer courses that year. Once that spear of "yes" pierced my heart, there was no one or no thing that stood in my way. I felt strong and godlike. No authority figure was going to place one little finger in my plan of following my Beloved across the country and my internal Goddess refused to sit again in a sea of passivity.

Aim hrim krimming away in a front row, amidst the folks I loved most, I suddenly found myself without body, without thought, without anything but the experience of experience. An experience of floating into, maybe through, an enormous iris. This iris was existence itself. Yet awareness was all that surrounded me (if I was me at all). I was exhilaration, period. Suddenly, the tiniest of thoughts entered from somewhere (it seemed to be a fear thought) and all instantly crumbled away and dissolved. I was hurled back into a fleshy body of form. The shock was almost too much and I found myself crying uncontrollably from sheer grief at the loss of that totality. I wanted only to return to that experience, to live forever one with it (Mere words are utterly inadequate to describe it now).

That night, when Preatam asked if anyone wanted to share an experience with the group, I thought, "What the hell..." and stood to speak. Little did I know that there was to be no sharing. Surrendering to my human inability to speak of it, I collapsed in his lap and mourned my loss. Only he could comfort me at that moment. Only this one, fleshy form could have true compassion. This was all I was absolutely and entirely certain of. It was a bond made of pure understanding -I with my head in his lap, sobbing, and he soothing my head with his soft hand and his voice.

He knew. The experience was him.

-MADHU

THE AIRPORT

Watching Gururaj in airports was really a trip, because there was this incredible force in him. Absolutely nobody knew who he was, but they couldn't take their eyes off him. He loved to be the center of attention, always. Any way he could get your attention, that's what he was here to do.

Once, in O'Hare Airport, we ran across this Hare Krishna person. He was dressed as a regular person, in his civvies, but he had that Hare Krishna look and he was going around accosting people, giving books away. Gururaj just watched him for a while. And, of course, Gururaj wanted him to give him something. Gururaj always liked people to give him presents, no matter what they were. One of the things he liked to do in airports was to get total strangers to give him things. So he went up to the Hare Krishna person and started asking him about what he was selling, pretending he didn't know much. And the Hare Krishna person started talking. And from some of the things Gururaj was saying, he said, "Oh, you must know something about bhakti; you must have some sense of bhakti yourself."

And I said, jokingly, "Know about bhakti? He's an object of bhakti!" But the guy evidently decided there was something wrong with Gururaj because he had beer on his breath and was saying things like, "Now you listen here, young man!" And it became obvious that he didn't think Gururaj was worth the effort, that he was never going to fully understand about the truth of God and bhakti and things like that. But he had to do his dharma and so he gave Gururaj the book. And Gururaj was telling him he needed to go to lectures and learn more and so forth and they had this interchange, and then the Hare Krishna guy had the effrontery to ask Gururaj for a donation.

Gururaj said, "Donation? You are giving me the book!" And the Hare Krishna person said, "Yes, well, we need a donation in return for the gift. You could give us some money, you know?" So Gururaj presented him with a challenge. He said, "If you give me this book and do not ask me to give you anything back, I can promise you your gift will be returned a hundredfold. But if you ask me to pay you money because you gave me a gift, I can only return your book to you and say you haven't understood why you are giving it." The Hare Krishna person failed the test. He took the book back because we didn't give him any money.

-ROOPA

NO NEED TO CONTINUE

Gururaj and I were seated at the small, round glass-topped table in Vidya's kitchen in Bourbonnais. Vidya was bustling around the kitchen, clearing up after dinner. As the conversation waned, Gururji began pounding out one of those erratic Hindu rhythms of which he was so fond. I knew as soon as he started this that I would have to grin and bear it. There was generally no stopping him once started, no way to exit gracefully from what to me was unbearable torture. I was trapped like a rat in a trap.

Several minutes passed and Vidya and I exchanged martyred looks, rolling our eyes. Didn't he realize how excruciatingly boring this was for me? Again, I tried to ignore it or tune it out, but this just seemed to inspire him to greater and louder heights and the beat went on and on and on...

Finally, when I thought I could absolutely take no more, something snapped inside of me. "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em," I thought and I began pounding the table with him, trying to synchronize my rhythm with his. Within 20 to 30 seconds Gururji came to an abrupt halt, the concert over.

He had made his point. I had finally stopped resisting and brought my mind into the present moment along with his. The lesson learned, there was no need to continue.

-PRIYA

READING THOUGHTS

I was always astounded when Gururaj read my thoughts. One hot July afternoon, I was driving a bronze Seville Cadillac from Cincinnati to Washington, D.C. and Gururaj was in the passenger seat, looking at the scenery. He appeared lost in his own thoughts and we rode in silence. My mind wandered, flitting from subject to subject. Then my mind posed a question, and Gururaj immediately answered the question out loud. My mind formed another question, which he again promptly answered. I glanced over at him, and he winked. This was my first direct experience of his mind-reading ability.

"How did you do that?" I asked. He just laughed and said, "Don't ever think you can keep anything from me, lovey." I inquired if he could always do this and if it got boring and tedious to always know people's thoughts. No, he said; it just happened and he could divert his attention away when he chose to.

–VIDYA

THE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

My very first long course took place In June 1985. On that course, I had a "midnight special" experience that blew my socks off -probably the most powerful meditative experience I've ever had. I don't want to describe it. Suffice to say I had a "vision" in which I really understood who Gururaj was and what was to be my relationship to him for this life's duration. I say that now but I don't think I understood it at that time. At the time, I was completely astonished and amazed that it occurred without any conscious attempt to make it happen. It just came at me during the meditation of the "midnight special," and was unlike anything I had ever read about, expected to happen, or had previously experienced.

So I was pretty excited. I wanted to see Gururaj immediately the next day, and Roopa, who was used to this sort of thing I suppose, was completely nonplussed. She and Vidya were bustling around, getting the Guru ready for the next event, as I was unceremoniously bundled in to see him. I had no real idea of what had happened to me, but I thought it must be important, so I was a little put off by how matter-of-factly the matter was treated. Gururaj was kind and listened to me, and then he did some strange little tests on my eyeballs, which I guess were to reveal to him what, if anything, was the result of my experience. The results seemed not to impress him very much.

Later on, during this meeting, he gave me another "test," as I now interpret it. He showed me one of his paintings and asked my opinion. I think I now know what that painting was, but at the time I actually began to critique it as I would one of my student's artworks. I hope most of you can understand what a really astonishingly stupid response this was. Really, it was astonishingly stupid. At the time, Gururaj looked at me kindly and smiled.

So what did I get from this meeting? I was trying really hard to describe my experience to him. I kept saying, "But it was SO REAL, Gururaj! It was Realer than what I see in everyday life!" The Guru looked at me and said, "But of course! All of this" - he spread his arms wide - "is an illusion!" This was stated in the most quiet, matter-of-fact manner, with me standing there looking at him, Vidya and Roopa running around trying to get ready for the Guru's next satsang and all the usual distractions and chaos of a course going on. All of this is an illusion. This remains my most important spiritual teaching, and this is what it has come to mean to me: It is not that all this "real" stuff going on around us and within us is an illusion; it is that all this "illusionary" stuff going on around and within us is Real.

Or better yet, as Gururaj put it to us once: "The Universe is Unreal. God Alone is Real. God is the Universe." Man, that is heavy.

-JEFF

THE PRACTICE

On my second course, at the old folks' home in Illinois, Gururaj suggested we each record our experiences in a journal, leaving a wide margin. He said he would read all our journals and write notes in the borders, explaining what had happened to us. I knew enough even then that part two wasn't going to happen, but, loving journals, I took to it and never stopped. So I have a good record of my experiences with him on courses.

Recently, as I reviewed them in my mind, I came to see that all those interactions on courses -the pictures we painted under his directions, the visions, the games -were like the lollipops given to children at the doctor's office. The real healing is done on a much deeper level, which is not at all obvious to the rank beginner.

In my case, what needed healing was my tendency to take refuge in a grand, spectacular imagination, short-circuiting the part where you cause ideas to be manifested in the physical universe. It was like being wrapped up in ephemeral spider webs, or like being haunted, perhaps like being unable to wake from a dream. Well, Gururaj had the antidote. At about my third course, during a healing, he said it was time I had children. Madhu was in the room, pregnant with Vik. When he suggested I get started tonight, she laughed and said, "Her husband's in Connecticut!"

Later, after we moved to Indiana and got our medical insurance settled. I did one last non-pregnant course. Gururaj asked if I was having trouble (only with insurance!) and predicted I'd be pregnant before the year was out. This was Thanksgiving, and I conceived right around Christmas. There began THE PRACTICE that blew away all others. Through having this child, I was and continue to be forced to handle the physical universe that I couldn't get a handle on before. I had to drop dreaming and get to work.

As soon as I was pregnant, Gururaj became stone cold towards me, first during gurushakti with his photo and then in person. And so it continued for the two remaining years of his life and the first two years after he took off. It took more than those four years to understand I had been finally forced to stand on my own two feet, and to wake up from a dream in which I believed I didn't have to take care of myself - that God alone would do that for me.

I have been working hard and well ever since. Looking back on my time with him, I see clearly that what was so deeply important were those hours themselves, being in that presence, with the sangha, knowing and feeling with such joy, that he was there among us. Alone (in my room) and comfortable, I was absorbing all that shakti (even though I was unaware of it).

-LORIETA

THE GLIMPSE

One summer evening on a country road in southern Illinois, I remember Gururaj telling us that all we ever get is a glimpse here and there, we never see the whole picture.

"Nol It can't be sol" I thought I desired passionately to be free, which I imagined as one vast territory with no visible horizon, kind of like Kansas, only bigger -an even bigger sky, unending freedom in all directions: enlightenment. Instead, here was my Guru, lounging with Vldya in the back seat of Sutriya's silvery-bronze Audi somewhere outside St. Louis, telling us that all we ever get -all I can ever look forward to while I'm busting my ass spiritually to awaken -are tiny glimpses of Truth, of All That Is, of Infinity! I didn't like it.

The night was falling in deep indigo darkness, our headlights had been switched on, and the road, like my life, was unrolling in unknown loops and curves that could have been fun if I were in the mood to like it. I wasn't. I resolved not to accept it. It was one of the many times I knew my Guru was simply wrong, poor simple soul. He had his limitations and I was not about to make his limitations my own. I would just let it drop. I gazed out at the darkening bushes and trees, patches of woodland and amber lights in living room windows. How many others in these houses want to be free as much as I do? I wondered.

Later during that drive I fell into an altered state wherein I felt the universe exploding and expanding in my heart. This happened as Gururaj fell asleep and made little snoring sounds in the back seat. It never occurred to me then that Gururaj had ushered me into a glimpse of his vast view. What I do remember is that I could not move or speak, and that my body remained slumped in the shotgun seat for a long time after the car was parked in the garage and everyone else had gone into the house.

I also remember what came later. When I finally "got back" from wherever I'd been and went into the house, I was still so shaky I had to crawl up the steep stairs to the Guru's sitting room, where everyone else was. I took my place on the carpeted floor, and that night Gururaj went transparent on me, slowly turning into light right in front of me more than once. I remember watching him disappear, until only the wall and furniture behind and around him were visible. I have no idea how this happened or why. I remember discreetly looking for signs that anyone else was noticing this obvious phenomenon, but no one looked concerned. I wondered what it meant. Was he always doing this, and I hadn't noticed? Maybe, I thought, this was preparing me for the day when Gururaj would no longer be with us in a visible flesh body, but only as the light into which I kept watching him dissolve. I had to focus to keep him solid in my sights. If I relaxed, I saw him become light and disappear.

