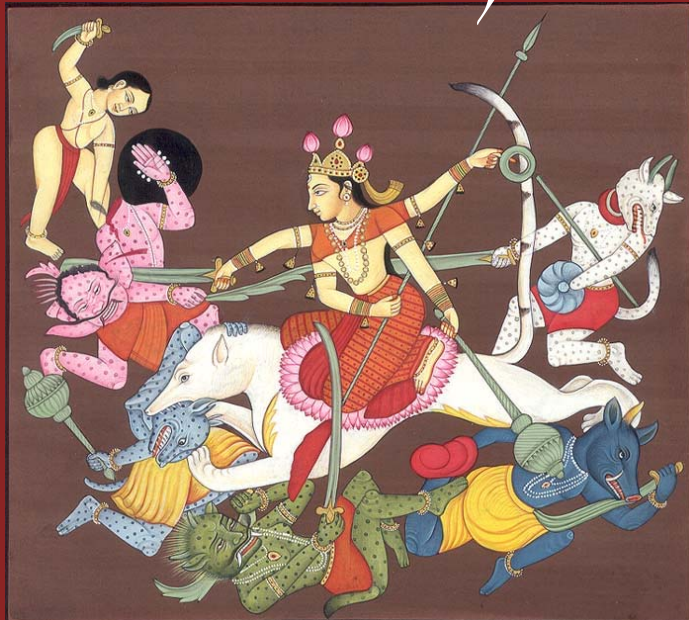


Muktanand
Meannjin



Last Class



"From The Tree of Wisdom" *Megan Mitchell 1995*

LAST CLASS

A Story of Joy and Courage in the Face of Death

by

**Muktanand Meannjin,
Her Yoga Students, Friends & Family**

Written & Edited by

John E Ransley

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LAST CLASS

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Last but not least by any stretch of the imagination, much love and thanks to my partner Muktanand Meannjin: this story belongs to her.

As always in these matters, the final responsibility for the text rests with me.

Courage is the quality of being brave: the ability to face danger, difficulty, uncertainty, or pain without being overcome by fear or being deflected from a chosen course of action. ENCARTA Online Dictionary

Courage is the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

Introduction

First, introductions to Muktanand and myself.

Muktanand Meannjin was a Yoga Acharya, or senior teacher, in the style of yoga developed by Swami Satyananda of the Bihar School of Yoga, India. She established the Brisbane Yoga Therapy Centre in 1988 and renamed this Authentic Yoga & Meditation in 2000. She died on 14 February 2004 after being diagnosed with last-stage breast cancer two years previously.

My name is John E Ransley and I was Muktanand's partner for the last eighteen years of her life. We also had an earlier life together, from 1970 to 1974, first in Sydney and then in Toowoomba. After she went to India I visited her ashram for several months in 1976, and we corresponded over the years. Shortly after she returned to Australia I persuaded her to join me in Brisbane in early 1986. Some more details are provided in my eulogy from her funeral service.

This book is Muktanand's 'Last Class', a teaching about dreams and dying. Muktanand always intended to write a book about her illness, including both the major events and her dreams. When she didn't survive I took on the responsibility, and it changed into a collaboration between her and me. Because Muktanand always sought a two way conversation between herself and her students, it later expanded to include contributions from her students, friends and family.

Thus the book is literally the teacher's last class: it has the teacher and it has her students. I have assisted in the preparation of the class, and I have also contributed my own experiences. But Muktanand is the focus and I have done my best to get out of the way, so that readers can hear her story as clearly as possible.

Muktanand was best known as a yoga and meditation teacher, but she was also renowned for her dream workshops. It is no accident that many of her senior students were themselves deeply interested in dreams. This book then, is a teaching about dreams, in the context of a terminal illness. It is certainly not your usual yoga book, although yoga practices are mentioned from time to time.

Why the title 'Last Class'? A couple of weeks after Muktanand died I had several dreams with the theme of preparations involving Muktanand. I managed to capture one of these dreams on Monday 1 March, the first part of which went like this:

We are preparing for Muktanand to cease teaching. There is time for me to prepare, like cleaning up my email, and the thought I need to prepare a class, but then the thought that Muktanand is doing that. Muktanand will do one last sequence of a standard sort of class – she selects this and that.

Kathy Turner suggested the theme of the dream was 'Last Class' and the title was so apt I adopted it for this whole project, including this book.

* * *

The title Last Class focuses our attention on the fact that Muktanand is no longer with us. Inevitably because it concerns her terminal illness and death, some of the dreams and stories imply the notion of survival. This collaboration is not intended to make an argument about that; that is for other people and other books.

