



# ***Darshan & Sadhana***

## **Living in the Ashram**

*A personal journey along a spiritual path*



### **Darshan - 25<sup>th</sup> March 1997**

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

#### **Gurumayi Arrives at the Ashram**

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

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

#### **Darshan in Namaste Room**

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

#### **Joyous Interchange**

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

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



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

### **A Beautiful Connection**

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

In fact, I became embedded in this extraordinary experience. It was a deep and powerful connection that lasted for what seemed an eternity. At the time I had no rationalisation of its significance as I was beyond all thought, yet I knew something of extraordinary significance had transpired.



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

Gurumayi seemed to be anticipating the melody as she was following the words. She had a beaming smile and was showing her delight with everyone's singing.

After the song Gurumayi commented it was such a sweet song and I was surprised to see many of the people in the room with tears flowing and all of them seemed to have been deeply moved. Gurumayi asked me when the song was written and I explained that it was in 1993, after the satellite intensive. I explained how I had dreamt of singing it to Gurumayi many, many times and now my longing had been fulfilled.

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

This was a major breakthrough as I had always frozen when singing in public. *In retrospect it was an amazing personal experience for me!* A little later Gurumayi said, "*such sweet people, a sweet ashram and sweet song.*" I said this sounded like another song, and Gurumayi laughed. Jacqui mentioned how, "*This could be the song for the next tour!*"



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### **Gift to Gurumayi**

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



Gurumayi asked how long it had taken. I explained, as I was not really an artist, it had taken me over three months because I had to keep erasing sections and doing it over and over, time and time again, looking very closely and studying Baba’s photo. Gurumayi then commented, “*what a great dharana.*”

### **Sankalpa**

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



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

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

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

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

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

### **Birthday Wish**

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



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### **Letter to Gurumayi – 26<sup>th</sup> March 1997**

I decided to write a letter to Gurumayi, asking to see her on my birthday. I gave it to Bowbay who had played such a key role in organising the darshan for the ashram residents with Gurumayi the day before. I knew I needed to maintain a sincere state of detachment within myself as to whether or not it was to going to happen. Ultimately, what was really important was to know that the inner connection with the Guru within my heart was everything!

I addressed it to Bowbay and the letter read:

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

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

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

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

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



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### **Divya Diksha & Birthday Celebration - 1<sup>st</sup> April 1997**

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

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

As I was walking up the hall I sensed this wave of excitement start to build around me. Then I heard the news; Gurumayi was coming to the Ashram! My heart picked up a few beats in anticipation of just the thought of it. I rushed out to the front garden where everyone was gathering. Swami Ishwarananda asked me if it was OK to chant because of the early hour, out of concern for the neighbours. I said very directly, "*Of course!*" so we all started chanting "*Om Namo Bhagavate Muktanandaya*" very sweetly with an early morning sensitivity that contained tremendous power. I was looking around at all the people's beaming faces at the prospect of the impending visitor and Brigit smiled at me as if to say, "*Great birthday present!*" (Bridget had escorted me to see Gurumayi for a private darshan at Darling Harbour on the day of my Divya Diksha in 1997, 6 years to the day.)

Suddenly there was a rush of activity outside the front gate as a car pulled up. Everyone was standing at attention when we suddenly heard the words "*April Fool!*" sounding out. A sudden wave of a very "bitter/sweet" mixed emotion ran through everyone. The point being made was, if you are going to have a joked pulled on you, it may as well be by the Guru. The momentary disappointment turned quickly to joy and laughter as to the ingenious, and now obvious, "*April Fool*" trick that we had all fallen for, *hook, line and sinker!*

### **My Heartfelt Wish**

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

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

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



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

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

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

### **Birthday Wishes**

By the time I regained some sense of composure, I thought to myself I probably should let someone know Gurumayi is here! I rushed into the amrit and saw Swami Ishwarananda standing there. I told him “Gurumayi’s here!” With the early “April Fool” experience still lingering in his mind, I noted a split second of disbelief, and then Swamiji, seeing the movement of people in the hallway rushed off “in pursuit” as well. I was standing around for a while, savouring the excitement of realisation of my request to the Guru.