This went on for about an hour or so until the strange state I was in dissolved back into my normal perception. Scotch and cigarettes helped ground me, and I was relieved not to see Gururaj dissolving into light anymore that

evening, but remaining a comfortably-solid, warmly-brown-skinned man in pale blue pajamas with tea stains down the front.

–ROOPA

THE DRINK

I was visiting Gururaj in South Africa. He, his wife who was called Ma, and I were sitting around their kitchen table eating lunch one afternoon. He was having a scotch and I was drinking white wine. Suddenly he got up, went to the fridge and started hunting around. He brought back to the table a bottle of ketchup and some green olives. He poured some ketchup in my wine and then added a couple of olives. "Drink this," he commanded. I gingerly took a sip. "Drink!" he said again and again I took a sip. Out of the corner of my eye I noticed Ma holding her hand over her mouth to keep from laughing. He pushed my wineglass closer to me indicating that I should take another drink. I did. As I glanced at Ma, I noticed that her shoulders were starting to shake with laughter, though she still had her hand over her mouth. I took another drink and then my eyes met Ma's. We both started to laugh. We laughed until we had tears running down our cheeks. Gururaj said, "Nice to see you two sisters laughing together."

-SUTRIYA

THE GIFT

By 1980, I was completely smitten by Gururaj. My love and yearning for him had really blossomed. I was asked to serve Gururaj a meal during that course, a task that was considered an honor, and I was giddy and excited. That morning, Irene and I walked into the little town near the facility to buy small treasures to present to him on this special day. We were like two obsessed teenagers searching out the perfect gifts for our boyfriends.

Wanting to present our gifts to him at a special moment, we waited until our work was finished and he and his lunch guests were relaxed and conversing. As he opened my gift of creamy mint chocolates, I hovered behind him waiting for his delight. To my surprise, after expressing his gratitude, he proceeded to hand the box to his left, proffering my offering to everyone at the table! I was mortified! My selfishness dictated that this "gift" was meant only for him.

However, on that day it was he who gave me gifts. As the other chelas oo'd and ah'h'd over their mints, I learned that to serve him is ultimately serving all. And after being told that he didn't care for this sort of candy, I was taught that receiving gracefully instead of declining an undesirable gift is an act of disguised giving.

Joy is the acceptance of gifts.

-MADHU

THE GOLDEN LIGHT

At AMS courses I was a longtime "non-experiercer." In the Communion practice, while others routinely saw celestial lights or the face of the Buddha or heard words in ancient Aramaic, I saw a guy in a Nehru suit up in the front of the room, nodding out. But one Thanksgiving, midway through Communion, I saw the room fill with a soft, gauzy, honey-colored light. I blinked my eyes, but the gold light was still there. "Hot damn!" I said to myself. More noteworthy than the light was the feeling that came with it; it was indescribable, some unearthly mixture of love, bliss and peace, something like satchitananda-or how I thought of satchitananda, anyway, because there was some kind of "knowingness" (the chit) wrapped up in it too. And it was inside everywhere and me at the same time.

It was still with me later, this golden light, this incomparable bliss, even after Guruji came back down to earth, wiped the tears from his eyes with his ubiquitous large, white handkerchief, and spoke to us in plain English. It was still there after satsang when I was depositing quarters in the coke machine in the lounge, and Murray approached me, looking very, very nervous. This was his first course, and he looked as if he had just seen a ghost. His eyes were wide, and he looked pale and basically freaked out. "Um, did you see a gold light?" he asked me in a panicked whisper. I told him I had, and still did. He looked relieved, though still awestruck. "It's like being on acid!" he whispered.

Three days later, the bliss-love-peace-golden-light show was still going on. Having landed at La Guardia, Murray and I were on a descending escalator, under too-bright lights, heading for the baggage claim, doubled over with laughter, tears streaming down our faces. People were staring at us. I will never forget how it felt to be tripping through the airport, drugged on satchitananda, and not be able to stop giggling because the universe was so overwhelmingly rich and funny and sad and poignant, and there were so many things to see, hear, and feel in every moment.

–JAISHA

THE OBELISK

My guru was to me like the obelisk in the movie 2001. Whenever I was in his presence -and I sometimes spent six weeks continuously in his presence-the air was charged with a sense of the Ultimate, like the music of the spheres made audible. Just by being in his presence I was participating in suicide: moth to flame, me to him. So it was, inside me.

On the outside, our relationship looked perfectly natural-just nothing. Yet at times being near Preatam blew the flesh off my bones with the irresistible certainty of Being, like the just-opened Ark in Raiders of the Lost Ark as it blasts the flesh off the bodies of those human beings dumb enough to stand directly before its radiance. He was not a person; he was a strange, unknowable, infinitely intimate yet terrifying phenomenon, a lump of hard stuff carrying within its density the killing rays of transformation. That was my Guru, to me.

No one ever loved me more, and yet he was just that: no one. He knew it. I am still learning it. I am learning still that this alone is the Way that leads me to Love, whose presence makes stars seem cool and dim by comparison.

Can you picture the obelisk in 2001 taking human form, hanging out with the apes or spacemen, dressed in their furs or spacesuits, sharing a bone or sipping Tang from a straw? That's how it felt, at times, hanging out with Preatam, offering him your favorite foodstuffs at home or making a midnight snack, everyone in their bathrobes, or choosing a cheese-and-tuna sandwich from the display case of an airport snack bar. Almost everything was ordinary. But it was surreal. Reality curved around him as light bends around a black hole.

As I write this I ask myself, "Would I believe any of this if I hadn't met such a being?" The answer is, "No, probably not." The oddest thing of all is that he was -I am convinced of this -an ordinary human being. Except for one thing: He knew who he was. That's the only difference.

-ROOPA

FOREWARD TO THE 1998 EDITION

I am so glad you have taken the time to read these stories. Each one of us has tales to tell about the profound and amusing relationship we all seem to have with our guru. I would like to take this opportunity to extend an invitation to you to splash and play in the pool along with the rest of us. You don't have to consider yourself a great writer to tell your story. It is the lesson in the story that is most important. From actual in-the-body experiences with Gururaj to your encounters with him in dreams and meditations- these have important messages and are as much Gururaj's teachings as are his satsangs.

So please share what you have learned and experienced so far, whether or not you ever met Gururaj in the flesh. This is your opportunity to be in with the in-crowd. The sooner we receive your stories, the sooner we can look forward to publishing a book which we will share Gururaj and his teachings with a larger audience. Come join us in our swimming pool. The water's just fine!

-PRIYA

NEW STORIES & EXPERIENCES: 2018

GURURAJ: MASTER TEACHER

All of us in education know that whereas most conventional teaching in schools is given auditorially, most students learn best kinesthetically, visually, or both simultaneously. In other words, traditional teachers lecture, and students listen; teachers using best practice demonstrate and then have the students try it themselves. The very best teachers set up a situation for the students to discover for themselves. Gururaj was truly a master of best practice.

One of the main struggles in my lifetime has been around time, both having enough time, and being at the right place at the right time. For almost eight years I spent several weeks in his physical presence every year, sometimes in formal satsang on courses and sometimes in informal situations between satsangs at the course sites and between courses at friends' houses. One of the teachings about time occurred over that eight-year period. At the first courses I attended teacher initiations were done in a very elaborate way. All the initiates were brought to a special room where a special puja had been set up. Gururaj addressed us as a group and then chanted the initiation prayer and touched our heads and shoulders. The whole process took a couple of hours between the set-up and the meeting and ceremony itself. As time went on the process became much more efficient, but it always set up in me an underlying concern. My mind would constantly be asking, "But Gururaj, do you realize we have to have teacher initiations, and there are only 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 day left of the course???" now there's only one afternoon left?? How are you going to fit it in???" And magically, every time it fit in beautifully, smoothly, part of the flow of the course. The separate room was replaced by chairs in front of the satsang hall, the ceremony was done with all the participants in the course present, and the power of it was shared by everyone. It occurs to me as I write this that by this time almost everyone in the audience was already a teacher!

Gururaj very often taught by having us act out what we were to learn. The lesson about time that I remember most clearly happened in the hallway at one of the course sites. I had been having a pretty intense interchange with a friend in our shared room. When that was finished, I went out into the hall just as Gururaj was coming by. He said, "I hope I didn't interrupt anything," to which I answered, "Oh no, Gururaj, your timing is always perfect!" He could have lectured about Divine flow, about how everything happens in its right timing, and I suspect if I examine the transcripts I would find those teachings repeated often, but what has remained with me for some thirty-five years is what came out of my own mouth, "Gururaj (which even then was synonymous with Grace) your timing is always perfect."

In case I missed it that time there was another, and another, and another. . . the special ed. teacher in me appreciates the value of repetition. One lesson came in the form of humor. I was about to drive a group of chelas on a shopping

errand. As we were walking to the car I was saying, loudly and facetiously, "What? Drink on a course? Of course not! We are all completely sober at all times!" At that very second the car door opened to reveal the forgotten purchases from the previous shopping errand--three full boxes of liquor! It was a joke only the Cosmic Comedian could have pulled off--because, of course, timing is everything!

The lesson about GR's perfect timing was put to the test another day. Vidya and Gomila and I had been planning Gururaj's time for the few days before a course in the Midwest at Techny Towers. We had arranged for him to spend the night and part of the next day at Harriet's house. There was a public talk at her house in the evening, and then the plan was to have breakfast and lunch at her house the next day and then take Gururaj downtown to see the play, *Evita*. Harriet had been planning and worrying for months about how to entertain the guru at her house. There were many frantic calls about what he could eat and what to serve for breakfast and lunch. Harriet had recently lost her daughter, and I was glad that she would have Gururaj's presence with her at this difficult time. I was sure it would help her. In my mind, "help her" meant have a nice day with her, sit around her table and enjoy the food she had toiled over and gradually fill her house with the guru's presence which would, of course, cure everything.

Surprise! That's not exactly how it transpired. Instead, the morning after the public talk Gururaj came downstairs all dressed, but not having taken time even to comb his hair. "We must leave right now!" he said. I launched into protests about how it should take less than an hour to get downtown, and the show wasn't until 2:00, we had many hours before we had to leave, and wouldn't he like to have a lovely breakfast (and lunch!) with Harriet? It wouldn't take long to learn about the uselessness of trying to steer the guru. He knew Who(What) was in charge, and he was in the process of teaching us about that.

We flew out of the house, leaving Harriet in the dust with the carefully planned meals untouched. Somehow, though, the timing of this was right too. Between traffic jams and "jams" (probably guru lessons being handed out to the unsuspecting workers) in the ticket exchange office where we had to make a "quick" (two hour) stop, we ended up barely sitting down, winded and clutching our unopened Burger King bags, by the time the curtain opened for the show. Who knew it would take that long? Gururaj, your timing is always perfect.

Sitting next to Gururaj at the play became perhaps the most important lesson I learned in all the years with him. It was a window into who "he" was. Spending the previous couple of days with him had opened a channel of understanding for me so that the play seemed to be an enactment of my own life. I felt so attuned to Gururaj that I could feel that every movement he made, literally every breath he took, was for me. He would turn toward me, turn away, breath in, breath out in perfect alignment with what I was experiencing in the play. At a very deep level I "got" that it was always that way, that there was absolutely no thought or probably even awareness of the needs of the body he was living in. Every move He made (makes) is for us. Always.