Nor is any claim intended that Muktanand's experience of dying is special in the sense that the strange and wonderful things that happened are unique to her. These kinds of experience are much more common than we give credit for, as anyone who regularly watches Andrew Denton's TV show, Enough Rope, can vouch for. Muktanand's story is different because so many people knew her through her yoga and meditation teaching, and not coincidentally, so many of her students and friends were interested in dreams.

* * *

Why did I write it, and what has been my role in writing this story? A clue is provided by a dream I had on Friday 30 August 2002:

I am with a large group camping with 'swamiji'. I roam around along dirt tracks and up and down side paths of banks and drain-like cuts through the bush, followed by a guy who I only allow to catch up with me at the end. We stand together and he says something complimentary about the scenery. I have a yoga name – Purananand – but I think I had a longer yoga name at the beginning. It is my turn to take swamiji his breakfast but I am keen to be early, to have at least a short conversation with him. When I go to his place the door is closed. I ask if it's okay to knock but two different people say no, you have to wait. I intend to knock, but when I turn around the door is open and he is moving around. I go into the room. He gets scissors and cuts locks of his long curly hair and puts them on the table. I almost grab them for myself, thinking how valuable or desirable they would be to the other people, the devotees. He doesn't seem to care. I ask him if he wants a larger breakfast or smaller than usual. I am looking at him closely, thinking he is very handsome, fine featured and tanned, with dark hair (not like Swami Satyananda). At this point his Shakti comes in – her appearance is vague but she is slim and youngish. She wraps herself around him. Swamiji says he wants what she had for breakfast.

I had forgotten this dream until I set about writing this book. So I only looked up the definition of Purana in October 2006 ('ananda' is roughly translated as 'bliss' and is a commonly used suffix for swami names). The Puranas are a collection of Sanskrit myths, legends and folklore treating the creation of the universe – conceived of as a cosmic egg – and recounting the histories of gods, kings, saints, and yogic heroes such as Shiva. The name Purananand thus conveys the idea of a particular type of story telling. The story in this book has a yogic hero – Muktanand – and a large cast of characters, including an Indian goddess.

How did I write the story? I recorded everything – conversations with Muktanand, her dreams and my dreams – and I asked people for their dreams and stories after she died. All of the text relating to Muktanand including conversations is taken from contemporaneous same-day (often real-time) notes.

* * *

This book introduces a new Muktanand, one most if not all of her students did not know. In

many ways it completes the project she started on returning to Australia, which was to dispense with the trappings and prestige of 'swami' and to live just like an ordinary person. She saw no contradiction between this and the fact she continued to be a yogi and, flowing from that, a remarkable yoga and meditation teacher.

Most people knew Muktanand as a strong but also very private person. She was very generous in sharing her knowledge about the teachings but she was also very reserved about her private life. This may have created a kind of mystique around her which was certainly not her intention.

Undoubtedly her strength was an attractive quality for many people. Yoga students were attracted to it; I was attracted to it. But although it was a genuine strength it was not totally who she was. In one way it was a strength built on an uncertain foundation.

This book shows Muktanand choosing to go into weakness and vulnerability as a necessary path for her healing and spiritual process. You may find sections of it hard to read, but I request that you persist. There is a thread of joy and light that flows through it all.

The depths of despair that Muktanand plumbed are what many people experience who feel they are dying before their time. I could have left out all the hard and painful bits. Undoubtedly they contribute to the drama of the story but that is not why I included them. They are included because they are essential to the integrity of the story and its truth.

Of course the temptation to create a nice story is very strong. But as already noted this book is compiled from real-time, same-day notes. In that sense it is a sort of history more than a memoir. It is not constructed from memory; it is a record of actual events including conversations. By this method I have tried to avoid telling any story but Muktanand's story.

Would Muktanand have told her story this way if she had lived? Of course not, she would have told it differently. Would she have included all the black bits? I honestly don't know for sure but I know she greatly admired Ram Dass. Somewhere in his writings or audiotapes Ram Dass makes a joke about a letter from a woman who writes to say he is great teacher "because he is so human". That is, he tells it warts and all, including his mistakes, his backsliding and everything. I know Muktanand respected that.

* * *

When people are told they have a terminal illness they have a variety of responses. Some feel relief, others opt for passive acceptance, others again horror and despair. I remember being greatly struck by a 1991 broadcast letter from the supervisor of Muktanand's Master of Letters reading thesis. He had written to say he had been diagnosed with a brain tumour. The first sentence went something like 'I've just been given terrible, horrible news'. I can't remember reading past that point, it seemed too dreadful given he was still in his forties.

My mother died at age 78 from metastatic breast cancer. She always put on a brave face in front of us children, but when she was admitted to the palliative care hospital, the doctor told me she wept inconsolably.