I heard someone say that Gurumayi had been upstairs and realised this could mean the dorms. I was told later Gurumayi had walked into my room and stood in front of my puja and stayed there for a short while. She had visited the other rooms and offices upstairs and apparently she was now in the front garden.

I decided to follow and walked up the hallway and noticed that Gurumayi had just walked back in and was standing at the front door. I stood to her left about two metres away and Gurumayi said, “*It’s his birthday*”, looking at me. A round of “happy birthday” followed and Gurumayi walked by me to the Ganesh puja and stopped there for a moment. She then went into the Seva room with an ashram resident who was standing at the door waiting to show her around.

Jane, one of the managers, told me to go into the room as well. I walked in and stayed at the entrance. Gurumayi started to leave and brushed passed me, caressed my shirt and commented, “*Great shirt.*” The shirt was a timeless design that I had only worn a very few times. (I wondered if the shirt was the one I had worn back in 1991 when I received Shaktipat.) It was also worn the week before when we had met with Gurumayi. I only wore it on rare occasions and it suddenly was relegated to ‘prized-shirt’ status, along with my Russian embroidered vest which I had also worn for Gurumayi’s last visit to the ashram.



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### **The Song**

Gurumayi went down the hallway to the meditation hall. Everyone in the program was told to go back into the hall. I walked down to the stairs just above the entrance to the meditation hall and just smiled at the most perfect fulfillment of my request for my birthday. Then Bowbay came out of the hall and invited everyone to come in. I somehow managed to find my way right down the front, directly to the side of Gurumayi who was sitting in her chair. As the room settled, Gurumayi said, “*It’s Anatole’s Birthday.*” This was the first time I had actually heard Gurumayi mention my name, and it sounded like nectar. The sound of the Guru saying your name is just divine. Everyone burst into song once again.





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

We then chanted Hari Hari Bol, a long chant mentioning many names and aspects of God. The chant finished with everyone feeling ecstatic and full of joy. Gurumayi started to speak again and quite playfully looked at me and said, "*Shambavi hasn't heard your song yet*" and said that I "*should go and get my guitar.*"

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

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

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

Gurumayi completed what she was saying and then mentioned how she had met with the ashram residents previously and gave a lot of praise to the people who live in the ashram and look after it. Gurumayi asked where was my "company", then said, "*Anatole and company should come up the front.*" I will never forget the next sight.

The instant Gurumayi said this, all of the ashram residents sitting in the hall sprung up like "jack-in-the-boxes" from amongst the crowd, simultaneously. There wasn't a moment's hesitation in their resolve. Gurumayi told the swamis and trustees to move and make space for the residents. Everyone gathered around me and the one song-sheet I had. We were bunched in very snugly.

### **Gurumayi's Instructions**

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

I introduced the song once again as before and we sang the song, this time to Gurumayi and a few hundred or so people. After we finished, Gurumayi commented she thought the song was much longer last time, suggesting she would have liked it to go on. She asked Shambavi about the song and Shambavi gestured by wiping away the tears. Gurumayi suggested Shambavi would like a copy of the words. Gurumayi said it was, "*The perfect song*" and asked, "*When was it written?*" I replied in 1993 after the New Years satellite intensive and Gurumayi asked Swami Ishwarananda what the name of the Intensive was. He replied, "*Everything happens for the best.*" I said to Gurumayi, "*I can vouch for that*" and told her that I would be happy to sing the song to her "*at any time.*"



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### **Baba's Drawing**

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

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

In the following weeks I spent a lot of time contemplating this day. I began to realise that Gurumayi had answered my request beyond all expectations - I asked for a mere “moment” of Gurumayi's time in my letter and received beyond anything I could have imagined.

*It was like my best friend had come to visit me on my birthday.*