-PRASEELA

PHONE BILLS

Back in the 1980's, making phone calls was pretty expensive. Local calls cost money and state to state calls cost even more. Several guru chelas and I (living on the east and west coasts, I might add) would have many phone conversations lasting 2-4 hours at a time. At the end of the month, Mark and I would have regular conversations regarding the outrageousness of the phone bill. These conversations became more and more frequent, intense and dramatic as Preatam began calling me collect from South Africa! Coincidentally, in all the times Preatam called here collect, I never got to answer the phone calls. Inevitably, Mark would be the one to pick up the phone and have to accept the collect calls!!! Story-time...Need I describe Mark's reaction? His inner turmoil living with a chela? Looking back at those younger times, I see that it was amazing how Mark put up with having the guru stay at our house as often as he did, the chela body constantly around and especially the changes in me. I was the one "on the spiritual path," and yet he was filled with such love and tolerance that the marriage has survived 45 years, in spite of it all. Keep in mind, he thought he was marrying the typical, conventional, sweet Jewish woman. Never in either of our wildest imaginations did we suspect what life had in store for us. Such gratitude...Ahhh, the trickster at work....

I was so excited to have "my" (said half humorously) meditation students meet Preatam at the Lake Geneva Resort. The group had become a strongly established meditation community. As the retreat was in the Chicago area, most of the students signed up. There were at least 10 students chomping at the bit to meet Preatam. I thought I had some control of the situation. I prepared the students for what it was like being with a guru. I shared many incidents of my encounters with such an energy. At the retreat, each was invited to have tea with Preatam. The shakti was extremely powerful. I was like a mother hen watching over her chicks. It's so funny looking back over this. Oh...so naive. Laughter over here as I reminisce ... Just who is the doer? Is there a doer? The Preatam energy was in rare form.

At the end of the retreat not one student remained. No preparation could have primed them for their reflection being brightly mirrored back at them, ever so casually, spontaneous actions arising and being expressed through a Master. He winked at me as we were all leaving. He said he was not here for the masses. This personality experienced a flood of emotion... a combination of how could you wipe everyone out?? anger, then laughter and surrender. Was there actually a choice? Ohhh Preatam ...

One of the retreats at Lake Geneva was quite remarkable. We were really put through our paces. Many of the meditators had brought children to the retreat. The satsang hall was down a bit from where the kids stayed. The parents took turns supervising the kids. This particular time as Preatam was speaking a severe storm came up over the lake. It became pitch black outside, the trees were swaying, the wind was howling and there was a downpour of rain. Someone ran into the sangha hall shouting a tornado was going to touch down on the lake real soon. The parents should hurry and get their kids. With a booming voice, Preatam told us to stay put. He closed his eyes and then told us not to worry. He said he diverted the tornado. All the parents gasped. What do we do? Listen to Preatam

or be concerned for the safety of the children and run to get them? I sat totally frozen. My mind panicked and time stood still. Vidya and I were sitting together. I looked over to her and she said 'Let's go!' We ran out of the satsang hall and got the kids. The aftermath: The tornado passed over. No one in the area was hurt.

-GOMILLA

FINDING JESUS

In 1980 my husband and I started a custom silk screen printing business. We rented a small office space about a block away from our home. Early one morning in 1981, I nearly fell off the chair at my desk when the phone rang and I heard Gururaj's voice. He had never called me at work before so it came as a complete surprise when he asked me if I could help him find someone. He was staying at Vidya and Sujay's house near Chicago. Even though I was unaware of what I was getting myself into, I replied, "Yes". I had been meditating for several years using his profound meditation techniques and had experienced many wonderful physical and mental benefits so I was happy to help. Besides, how could I say "No" to my guru? Gururaj was very vague about the purpose of his request and did not provide me with any details. He asked if I knew anyone at the Chicago Police Department. He wanted me to find an artist who drew suspects and criminals based on witness descriptions. My uncle was a well-known police officer at Police Headquarters in downtown Chicago but I didn't dare call him. We hadn't spoken in several years due to his disapproval of my marriage partner. When I hung up the phone with Gururaj, I said to myself, "Oh, no! What did I just get myself into?" My mind was spinning and racing with all sorts of thoughts about who might answer the phone at Police Headquarters. What I would say if they asked me questions? Why would they provide this information to a complete stranger? Before making that cold call, I decided to call Gururaj back to see if he could provide me with some details. Vidya answered the phone and I heard Gururaj's voice in the background. Vidya said that I should tell the artist that a well-known Indian dignitary was in town for a brief visit and wanted to find his old friend with whom he had lost contact. This certainly didn't make it any easier for me. I did not want to disappoint Gururaj but I also didn't want to sound like an idiot.

Once I got up the nerve I picked up the phone to call Police Headquarters. I wanted to speak with the artist directly so I wouldn't have to explain to multiple people the purpose of my call. Without questioning the purpose of my call, they transferred me to the sketch artist. A soft-spoken African American man answered the phone. He identified himself as Officer John Holmes. I later learned that Mr. Holmes was the best in the business of drawing composites of alleged criminals based on witness descriptions. I explained the assignment but only provided him with a vague description. He agreed to help but said he was backed up with police work and that he would not get to for several weeks or even months. If I needed this right away, he suggested that I contact a retired police lieutenant who had transferred to the Niles Police Department, a northern suburb of Chicago. This former lieutenant had developed a technique called the Identi-Kit System, which was being used by police departments and the FBI throughout the United States to track down criminals. The system consisted of thousands of facial composite images of films generated by a sketch artist, which were in a small file box. There were images of eyes, noses, chins, eyebrows, mustaches and facial features. These film positives were used by law enforcement to create a likeness of an individual based on witness descriptions. I thanked Mr. Holmes for the information and called the Niles Police Department to find the lieutenant. I was told that he had recently retired from their department. I asked if they

could provide me with his telephone number. They asked me to leave my telephone number and they would try to contact him on my behalf.

Shortly thereafter, I received a call from the retired Lieutenant. He confirmed that he had been using the Identi-Kit system for many years and was well trained in finding criminals. As is typical with police officers he had begun asking me questions. Who is this person that wants this information? Why is he looking for the suspect? I wasn't sure how to respond so I told him I would get back with him with as much information as possible. I called Vidya and Gururaj got on the phone. I couldn't believe my ears when he informed me that the person he was looking for was Jesus! He asked me to keep it confidential and not to tell the police officer or anyone else for that matter. He certainly didn't have to worry about me spilling the beans. I did not want to go down in history looking like a complete fool. I couldn't tell my husband either since he had been having doubts about Gururaj's authenticity. As Gururaj was plotting this outrageous scam I became more and more curious about the outcome. I had some previous dealings with police officers in Chicago so this was not something I relished. I envisioned my name being splashed across the Chicago Tribune or the Sun-Times...with something like, "*Chicago Native Searching for Jesus.*" I began to feel like I was aiding and abetting a scam artist. However, something deep inside me was stimulated so I persevered while participating in this outrageous scheme.

Around that same time period I had discovered a line art drawing of the Chicago skyline in a Michigan Avenue art shop. I was intrigued with the artist rendering and envisioned it silk screen printed on T-shirts for my business. The name at the bottom of the print was George Becker. I learned that he lived in Glenview, IL so I called him to get his permission to print his design on apparel items. We arranged a time to meet in person. When I walked into his studio I found a sixty something year-old one-armed man with a pleasant personality. He told me he was famous for creating logos of the ship that was being used for Cutty Sark Scotch and Hushpuppy shoes. He showed me some of his other artwork, which included watercolor landscapes and line art drawings of people. George and I hit it off immediately. He was pleased and impressed with my presentation and my request to print his Chicago designs on apparel for the purpose of marketing them to retail shops and the Chicago Art Institute gift store.

After meeting George I called Gururaj and told him that I found the artist who could draw Jesus. I arranged a meeting for them to meet. I told George that a spiritual man from India who had taught me how to meditate was in town and wanted to meet him with the possibility of commissioning him for a drawing. A few days later Vidya drove Gururaj to Glenview to meet George and me at the art studio. When Gururaj walked in, he looked at George's drawings and paintings on the walls. He was quite charming in his Indian attire and began flattering George as he pumped up George's ego up like a big balloon. Then he asked George to draw a picture of his friend free of charge. I learned later that George normally charged between \$500 - \$800 for these type of drawings. Then he asked George if he could complete the drawing in one week. I was surprised that George agreed to both of these outlandish requests.

The plot thickened. The next step of the plan that Gururaj was to make arrangements to bring everyone together to begin the process of finding Jesus. He wanted me, Vidya, the retired police officer and George to be present. At the last minute he also brought Gomila into the mix because he had been staying at her home. We met at the home of Gomila's neighbor who was a police officer.

The plan was for the police lieutenant to bring his Identi-Kit system. As the witness, Gururaj was to be interviewed by the officer about the characteristics and facial features of the "suspect". An Identikit system composite would be compiled based on Gururaj's description. George's role was to be present to develop his impressions before beginning the actual drawing. Little by little Gururaj was weaving a plan to find his old friend Jesus.

Upon arrival, everyone found a seat in the living room to begin the session. Gururaj looked quite stunning in his Indian shirt and was very charming. He instructed me, Vidya and Gomila not to say anything but to just sit quietly and observe. A small table was set up for the police officer. He arranged his catalog file box, which contained hundreds of images and facial features of eyes, noses, lips, cheeks, mustaches and facial shapes. Then the questioning began. The officer began by asking Gururaj, "Where are you from? When was the last time you saw this suspect?" Vidya, Gomila and I suppressed our giggles as we braced ourselves for Gururaj's response. He responded, "I see him every day". Vidya, Gomila and I were like three young schoolgirls who were trying to hold back laughter from our teacher while we kicked each other under the table. I thought that the sham would be revealed and we would all be left holding Gururaj's bag of tricks. The officer also looked surprised then Gururaj said, "I see him every day in my meditations." Thank God he didn't say something that would have the potential of humiliating us!

The next series of questions had to do with Jesus' facial features, characteristics and appearance: "How tall was he? How much did he weigh? What color hair did he have? Was his face round, long or square? What about his cheekbones?" Gururaj injected that he had a gaunt appearance like he was hungry. "Were his eyebrows more like this one or that one?" With each response, the officer pulled out images from his little file box that matched Gururaj's description. Gururaj was very animated as he paused and accentuated his responses while using lots of hand gestures. The police officer continued, "What color are his eyes? Does he have wide set eyes or are close set eyes? Look at these images and tell me what kind of nose he had. Now look at the lips." At one point, Gururaj told the officer that this individual had a joyful expression, not sad. After the questioning was done, the officer created one complete composite bearing all of the features that Gururaj had chosen. Gururaj explained to the officer that he should give the composite to George who was going to make a drawing from the composite. I was grateful that he didn't inform the police officer and George about who was depicted in the composite.

After the session, I walked outside with the officer and thanked him for coming and sharing his expertise with us. Then he asked me about Gururaj. He said that he was quite an unusual and interesting fellow and that he had never met anyone like him before. We said goodbye and he asked me to please not reveal that he had conducted this session with us. I honored his request and never mentioned his name or his affiliation to anyone.

One week after the session Gururaj, Vidya and I were back in George's office to view the drawing. George was just finishing up the details when we arrived and said that he had one final touch to complete the drawing. He took out a small artist pen that was filled with a white liquid and put a tiny dot on each of Jesus' eyes, which made him come to life. Then Gururaj turned to George and said, "You are a master at your art!" George was very pleased. Then he turned to George and asked, "Do you know who you just drew?" George was very sensitive and intuitive so I was not surprised when he responded, "I think so." At that point Gururaj informed him that he drew Jesus. He also said that pictures of other artist renderings generally depicted Jesus with blond hair and blue eyes. Jesus had dark hair, dark eyes, high cheekbones and a gaunt hungry appearance.

When the entire ordeal ended, I was completely amazed by all of the synchronicities of lining up all of the people who participated in the experience. I was grateful that Gururaj gave me an opportunity to take the lead in this adventure because I had been very close to Jesus during my childhood. I was born into a family of Catholics but my parents joined a Lutheran church when I was twelve and allowed me to explore many other denominations as well. When I left home at age 18, I began exploring Eastern religions including Buddhism and Hinduism. I joined the American Meditation Society (AMS) in 1977 and found no conflict whatsoever with Gururaj's teachings and other religious teachings (as shown on the AMS emblem). Gururaj gave me the spiritual name, Dooreena, which he said means, "the totality of all scriptures".

In 1991, I became a member of the Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions (CPWR). The keynote speaker for the 1883 CPWR was Swami Vivekananda, who opened the door to bring Eastern philosophies and ultimately meditation to the western part of the world. A Buddhist monk from Thailand asked me to join him and other religious leaders in the Chicago area to begin preparing for the 1993 CPWR 100th year anniversary. I served on the Dialogue Committee and became known as "the Bridge" as a result of my ability to see the essence and oneness of all religions. I arranged dialogues at religious institutions throughout the Chicago area including Hindu temples, Sikh Guruwaras, Buddhist temples, Moslem mosques, a Zoroastrian center, Jewish temples and even brought in a Native American tribe. During the 100th anniversary event, religious leaders worldwide came to the Palmer House in Chicago to participate. The Dalai Lama was the keynote speaker.

After the finding Jesus experience, I moved to Glenview, IL to join forces with the artist George to start a new business, Apparel Graphics, Inc., which was around the corner from Villa Redeemer where we used to have AMS retreats. I taught George, his wife and his son AMS meditation practices. Gururaj found Jesus but was he really ever lost? I learned that Jesus and other avatars who have made an impact on humanity are still present. Their physical bodies may be gone but their spirits and teachings forever remain. The Bible quote, "Seek and ye shall find" is a powerful reminder that if we are truly sincere, we will each find our way on our spiritual path. Gururaj often said, "One can be a Christian, a Jew or a Moslem, a Hindu, Buddhist or Taoist and with proper understanding your

personal religion can ignite your soul, deepening and accelerating your spiritual growth so you can really understand the core or the essence of religion.”

A final note: As I was writing about this experience I went on line to get some information about the Identi-Kit System. One of the descriptions said: Anatomy of a scientific bag of tricks to conjure up the likeness of an unknown face. Based on the actual experience there couldn't have been a better description

-DOOREENA

THE PRESENCE OF GURURAJ

Although I never experienced being in the presence of Gururaj while he was alive, during Gurushakti his presence feels very real, and occasionally there are encounters that seem personal rather than seeking the One through him.

One of those moments came to me about six months after starting to meditate. I was in the grip of uncertainty. Was I doing it right? Would it save me from myself? Would it help me find peace? In a dream, I was on my way to a retreat at a beautiful location in the woods. But before participating in the retreat, I was given the task of finding a building that had some relevance to the retreat. I went on foot up and down the roads around the edge of the park where the retreat was being held, all to no avail. I became increasingly frantic, but finally decided to go back to the retreat and admit to having been unable to find the thing I was supposed to find. I then learned Gururaj was at the retreat. To my amazement, he embraced me and said, "You are totally loved." With that, a profound sense of peace came over me such as I had never experienced in my entire life.

Then, about a year into meditation, I was in a situation where there was a woman who was making me crazy. She seemed self-involved, aggressive and delusional. Avoiding her became the goal, but total avoidance was impossible because we were locked together in the same space and the same group. So, I asked Gururaj for help. He helped, and the reason it felt as if I was in touch with Gururaj and not just with a projection of my own was that he gave advice I totally didn't want to take. His presence filled the room, and he said, "She's your teacher; become her friend." Oh, no--you're kidding, I thought. But it was all too clear that he wasn't kidding. So the next day, I struck up a conversation and asked the woman about herself. Later we had lunch together and shared experiences. In the end, we had a truly positive encounter, and all of the negativity evaporated.

Much of the time, Gururaj feels like a portal through which we can go out into a dimension beyond time and space. But when there's a serious issue, it seems, for the sake of our better understanding, that he comes in person as if making a house call.

-PEG

DREAMS OF GURURAJ

23AUG02

I was at a course and sitting down. It was the end of the Satsang and people were getting up. I was folding my blanket, when Gururaj walked by me. He bent down and turned his cheek to me to kiss him. He smiled and gestured to me to follow him. I got up and did. He sat down and began to stroke my hair. Suddenly I was leaning over and clenching my fists and spasming in my middle. There was a deep bruising pain in my stomach. He continued to stroke my hair and murmured softly to me. Then he says, "you need these pranayama exercises" and gestures for someone to come and write it down.

I am woken at this point by the alarm.

February 2016

I am attending some kind of board meeting with a bunch of women. Nobody I know in my waking life and not what I do for work either. I am upset with these women as they do not acknowledge my input in the meeting and even were whispering cruel things about me. I was upset. Finally, the meeting concludes and I remain at the table a few minutes. Suddenly I notice across the room in an armchair is Gururaj. I get up and go to him and sit at his feet. I seem to have a terrible headache in my dream and rest my head in his lap. He places his hands on my head and the pain goes away. He suddenly speaks and says, "what are you doing with these women? This is not for you".

I wake up at this point.

-MICHELE

MY FIRST COMMUNION

The year was 1980, the venue, Brethren Center in Pennsylvania. I had begun my practices the previous fall. There had been a meeting of the class at my house perhaps two weeks earlier. Vidya told us about the upcoming course, not mentioning how far away it was. I assumed it must be in Chicago, near my house, but my first thought was, "why are you telling me this?" It was about the practices for me, learning to relax, handling life better. Spiritual growth was not even something I had heard of before, much less considered important.

What happened during the intervening two weeks to cause me to write a letter to the principal asking for a week off from teaching and head off to Pennsylvania in "Bob and Laura's" (Sujay and Vidya) car along with three and five year old Crystal and Coleen? We stopped to visit relatives of Vidya's, and I remember confessing that I was a little concerned that everyone might be wearing purple robes and carrying candles, or who knows what other kind of strangeness might be awaiting me.

Much to my relief everyone at the course was dressed in regular summer clothes, laughing and talking just like people everywhere. We had chant and meditation twice a day and satsang twice a day, and occasionally Gururaj would join us for "tea," which at that time just meant a little while to stand around and hang out with the guru. I got up my courage and went over to him. I asked him if he would speak to me about doubt. He said, "It is your right!" And turned and walked away: the perfect mirror for the doubt I was feeling.

Toward the end of the course we had Communion Practice. The alter had been specially decorated, and we were told to shower and dress up. We sat for about 20 minutes and just looked at Gururaj while he went into Nirvikalpa samadhi, total communion with the Supreme. I don't remember much about the experience, although it was probably quite calming. What I will never forget is what happened after that. He asked everyone to describe their experiences. People talked about seeing the room filled with gold light, his face changing, and more and more amazing experiences, enough to fill perhaps half an hour. By the end of this time I had become filled with such deep rage, envy, inadequacy, and alienation that I just wanted to put as much distance between myself and this group as I could. I went outside and started walking, as far and as fast as my feet would take me. It's possible that I walked in the direction of the restaurant, but somehow, I ended up with a group of chelas in the vestibule of a seafood restaurant. A flood of tears started. Soon I was in Baldev's arms, sobbing, and then somehow, I was passed to Barbara Maynard's arms, perhaps so that Baldev could begin drying his shirt. I was still sobbing with an intensity that may never have happened to me before--in the vestibule of the restaurant!

When the tears had finally washed everything through we sat down to an amazing feast of soft shell crabs. The table was covered with paper, and messy crab shells were everywhere. I felt deeply connected to this group, and to everything. The rest of the course was spent in a wide open state, loving everyone. On the way home Vidya and I made plans for me to learn to teach meditation.

Thirty-six years later it seems that my communion experiences have continued to be like that. The power of that Presence, whether in formal Communion Practice with Gururaj or his picture, or in the presence of an awakened master, or in communion with the inner guru, cracks something open in my heart, leaving my inner light shining a bit brighter, my awareness a bit broader, and my outer experience largely unchanged, except in what appear to be very ordinary ways. The gradual shift from the extremely stressful home and work life of the 80's and 90's has given way to quite a peaceful life of spirit and joy. There have been big miracles around family and finances, and small daily ones like looking into the eyes of a doe from perhaps 20 feet. It seems now that the gold light and changing faces are felt inside, like becoming aware of a subtler plane of existence, while perception of the physical world remains about the same. No purple robes, no candles, just ordinary life. The physical world is just not as important or as solidly real as it had been. For moments in the presence of a mystic it has appeared as a stage set. For moments one morning it seemed to be laughing. There is just something thinner and less substantial about it. Tonight, as my heart looks at the full moon on the first day of summer, I see that what we think of as ordinary life is, indeed, the special effect. All of it.

Gururaj often used the famous quote: "The Universe is unreal; only Brahmin is real; Brahmin is the Universe." He never stops working with us to get that. Perhaps having us share our experiences of communion helped us open to the possibility that nothing is as it seems. For me "not having any experiences" has become a doorway into seeing what is real in the face of apparent sensory experience. Thank you Beloved!

-PRASEELA

MAY 17: THE ANNIVERSARY OF PREATAM'S LEAVING THE PHYSICAL BODY

They say that on Preatam's Day you can ask a boon of the Beloved, and every sincere Boon will be granted. Of course, we know what Preatam said about Boons...

-ROOPA

GURURAJ ANANDA YOGI: Vidya's Boon: The Boon of Oneness (US-83012)

...The experience of eternity by touch. Why should a person seek that when you are forever touched by eternity, and you are eternal yourself? But it is the veils covering that eternity, that superimposition, the illusions that I've talked to you about many times, prevents you from seeing and experiencing divinity. To be touched would to me not mean a physical touch. To me it would mean a touch by a Divine Force, a universal force that would be transforming the life of a person whereby that person could experience the ultimate.

What is the ultimate? Your ultimate would differ from someone else's ultimate because you are not all at a same level of evolution. What might seem to be ultimate to you would seem not ultimate to others. For Matthew to create a few world tennis champions in his tennis coaching would be his ultimate now. My ultimate is to take over the sufferings and the misery from the entire world, if that were ever possible, and make them experience that bliss and joy, which life is all about. So, your quest for the touch is to experience that joy and that bliss for that joy and that bliss is none else but immortal and eternal. There is nothing else existent in this world but existence itself. And what is that existence? That existence is divinity and it has to be so, for divinity is omnipresent, present in the very, very cell of your body.

So, who would grant you the boon? Would I in my cosmic form be granting you the boon? No. I will allow you to grant the boon to yourself by showing you the path; by giving you certain glimpses with the touch that, "Ah, this is where I have to reach! And this is the road that will make me there." Now, this path is reached through many, many ways, as there are many rivers that end up in the same ocean, so there are many paths. But, when you have some little inkling of the cosmic form of a spiritual master, you will know that the path he as a teacher has chosen for me through his own personal experiences should be or would be the path that is good for me to experience that love that knows of no separation. The whole word "separation" is so illusory, for it does not exist at all. It only exists, or finds existence, on the sensory and the mental level.

So, reading faces here, some would say that the request I would make to that cosmic form of Gururaj would be, "Let me meet a man whom I could love deeply," or a man would say, "Let me meet a woman I could love deeply." Someone would ask for the boon that let my house be filled with all the wealth and riches that I might have that

social status of being a millionaire. Others would ask for the boon, "Rid me of the diseases I suffer from, be it mental or physical." Some would ask for a boon, let me pass my exams. Some would ask for these very little things.

How many of there among you that will ask that, Lord, I want nothing from you but, just give me greater and greater devotion for Thee? That question has not appeared in anyone's mind here, except one person. So, what part of you really observes? What part in you is there in you that is the observer? For the absolute is neither an actor nor the observer. Here is another revolutionary truth that goes beyond the Upanishads and teachings of the Gita. They say, "He is the doer." He is not the doer. That which we describe as He is totally neutral; but his energy is used by us in action, in doing or not doing. For the very word doing or not doing, acting or not acting, implies will. Will implies mind. Mind implies thought; while that which is termed the Absolute is beyond thought, beyond mind, beyond will. Beyond direction. Nameless, formless, attributeless. But that energy is there all the time. So, when you ask for your boon to be granted, what do you get is a lump of energy. That's what you get. And if you are sincere in your request, you will use that energy the way it should be used.

-GURURAJ ANANDA YOGI

EASTER DINNER

Preatam told his chelas, when he was visiting Maryland in the early '80's, to place a red flower upon a white plate at their Easter dinner table. This symbolized recognition of him, or Divinity, being welcomed or present at this special place and time.

He also told us years later when one of the chelas jokingly asked.... "What if you don't have a red flower?" He responded by saying... "Use any kind of flower. It's simply done in remembrance of me."

-MADHU

ASKING FOR HELP

When Gururaj was in body, we were always able to either call him at home, (which I only did once when I was in such horrible pain prior to my first back surgery; a story in itself) or we could write him. I cannot even begin to tell you how many times I heard the same story from people... "I wrote Guruji about whatever the problem was and before he could have possibly received the letter, the healing or change in situation had already occurred." As I remember, when he was asked about this, he would explain that this just showed the power of Divinity, and/or just smile and say, "Good."

With my primary focus and purpose being in healing, this of course has stuck in my mind and I have pondered this many times over the years. At this point in time, what I believe is that of course, it is the power of Divinity, but what ignites that power is our asking for help. As GR explained many, many times, Divinity is a neutral sort of energy... it is my belief that when we ask for help, we are thus creating a vortex, so to say, for that energy to shift or activate and affect us in a way that is for our higher good. Our asking for help is what turns on the power, so to say. Meditation, spiritual practices, gurushakti, all are tools to turn on that power switch... but so is our asking. And when asking is combined with our practices, it is like we connect directly to the generator... without our practices or for non-meditators, asking still works, but it is like we are only able to plug into our wall outlet, as a general rule... still the same energy source, but at a lower frequency of power.

-JASUTI

THE SPOON DANCE

In 1984 I was attending a summer retreat at Lake Geneva, WI. I had been feeling restless after the many hours of sitting for two long meditations, chants, and satsangs. Late into the evening after the last satsang, all of the meditators went to join Gururaj in one of the large cabins. I had had enough so I chose not to go. I needed some time to myself and some distance from the group. But after an hour or so, curiosity got the better of me, and I decided to walk towards the building where everyone was hanging out with Gururaj. I didn't want to miss out on anything. As I walked towards the cabin trying to decide whether I should go inside or not I ran into one of the chelas who had just exited the door. I asked him what was going on inside. He said that everyone was sitting around listening to Gururaj ramble on and on singing about people's names.

His singing wasn't the greatest after a couple of glasses of scotch, so I was grateful that I delayed entry and was spared an additional hour of sitting, but his energy was overpowering and seemed to be pulling me in. I entered with trepidation and was hoping to sneak past Gururaj without being noticed. He often called me out in front of everyone when I did my disappearing act or walked in late at courses or satsangs.

Upon entry, I noticed that he was sitting at the only table in the room, which was close to the door. He was turned facing the other way. There were several chelas at the table with him drinking scotch, looking bored and rolling their eyes as he sang and weaved satsangs into songs about people's names. The large room was filled with chelas all sitting on the floor hugging the walls. It appeared to me that their eyes were glazed over, but their attention was on Gururaj as he continued to ramble and sing off key. Nearly every floor space against the wall was filled with chelas glued to the floor, waiting for some words of wisdom from the Master which didn't seem to be forthcoming.

I noticed a spot all the way in the back on the right side wall, so I shot past Gururaj and sat down to tune in. Whew! I was glad that I made it past him without being noticed. I thought that everyone looked extremely bored and exhausted. It didn't take long before I began plotting my escape. He sang to one chela after another focusing on their names. Then he turned his attention to Sujay's mother, Irene, and sang "Good Night Irene" while he weaved in other spontaneous songs and mini satsangs about her name. His voice was sounding tinny and off key, and I was grateful that I had been late and was spared an hour or so of an excruciatingly boring experience.

I wanted to go back outside and sit under the stars on the pier. As I was waited for the perfect opportunity to sneak outside, he got up off his chair and headed straight towards me! I was trapped! He reached down and took my hand then brought me into the center of the large room to dance with him. Although I liked dancing, I thought his Indian style of dance looked rather silly, but I tried to follow his movements anyway. I began to feel like I was one of the Gopis in Vrindivan and had snuck out of my house in the middle of the night to run away from my husband and family to dance with Krishna.

After several minutes of dancing (I was always in a time warp when I was with Gururaj so I really have no idea how much time had passed), he hollered across the room to Vidya or Roopa to bring him some spoons that were sitting on the table. He began clanging the spoons, which became his instruments as he clanged them rhythmically syncing up with his dance movements. Then someone brought me two spoons, and I joined him in the clanging while continuing to dance. Within minutes, magic occurred as the chelas got up one by one from their sitting positions to join us in the dance.

Within seconds, the room was filled with a vibrant, joyous, lively energy. Someone handed out spoons as the instruments and sounds began to heighten like a kirtan that begins slow then escalates into a powerful song. Before long we were laughing, shimmying, swaying and swirling like dervishes around the dance floor. We continued into the wee hours of the morning as we danced the night away. We had so much fun! This event took on a life of its own and became known as the Spoon Dance.

-DOOREENA

ROOPA TELLS THE AIRPORT STORY

(from: US- 87024)

(Editor's Note: This is from a transcript of a satsang given by Roopa Morosani in 1987, talking about encounters and teachings by Gururaj. It starts mid conversation, and has been lightly edited)

...A lot of us have insight into some funny little things like that. And it's good to be aware of them because then you start seeing them even more all the time. The dimension of having Gururaj around -- and even when he's not around -- becomes more full of meaning and excitement. In fact, I was going to say I should tell you about our dinner last night which was just a riot. It was too much!

But about the cigarette! Alright, so about the cigarette. It happened in Cyprus. It happened simultaneously for Vidya and me that we suddenly "got" the lighting of the cigarette as he was doing it-- and right after it happened, simultaneously for her and me, that we both understood it, and we both knew that the other one had understood it. And (that) right away he then gave the explanation of it. Finally! So anyway, he was, as usual, crammed into this little kitchen in Cyprus which was very small space. And everybody there would cram into this space, and we'd all be sitting on the floor, on chairs, on the kitchen counters, on everything that you could sit on. Crammed together. And Chetan, of course, would keep getting up and leaving the room and stalking the halls and peering out around the corner.

So Gururaj took a cigarette, and he did his thing. And, of course, all these people had all seen it -- just like you -- four million times. But this time there was this *kaboom*, and this is what it was in words. But I want you-- if you hear the words -- to understand it in a much bigger sense because everyone here is a teacher of meditation even if you haven't yet been formally made a teacher of meditation or a healer or a person whose function is to ignite another person. That is your function or you wouldn't be here. And suddenly as he was doing that, he was saying (that) you don't know how to light another person's cigarette...this is how you light it. And all of a sudden, there he was making this big flame arise and slowly bringing the flame up toward the person who was holding the cigarette in the mouth. And you can get into the whole bit about holding a cigarette in the mouth. In fact, we might as well because today when he was talking about how to light a cigarette -- which is another routine he's been doing for years as some of you may have been put through -- how to smoke a cigarette elegantly and properly. It's the same kind of thing going on there.

A cigarette is ... I'll just tell you how it strikes me. A cigarette is made of plants grown in the earth, and it's something that we are addicted to that gives us pleasure and pain at the same time. And we consume it, and as it's consumed, then we inhale it and take it into ourselves. It burns away, and it's gone. And there's something about the whole smoking of a cigarette and the amazing amount of symbology or metaphor that it is for living of a human life. All the stuff that's involved in it. And so, as he was talking today about the art of smoking a cigarette and of

breathing it in, there are a lot of dimensions that he's talking about. And I'm sure that a lot of us, you know, see that or feel that as he's saying that. So there he was igniting a cigarette. And all of a sudden to me it was about how we are to do our dharma in the world as igniters because that is the dharma for all of us who are with him now. We've begun to do it and will continue to do it for the rest of our lives. Which is: as we have been ignited, we are to ignite others -- period -- in whatever way is our style. And each one of us, of course, will have a different style. But over and over again he gives us this lesson. You don't just throw it up in someone's face, you start from far away and you very slowly, gently bring that light until it comes to the right place where it ignites. And that's the graceful way to present the light that you can give to another person. And of course, it's true. Most of us -- and in America; he always used to say, "In America you don't know how to light cigarettes" -- we do have a tendency to ungracefully bowl people over. And if you look at the way Gururaj works, he's always lighting our cigarettes gently.

Well, alright maybe not always. Well, OK, so there's the occasional blow touch, ... Yes, at first! The blow torch comes later. Swoosh! When the whole face goes! That's when he's getting rid of your masks. You know? So, your whole face goes! So what? Actually, speaking of these little lessons and how much fun it is when you start clicking in to them -- didn't you think it was great when Joy came in today? I mean to me when Joy came in and he was playing with her. And, you know, her first response was to scream at the sight of the guru, saying, "No, no! Don't bring me any closer!" To me this was just us. This was like the chela meets the guru, right? And Joy says "Don't bring me any nearer! No!" Right! Exactly! "No. I'm scared." Wasn't that great? I loved it.

In his interactions with little children you so often, we so often see ourselves in our interactions with him. It is so much fun. And then just watching the whole thing, if you do get this tape and if this is on tape, just watch the whole interaction because it is your story. At first, it's I'm scared and I'm screaming. And then she's coming closer, and then he notices that. And he says, "Come on. Come on. Come on." She says "no, no, no!" And then finally he picks up a little potato head, and says, "Here you want a little potato head?" Something you can relate to on your level. A little toy that's nice on your level. Come here little chela... I've got something for you. Little potato head. Right? So, we all come, and we all get hooked. And we try to go away a little bit, you know? She tried again after she took the potato head. Hey, Joy's listening, right? And then she tried to go away. "No, no. I don't want to get any closer." So, then he said "Oh, look. We've got to put the little feet back together. Let's put the little feet back together." You know? Which was also very good. Putting the chelas on their feet. I mean, I tell you, it's incredible. Everything around him, it just starts reflecting. And then, so then she gets involved in playing with putting the little feet on chela. So, she stops screaming and trying to go away again. But she's still not too sure. And then finally in the end, "Will you give me a kiss?" And she just -- smack -- she just gives him a little kiss. But she's still got a little like "Oh, -get-me-out-of-here", you know?

When I watched him do that healing, that spontaneous healing on the person whose hand he healed yesterday, it was again just ... "Oh, goodness! He's going to have to do one on the whole arm. Gosh." When he did this healing on the little girl yesterday, she was screaming and carrying on and she had gotten her hand totally smashed in the doors

in the front of the church in the chapel. And so she was screaming and carrying on. And they were trying to put water on her hand. Gururaj came in and said, "What's all this? What's all this?" He came in and shoved everyone aside; grabs her...sits down with her. She's of course bawling her head off. At first -- it went in stages -- at first, he just took her hand and said, "There, there. Now just hold with me for a moment. Just hold my hand for a moment. It will be alright. Give it a little time." And she's bawling. Then he said, "It's OK. It's OK. Keep bawling. Just give it a little time." He said that to her about three times. Then she began to cool down and settle in and began to feel better. And he's just, you know, holding her hand in his, in the hand which is now doing this routine. So, he's holding her hand.

Then the next stage was she wanted to keep having the pain even though it wasn't so bad any more. She wanted to point out to him it really was very bad. But it really wasn't any more. And so he just kept diverting her mind off the subject and saying, "Oh, look at this! What is this thing over here?" And asking her questions about -- what was it? -- I forget what it was. He diverted her attention to something different because she still had the momentum of her attention focused on the pain. Even though the pain had actually tremendously abated, she still wanted to stay with it. So, he had to divert her mind off its habit -- the way we all cling to our pain even when it's taken away from us. We rush back and pick it up and dramatize it some more. So, he was having to then divert her. And he diverted her for a while as he continued to hold that hand. I think the next thing he did was he said, "OK. Well..." and said, "Now let's do this hand." And he started working on her other hand -- which was again part of the diversion and a balancing too. Just, OK, now let's do this hand. She kept insisting that there was something wrong with her hand, and he said, "Well, let's see." And he took the hand that she had been so delicate with, and he started just saying, "Look. It's working just fine...look what your hand can do...it can do this and this." You know how you've seen him in healings where he'll just take the effected thing, and he'll just move it around like this. He certainly does that with us-- even without the physical part. He does it with our psyches. It's like you say, "Oh, I've got a real problem with this!" And he says, "Oh, you've got a problem with THISSSSSS!" And he goes all over the place.

It's so funny! So, he did the same thing with her. He was taking her hand that she thought she could hardly move, and he's just doing all this stuff with it all over the place. "Look. Look. It's alright. There's no broken bones. It can bend." Then the final thing he had her do was he had her play a game with him using her hands. And he put his hands out in front of hers. By the way, he did this whole thing sitting cross legged across from her. So, he got right down to her level. Sat right down with her and just sat with her talking to her.

This whole thing was done like that. He's sitting on the ground with her. And then he's sitting on the ground cross legged and he puts his hands out in front of her like this. And he says, you know, he didn't say slap me ten, but it was -- I forget what he said -- but it was like that. So, she gave him a little slap. And then she put her hands out, and he gave her a little slap. And then he put his hands out again, and she had to give him another little slap. "OK. Come on. Harder. Come on." And then she started saying, "Last time." I thought that was really funny. She wanted to stop playing the game because it kept going back and forth, you know? He kept insisting that she slap his

hands with hers and then she put her hands out for him to slap. And so then she started saying, "Last time. Last time. Last time." And each time he did it she'd say, "Last time! Last time!" And I thought of us. It was like OK last time. And he paid no attention to this! He just kept going. It was so funny. And she'd say, "Last time!" And he would say, "Good. Now come on again." And he did that about six times until he decided it was done, you know? It was funny. The children reflect it so clearly, so purely, it's just amazing—just watch him with children. We do anyway, but it's really fun. Baldev could tell the story of him in the room with the bug last night. I mean, it's amazing. Every little thing that happens. It's amazing- the little things that happen.

But to finish with the cigarettes: we talked about lighting the cigarette, having to do with how you light or ignite another person. The proper way to give the gift that you are, all of us, are to be giving for the rest of our lives in whatever way we can. Another one is the art of smoking a cigarette. They talked about that. To me that's all about art of living our regular life on earth. That even in such things as taking in poison and making a disgusting mess in the ash tray, when you put the things out, you put them out completely, leaving nothing smoldering behind. You know? Just little things like that. When you get to the end of it, you finish it off with no little bits left smoldering and stinking anything up. You just leave it clean; when you leave, you leave clean. And that's certainly something he wants us all to do and that he makes sure that we do to whatever extent that he can and that our practices ensure for us. If we've got any little bits smoldering around, those bits, with our practices, they are going to be put out. It's like roasting the seeds of karma. Then he did the lighting. While you're smoking, you watch the smoke, the twirling and the twirling of the smoke. And the smoke is that very burning of the life of the earth stuff with the fire of life. Being burned up and consumed. The whole process of it happening. He said you watch the twirling of the smoke as it swirls around. Just all the things he says about the process of smoking a cigarette. It's such a simple little thing, and he did it for ages before ... I mean, he used to do that all the time. He'd be constantly going on about the smoke and the cigarette and about how it was very important to smoke a cigarette elegantly. And not to breathe in all of it. Don't breathe all the smoke in. Always have your prana be the most important thing, the breath of life. So that even while you're inhaling the smoke, the poison, the garbage, what you're mainly inhaling is the breath of life, so what remains in you is purity.

The metaphor for that is that he says -- although frankly I don't believe it myself personally, but that's just my opinion because I'm stuck maybe or maybe not; who knows whether it's true or not -- that doctors have given him a clean bill of health and say his lungs are as clean as a baby's. It's certainly true metaphorically that his lungs are clean as a baby's, that he does not breathe in, he does not take in and he does not pollute his essence with everything that he smokes. He takes in so many toxins. We are his cigarettes, and he smokes us. But he does not retain the tar and garbage that gets smoked in himself. He may show signs of it in his body, which he certainly does. When he started out, when some of us first knew him, he didn't have diabetes. He had about fifty times the energy and vitality and capacity that he has now. And you can imagine what it was like then. It was really scary then, I'll tell you, (but) he is no less nor no more scary (now). He has always been equally scary, he's always been. But his body (then) was

very (healthy)...his hair still had a lot of black in it then. And it's amazing how much he seems to have aged in just the eleven years that I've seen him.

(Priya: It hit me when you talked about smoking cigarettes that he may have been referring to how we should smoke in life ourselves. That we should, you know, take in all of life, I mean, be in the presence of life but not so much of it that it's a necessity and that our bodies are damaged by all of the stress.)

I think so, absolutely. Yes, I feel the same way. That is the lesson he's teaching us, when I say that we're his cigarette. There's that aspect too; they're both there. There are multiple things in that one simple little thing that looks so casual. One of the things that I love is that it is so typical of him to take something very down- to-earth, human, ordinary, anti-holy, and use that as a symbol to teach his lessons, so that you cannot divorce his lessons from everyday existence right here. They have to be combined-- unless you were eventually to make the cigarette a holy thing and then you could come to retreat houses and see the cigarettes hanging there. The holy smoke! He really goes out of his way to get the grossest possible symbols in which to mesh his teachings together. For those of us who write, who keep track of all that, we're always trying to figure out how we're going to publish any of this stuff because in the most sublime poetry, he always has the word fuck, shit, fart, things like that. And they really are a part of the poem. Like "life is an art, not a fart": it really is profound. It isn't just a joke. But he manages to take stuff like that which is really, really funny and use that as the medium in which he expresses eternal truths.

So, about the cigarettes; we looked at cigarettes. Oh, the golden lighter practice! I knew there was one connected to that. How many people have heard about the golden lighter practice? Well, the golden lighter practice is something he makes the people who are looking after him do and anyone whose house he's staying in and so forth. The golden lighter practice is, "I've lost my golden lighter...we have to drop everything and look for it." The golden lighter practice is something he hasn't done it very much lately, but a few years ago he did the golden lighter practice at every house we were in several times. And so, he did it I don't know how many times. And he would get everybody who was there walking around on their hands and knees looking all over the place for the golden lighter. And the outcome was always the same. It was always in his little ticky pocket; you know, the little pocket in his pants or somewhere else in one of the deeper pants pockets. And of course, we, not being all that dumb, would sort of raise our hands and say, "Gururaj, we know where the golden lighter is." You know? And he would say, "No, it's not there. It's not there. I've looked through my pants three times, and no one else is allowed to go through my pockets! So, don't touch my pants!" You know? And it would always be there in the pants hanging in the closet. And we would go searching all through the house, searching all through the house. Almost always it would be there. Sometimes it wasn't there, but usually, pretty much ninety-eight percent of the time it was there. It was in the pants pocket!

But he would insist that we do this whole practice. I mean, there was just no getting out of it. Sometimes we would spend a half an hour crawling through the whole house, lifting up everything, opening drawers. He would make us

go through this practice of looking all over the place for the golden lighter. That's, I suppose, kind of obvious, right? But it couldn't have been that obvious to us. In some way, he must have felt we needed that lesson a lot. That we were not knowing it. He made us go over it again and again and again that, you know, the golden light, that which ignites the golden light within you, is not to be found anywhere but right on your in your own personal possession all the time! It's never lost! But you go through the process of acting as if you lost it and wasting all your time, just wasting your time, running all over the place looking. And it's a total waste of time because you have it, and you're not recognizing it. So, you know, he's constantly putting us through these (things).

So, what happened at the airport is that we had finally gotten all those suitcases ineptly tied on the luggage rack of the car. There were so many of us traveling in Praseela's car that we have to start tying our baggage. We had too much baggage to begin with, and we're trying to tie it on top of our vehicle, and it's taking us forever to bind it down so that it won't be blown off. We've got to be sure we've got all of it, right? And this is going on and on and on: we're tying our baggage to our vehicle...we're tying our baggage to our vehicle.

Finally, we've got it all tied down with fifty million ropes and things sticking out all over the place and Gururaj has been sitting there watching this while getting more and more, you know, just going like I don't believe! He's just sort of looking, demonstrating as if he cannot believe what he's seeing, what we're doing, the trouble we're taking and how ineptly we're doing it to tie all this stuff to the car. Finally, when it's all done, just at that moment, he says, "I've had enough!" He turns around and stalks, makes a bee-line for the air-conditioned airport and, of course, takes Vidya with him. And of course, I see the two of them disappearing just as we're ready to leave. They've just crossed the street. They're not close enough to grab, and so I go off after them. I catch up with them inside the airport and say, "We're ready to go. We're ready to go. You know, everything's ready. Now we can go! And we can't stand out there very much longer." "I'm getting a cold drink. I'm getting a cold drink!" And I said, "Well, OK, I'll run up, and I'll get the cold drink for you. I'll bring it back, and we can have it in the car." And so I went running off to get it. He wanted a beer. Well, OK, so it took a while to find the place that sold the beer, to get it, and all that stuff.

Meanwhile Gururaj catches up to where we are in the airport and insists on sitting down to enjoy the beer. That takes time. And as soon as that's done, he insists on having another one. And of course, (these are) all reminders of the fact that there's a car waiting outside, and they are very hot, not to mention confused-- because suddenly everybody has disappeared, and what are they supposed to do? "Oh, they'll be alright. No problem." So, you know, he just keeps ... so, we have to stay there. What it seemed to us at the time was that he was saying, I don't know the full story, but it seemed to me that he was saying they should be waiting for me, not me for them... so let them wait for me. They should not be making me stand and wait... so, let them wait, and let them circle around the airport for a turn over and over again or stand in the heat and wait. Well, I have to admit that when you guys went, well, Vidya and I were kind of going ha, ha, ha! We were sure you guys must have waited quite a while, but he was staying in that airport deliberately a really long time.

Another thing that happened in the airport before we found out that we had been stranded was his interchange with the Hari Krishna person. That was really something. He just went for that. He was so drawn to the Hari Krishna person. He had sat there for a while kind of watching the Hari Krishna person, you know? And the Hari Krishna person was not dressed up as a Hari Krishna person. He was dressed in civvies, except that he had that Hari Krishna person look of course. But he was dressed as a regular person...he didn't have the tassel. So anyway, he was going around accosting people, and Gururaj was kind of there watching him for a while. Gururaj was watching that he would give books away. So Gururaj of course wanted him to give him something. Gururaj always likes people to give him things no matter what it is. Even if he's never going to read the book, he loves to receive gifts. And one of the things he loves to do in airports is get people, total strangers, to give him things -- which is amazing to watch. It really is something! Watching him in airports, as many of us have done, is really a trip because there is this force in him. And you can really see it operating in a situation like at an airport where absolutely nobody knows who he is, but they can't take their eyes off him. They don't know what they're looking at, but they can't stop looking at it. And they're making all the judgements about what it is they're looking at, but they're still drawn to it. And of course, Gururaj loves to be the center of attention -- always. It's his dharma to be the center of attention or at least he behaves as though it were. But in any way he can get your attention, that's what he's here to do. And he doesn't really care what it is. Doesn't make any difference to him. So, in the airports he really tries to get everybody engaged -- and does.

So, he went up to the Hari Krishna person who was giving books away and had to draw him right in. And so he went. And he started asking him, pretending he didn't know that much, asking about what he was selling. And the Hari Krishna person started talking to him. It was really ironic to listen to them. And from what, from the things Gururaj said, the Hari Krishna person finally reached the conclusion, and he said to him, "Oh, you must know something about Bhakti. You must have some sense of bhakti yourself." And Gururaj who was demonstrating as if he was both at the same time amused and angry with this person for being so dumb. And yet amused. I said to the Hari Krishna person at that point, I said, "Does he know about bhakti?! He is an object of bhakti for God's sake!" Or something like that. I said, "Know about bhakti?! He's an object of bhakti!" And I was kind of joking with the guy, but the guy had decided that there was something wrong with Gururaj because Gururaj had beer on his breath and was talking to him like, "Now you listen here, young man!" And the Hari Krishna person obviously had decided that Gururaj was probably not worth his effort because he wasn't going to understand fully about the truth of God and bhakti and things like that. Not this kind of vaguely staggering man in a suit, in a business suit, smoking a cigarette with beer on his breath. You know? This was obviously not a good prospect. And so it was really funny.

Anyway, the Hari Krishna person had to do his dharma so he gave Gururaj the book. And so Gururaj had some more interchanges with him that were rather conflictive-- but not entirely conflictive-- because the Hari Krishna person had to always be loving no matter what, right? And as we know our Guru is not hampered by any such thing! So, he can behave however he wants to behave. So, the final thing that happened was that after he had given Gururaj the book and Gururaj had told him that he needs to go to lectures and he needs to learn more and so forth

and they had had their own little interchange, the Hari Krishna person had the effrontery to ask Gururaj for a donation. Having given him this book. And of course, Gururaj said, "Donation?! You are giving me the book." And he (the Hari Krishna person) said "Yes, well, we need a donation in return for the gift. You could give us some money, you know?"

So, Gururaj, what did he say? It was really good. He presented him with a challenge. He said, "If you give me this book and do not ask me to give you anything back, I can promise you your gift will be returned a hundredfold. But if you ask me to pay you money because you gave me a gift, I can only return your book to you and say you haven't understood why you are giving it." And the Hari Krishna person failed the test. He took the book back because we didn't give him any money. Isn't that amazing? Isn't that interesting? And then he, the Hari Krishna person, kind of brushed Gururaj off because he could see that Gururaj was just a person that drank beer and smoked cigarettes and didn't know what he was talking about. And it's the kind of things you see all the time in Gururaj's interchanges with strangers in the airport. It's really because there's so much that we miss, you know? I mean, we get as much as we can, but there's so much going on.

Anyway, we proceeded on down to the curb side. And after standing out there for a while, Gururaj realized that the car was not coming around. But he wouldn't believe that the car wasn't or whatever. I don't know. I can't say what his thoughts were. But it looked as if he couldn't believe the car was not coming around. And we kept saying, "Well, I'm sure it will come around eventually. There's a lot of traffic, and you know? I'm sure they're coming back." Meanwhile Vidya and I are kind of looking at each other and going snicker, snicker because we have the same rebellious chela in us that going, "Well, fuck you! If you're going... We were ready to go, and where were you?!!!" You know? So, we were, we had that feeling too. It was funny. It was funny. So, the next thing he did was he wouldn't leave because he had to demonstrate that he was waiting for his chelas because surely his chelas would not desert him. Surely his chelas would not desert him!!! So, he had to stand in his wool English suit in that heat, and he wouldn't go back inside.

So then he made Vidya go get him this cardboard box that was lying nearby. It was one of those airport things, one of those big rectangular things. And he made Vidya go get that for him and put it on the ground for him to sit on. By the curb with cars going by, right? And he puts it down on the ground. I mean he could have sat on that little concrete thing that you could sit on, but no, she had to place it down on the ground. And then dressed in this full suit that Charles Shaw gave him that's impeccably tailored wool, English suit with the little blue, silk thing and the little silk tie and all that, he took his leather shoes off -- what he calls his four-hundred and fifty dollar shoes -- off and took them off, threw them on the sidewalk and went into the lotus posture and began to meditate. I tell you it was wonderful. Everybody on the curbside was like this. Everybody. Stopping traffic. "What is this?! What is this?!" He managed to get all these people who were supposed to be looking for their ride looking at him going, "What is this?!" And written on this thing -- which Vidya pointed out to me -- the cardboard box which she had taken had a name written on it. And it was, it said Tom B. which when you looked at it just looked like it said tomb.

And we couldn't believe it, she said, "Do you see what it says on that thing?" He's sitting on this box that says tomb, and he's meditating and waiting for his chelas who have deserted him!

He kept swaying back and forth. He'd sit there, and then he would kind of go... and everybody that was watching would be going. So Vidya had to sit behind him on that little concrete thing that goes like that with her legs there so that as he would fall over she could catch him. Oh, my lord! So, we did that for a while, and finally after doing that for a while we finally managed to prevail upon him or he got tired of that one and figured enough people had seen that show or whatever that we were able to get him to go inside and say, "OK we're going to call the place and get a hold of somebody." So we go inside. And by now he is doing "complete disgruntled bear" which some of you know very well. He is very, you know, like his chelas have done these horrible things to him now. And so he's walking around like that. And I went to make the calls while Vidya looked after him as he went through the airport. So now he's, now he's on a float through the airport, you know, through the baggage area. "Attention all passengers: The Guru is loose in the baggage claim area. hold onto your chakras!"

So he goes in, eventually, and of course where he gravitates is to the special office where he can flash his VIP cards. He's got these things that he calls his VIP cards that he shows people in airports and these are all very comic, but every one of these, every one of these, I am just assuming you are seeing the lessons in all of these things. But every one of these even though they are so funny have all kinds of lessons in them. The VIP card lesson I'm beginning to get is when he goes on and on about being a master poet, a Nobel prize winner, his paintings are being hung in the Louvre, in the National Gallery in London, and he gets four thousand in rent for them in Cape Town, and, you know, the greatest this and the greatest that. What is beginning to come through now finally, and what it is saying for me now when he does it is that the value of someone who has mastered life-- the value is that there is nothing higher than that. There is nothing more supreme than that. I'm hearing it now not as, "Boy, does he have an ego -- not to mention that he's crazy." But now I'm beginning to hear it as "This 'I' that is talking, you know, am very, very valuable. I am more valuable than all those great things that you give prizes to, that you hang up in your galleries, and that you give great international awards to. I am that thing that you think is so valuable. You know? This is the master. This is it. This is beyond anything else. So, whatever you want to claim... Yes, yes, everything. It's the channel. It's that life force. That life force is the one that has won all those prizes and deserves to be it. Yes, that's another way of looking at it.

Anyway, it's funny because he's been doing that one for a long time and he's still doing it-- which says to me that if he's still doing it, he still thinks that we haven't quite got it yet. Because he seems to only stop doing that when enough of us have somewhat gotten some of it-- then he'll let that one go. Or else maybe he just gives up on us and says, "Oh, forget it!"

(Jagriti: I remember when you were visiting him in South Africa, he was going on and on about how he was performing with Ravi Shankar and writing music for him. And there was a part of me, I remember, that had the

same reaction. I was like "Oh, God, here we go again!" But there was also a part of me that said we can claim that for ourselves too because that force that is within him is also within us. I mean I didn't see it quite as clearly. But you know, my response to that -- and I'm having it more now when I hear him say that -- is, "Yes, we can walk in there and claim that too.")

Exactly. And to me that is what the VIP card is. And that's what he is always showing anyone who is traveling with him. He always says, "Demand to talk to the manager. Know that you have the right to talk to the manager no matter what it is. You know? And show them your VIP card, and demand the best! Because nothing but the best for the best and don't settle for less!" And it has stopped sounding to me now like an insane ego trip, and it's begun sounding like once you know what your value is and you know that it is at the highest value, there is nothing that is denied to you. And there is no place you cannot be.

And then as you know he'll turn it right around after that and point out that a dry crust of bread is as good as a king's feast. So, it's not like he is only trying get people to go for the big show. But when he says he talks to royalty and he's on, you know, he rubs elbows with all the people in power, it's like, it's the same kind of thing. It's like saying, "Don't take this light and stick it away thinking it has no place in this world and it has no ability to express itself or to assert its not supremacy over but supremacy within or in relation to the other things of the world." I don't know. The lesson is still going on so other people's insights are really welcome. But when he starts doing all those things... Yes. The final thing that happened in the airport -- and we're close to the end now -- is that eventually he wandered upstairs. And he wandered up to, you know, the main level where the main lobby is, where the ticket counter is. And this is after they refused to honor, they refused to do anything about his VIP ticket, and told him to go sit down. So, he sat down. And what Vidya was going through at that time was, "I give up. I don't care. I'm just going to sit here. Whatever happens, happens." So Vidya had gone through a total, you know, surrender by this time.

The next thing they did was to go upstairs, up that escalator, and stand in the middle of the lobby where all the ticket people were. And she said -- because I was still on the phone at that time -- so Vidya told me this part. She said he just sort of stood there, and he looked over that huge room with all of those people and all that activity, you know, that huge room there, that huge space. And he just sat and he looked down the whole thing. And this one man just stepped out of it and looked at him. And it was the operations manager of the airport who walked up to Guruji and said, "Is there anything I can do for you?" And Gururaj had started walking right toward him. And so they got together. And Guruji, you know, offered him a cigarette and kept putting his hand on his knee and talked, you know, his name was Jerry Traub. And "Hey, Jerry, how's it going?" And stuff like that. And came over and sat down with him and acted as if Gururaj was in fact the person who owned this airport and was having Jerry over as a guest and would he like some drinks. You know? "My secretaries can get you some drinks, and what would you like?"

And he did this whole thing. Now this is what's really interesting because Jerry was the one who had the capacity to do that to Gururaj. But how Gururaj ignited it in him was to do it to Jerry. So, he acted as if he owned the whole airport, and he would like to serve Jerry drinks and make him comfortable and is there anything I can do for you. And what Jerry did in return was to open up the Red Carpet Lounge, the fanciest room in the whole airport to Gururaj as his guest, and send Gururaj there to spend the rest of his time that he was waiting for his ride to come – which I'm sure he thought was a limousine. You know? So that later Vidya said to me, "Don't let Jerry see the car! OK? It's just Danusha's little Japanese car, you know?"

So anyway, it was great. And Jerry, by the way, was totally fascinated by Gururaj. And he, one of the things he said to me was, "Is he eighty-one years old or what?!" Because he was doing, you know, wheelchair, cane, old man. And he said, "I bet I know how old he is. I bet he's eighty-one years old." And I said, "Well, not quite. I'd say in some ways he's older than that, and in other ways we don't know how old he is." But anyway, it was great. This is the kind of thing that happens. So, by the time he'd been in the airport for a while he was ensconced comfortably in the Red Carpet VIP Lounge, sitting back with a scotch, and watching the planes take off, and just like this, you know, having a great time and being served and waiting for his car to arrive. And it was at this time that I said to him, "It is such an adventure being around you, Gururaj!" And he said, he said, "It's not the adventure, it's the add -- I think I said this before -- it's what is added, being with me is what is added to the venture. And that's what makes the adventure that I am." It's something like that. I wrote it down, but it was pretty close to that. And that was the airport.

So, folks. From the cardboard on the street to the Red Carpet Lounge. From the cardboard in the dust and the fumes to the Red Carpet lounge. The whole range. Yes, it really is incredible. It's amazing!

-ROOPA

LAST TIME WITH PREATAM

Preatam's last course in the United States was the most indescribable course I ever attended. My sense of connection with him seemed to be in constant flux. I experienced a total disconnect with him in the form of preatam/gomila. Love was palpable and expansive but there was no pull for me to be in the specific location where Preatam was present. This was very different for me. Though left to my own volition, I would have kept myself in the background because I rarely had the guts to enter into the smoke filled rooms where people were jammed around Preatam's bed, laughing, crying, smoking and getting high on shakti, more often than not, Preatam would send someone to find me and bring me to be with him. I loved being in "HIS" presence. But on this last retreat in the US before Gururaj left his body, the disconnect I felt from him was disarming. The mind could not wrap around what was happening. Though I was summoned by him throughout the retreat, it didn't seem to matter whether I was with him or not.

After the course, Preatam and Roopa spent the night at my home. Upon finishing dinner, he asked for water colors and proceeded to paint. My husband Mark, Roopa and I sat around the dining room table watching him play with colors. When he picked up the paintbrush, the canvas became a dreamscape. The Master painted a world within each picture. We were drawn into it with each and every stroke of the brush. As we sang, laughed, told stories, and drank scotch around the table he wove the energies of the three of us together until I could no longer feel any separation between us.

After a while Mark said good night, and a little later Roopa left. I don't remember if others were there initially, but eventually the house emptied out. I was alone with Preatam for hours as he continued to paint. Not a word was said. My mind began freaking out at the otherworldliness of this energy. Once again I began to feel more and more disconnected. Finally, I was bursting at the seams. I told him I didn't know what was happening. It was painful. He responded "A master knows how to shut off the sense of connection at will."

Apparently he also knew how to turn it on again, because as he continued to paint I began to feel connected in a way I had never experienced before. "We" sat in the Void. Painting was happening in/as the living Void. No time, space, characters. Emptiness. There was no sense of separation. It was something like the experience in chanting when the chant begins going on its own; sounds appear, then silence in the midst of it all. Most of those last hours with Preatam were spent in this sense of Empty Fullness, as the pulsation, the vibration continued to expand, dissolving boundaries, emptying into spaciousness.

When he finished painting, he asked me to sleep with him during the night. It felt almost rhetorical, as there was no connection to the man, only oneness with the energy. While it may have been a sweet, delicious gesture, it was totally a joke. (I am smiling as I write this.) There was already fullness in the truest sense.

Plus... Mark was in the next room. If I spent the night with Preatam, all hell would have broken loose. I went back to my bedroom. Mark woke up and we were together. Being with Mark was experienced as the fullness of love expressing. There was no difference in form. Preatam? Mark? No difference. No difference!

A year later my mother died. Toward the end, Mom and I were also disconnected. It was emotionally very painful for both of us. Growing up mother and daughter we had a very symbiotic, unhealthy relationship. About a week after her death, during meditation, there was a strong sense that if the disconnect hadn't happened before her death I would have been dragged psychologically into the grave with her. This awareness brought a sense of freedom and release. Hmmmm...was Preatam planting seeds for my mother's death during that last night we spent together in form? Just story time conjectures...All is empty and meaningless...right? :-)

I [only occasionally return to. . . Whatever is accurate] that state of Presence in/as the Void, but the glimpse Preatam offered me has broadened and deepened my awareness in a way that is lasting, even if the experience itself is not. [gratitude?]

-GOMILLA

MAY 17, 1988: THE DAY GURURAJ DIED

How blessed I am to be a chela of a True Master. And to experience the time of transition of the physical man into the pure channel is one of awe for me.

Let me start from the beginning of this experience.

On Tuesday, May 17, 1988, I was awakened by a phone call at 7:30 AM. Sutriya was calling to tell me that Gururaj had died about two hours earlier at his home in South Africa. Details were limited. He had died while giving himself an insulin shot. Later I found out that he had died from a heart attack. Sutriya said that Vidya had said that there would probably still be a summer retreat. The conversation was short. I was so shocked that I could hardly think, let alone speak.

So, my conscious experience begins...total shock, then denial...it had to be another Guru trick! Then it became a KNOWING that it was true. After a few minutes of these initial feelings, I was into the 'Poor Pitiful Me' routine: yearning for his touch, his lessons, his healings, etc. "How could he leave me? I'm not ready to lose my teacher. How will I make it without him?" were just a few of my thoughts mixing themselves with my sweet memories of Guruji. The tears flowed. Between my tears, I called two other Indiana meditators and told them the awful news.

I was then drawn into my meditation room, like a magnet pulling a piece of metal. I immediately went into a deep state of meditation. During the meditation, I was 'hit' by this incredible energy...it felt like a huge electrical shock that started from the base of one foot and went through my entire body. It was so strong that it literally jolted me several inches out of my chair. And then another bolt of energy hit me. I had no idea of what was happening. Then I heard Gururaj saying "So what! Just do what you have to do!" I then came out of meditation. During the day, I was 'drawn' into meditation many, many times.

I did not understand anything that had happened to me that day, but I knew something very powerful had happened. A few weeks later, I came across a paragraph in a book about Ramakrishna where it told about his death. The book said that the energy that was held by Ramakrishna's physical body was passed on to his chelas when he left the body. Is this what my experience was? I don't know and probably will never know for sure.

-JASUTI

POST-SCRIPT TO THE NEW EDITION

In one of my favorite satsangs, on the Guru-Chela relationship, Gururaj Ananda Yogi described the Guru-Chela relationship as a love affair. Not in the usual sense of the word, he goes on, as it might be understood in a man-woman relationship. It is even a greater love affair...that goes far beyond communication, and into communion.

The Guru is very important and somewhat controversial in spiritual practice. Many spiritual practitioners distrust and discredit gurus. The idea is that you can figure it out from books, teachers, and classes. I'm not so sure. The Guru is both a human being of flesh and blood and at the same time, the embodiment of transpersonal, universal wisdom. He, She or It is something that manifests in the individual mind stream of the spiritual seeker. You obtain a guru not through your own efforts, but as a miracle, an act of grace. The Guru is both highly personal and impersonal, intimate and public, inner and outer, particular and universal. The Guru is the Buddha, the Dharma and the sangha all in one. Guru is the principle of illumination, the liberator and the dispeller of darkness. Ultimately, Guru is the voice of your true nature, the nature of the Self. When it arises in the form of a human being, it is Bhagavan. If you are a Christian, it is the Christ. When it arises in the subtle level of the mind, it is Ishta-devata, the personal deity or the chosen spiritual ideal. When it arises in the energy- body, it is mantra. And when it arises in the manifold appearances of this world, it is the lotus land of purity. To paraphrase from the Gospel of Thomas, it is the Kingdom of God that is spread out before us, though people do not see it.

It was while teaching at a small college in St. Louis that I met my guru, Gururaj Ananda Yogi. Now that I am much older, I realize what a miracle it is to meet the Guru in a human form. My wife and I attended many weeklong retreats in the early to mid-eighties with Gururaj and the chelas of the American Meditation Society, or AMS. I was initiated in 1983. When I read over the journals from that period and think over my experiences while attending these courses, I am astonished at all that happened there. Although I listened to dozens of satsangs during the courses and later on tape, I had only a few private interviews with him. Each encounter was extremely memorable, and he gave me a number of specific instructions. Gururaj himself did not emphasize a particularly Indian approach. He liked to say he was a "universalist" who taught spiritual truths common to all the great traditions. I was made a Full Teacher of the American Meditation Society in the teachings of Gururaj Ananda Yogi. My wife and I have remained a part of this sangha in one way or another for over thirty years. I am still a senior member and give satsang when I can attend the annual retreats.

My relationship with Gururaj is hard to describe, because my feelings for him are so complex. In his words, the Guru-Chela relationship is a "love affair" – and this is true. As he himself emphasized, he was not a monk, and he didn't teach from a historic lineage. Calling himself a teacher for "householders," he liked to make fun of priests and of religions, as well as other gurus. His satsangs, in which he mingled the profound and the ordinary, were brilliant and spontaneous. His humor was full of enlightenment energy. I like to think that he gave his humor and his voice

to me as his special gift.

Gururaj said the goal of life is Self-Realization, which is true. He once said, "I don't believe in God; I KNOW God." This is also true. I now recognize that although his teaching shares many elements of classic Indian spirituality, he did it all from personal, firsthand experience. No canned Vedanta lectures. No beards and Patanjali terminology. No ancient traditions with venerable teachers or Hindu deities. No heavy, profound texts to study. Just his voice, that laughter and that mysterious presence. He had actualized all of it, and he spoke with direct knowing. With others, he could be a very controversial guru. This troubled me. But with me, he was a kind and austere Godfather-figure. Although I no longer read or listen to his satsangs on a regular basis, he is still front and center on my altar and in my devotion. It doesn't matter to me -- or to him -- that I mix and match Buddhist, Dzogchen, Advaita, and tantric practice. As he would put it, it is all One Consciousness. A dear teacher of mine has said that all sadhana practices can be boiled down to two essences: Samskara Shuddhi (Purification) and Guru Devotion. I think Gururaj would have agreed.

I hope that you have enjoyed these stories and teachings from the Guru. If you are an established spiritual practitioner, may it serve to inspire you to greater efforts. If you are new to meditation or to spirituality, consider joining us in this adventure. Come on in, as the AMS old timer has put it, the water's fine.

-JEFF