Another response to cancer is to try and keep on living as normally as possible. When Muktanand's first boyfriend was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer he chose to keep on

working. He did this for five years until he stopped his annual chemotherapy treatments and died.

Muktanand had her regrets, chiefly that she should have taken more care of herself and stopped work sooner. She had suffered from ill-health for several years before she was diagnosed with cancer. At the beginning of every year she would agonise over whether to keep working. Apart from one year she chose to keep on teaching. But when she discovered her small cancer lump she had no hesitation in ceasing work and giving up her yoga centre. For her, returning to work was not even an option she considered.

As her students can attest, she never allowed her ill-health to affect the quality of her teaching.

* * *

Many of us carry around an idea of what constitutes a good death, but we need to be very careful about imposing this on others, even when we are trying not to. For many of us there will not be a choice: we will simply drop dead from a heart attack or stroke, die in motor vehicle accident, pass away in our sleep or drift away into the grey lands of dementia. Whether these are good deaths or not will depend on your point of view, but they are not conscious deaths.

Muktanand was told at the beginning of her illness she was very lucky to be able to die consciously. Clearly the person who told her that believed this was a good thing, but it was not a view shared by Muktanand. She was definitely not ready to die.

Is anyone ready to die? Probably some are. I remember visiting a great aunt in a nursing home who said she was in god's waiting room, she actually seemed a bit impatient to die.

But think for a minute how you would respond if you were told you only had a short period to time to live. What would you do? Would you be ready to die?

In 2002 the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper ran a series of weekly interviews with the theme "*If I Had a Year to Live*". Muktanand only read a few, but she complained that in all of those she read the person assumed they would be healthy up until the day they died. She commented that was a very unrealistic assumption, at least for anyone with a terminal illness.

* * *

Muktanand's response to cancer was to fight for her life to the very end.

Some people may have expected she go into her death with calmness and equanimity. Whenever she had thought about it before it actually happened, she herself had expected to opt for deep meditation. Instead she sought connection and healing and a large part of that was allowing herself to be vulnerable and weak, and allowing other people to help her.

Muktanand was absolutely convinced that if she put all her power into positive thinking she would maximise her chances of living. To that end she enlisted all her intelligence, her yogic skills, her determination and her dreaming and meditation mind. At the same time she did

not try to avoid the regular bouts of bad news when they came; on the contrary she sought them out. She was sustained by her dreams and her yoga perspective and her yoga practices, whenever she was capable of doing them. When the illness got worse she effectively went into retreat.

This was a very hard way to go and Muktanand had to battle with black moods and depression each time she was confronted with bad news. But you have to say that in the end she pulled off something amazing, although what exactly that is you will have to decide for yourself.

In early 2002 I had a dream in which I was in a class in Victoria with a reluctant temporary teacher. Muktanand commented the dream positioned me as a student of a “victorious woman” in “an altered state”.

She didn’t connect the dots at the time, but in my view she is the “Victorious Woman”.

It has been a privilege to walk this path with her.

PART ONE

INTRODUCING MUKTANAND

“No one can draw a free breath who does not share with others a common and disinterested ideal. Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward in the same direction. There is no comradeship except through union in the same high effort.”

Antoine de St-Exupery: Sun, Wind and Stars



Sydney, 1958

CHAPTER 1

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Muktanand was born in Sydney, the eldest child of an Irish Australian couple who had just returned from New Guinea. Muktanand (not her birth name) displayed academic brilliance from an early age and was Dux of her school when she graduated from high school. At school she had avoided all types of team sports but nevertheless she believed in exercising and being healthy.

Muktanand's adventure with yoga began in Sydney in 1969 when she enrolled at Sydney University for her Bachelor of Arts degree. She commenced yoga classes as a way of keeping fit with a minimum amount of effort – that is how she understood yoga at the time.

Without knowing anything about the different styles of yoga she enrolled in a course of hatha yoga classes at Michael Volin's famous yoga school, where she was taught by Michael's brother. She never met Michael Volin, nor did she know at the time that he had been initiated by Swami Satyananda. This was her first connection with Swami Satyananda, via one of the older generation of Australian yoga teachers who had been initiated by him.

Although academically brilliant, she broke off her university studies after a couple of years and moved to Queensland, where she started practising yoga in a serious way.

Toowoomba

When Muktanand came to Toowoomba in 1972 she was initially at a loose end. While looking for a job she took the opportunity to start yoga classes with the Gita School of yoga. She became very involved, attending three classes a week as well as keeping up a daily home practice of one and half hours or more. She found herself enjoying it a lot more than before, as well as experiencing great improvements in her health, flexibility and relaxation.

She sat the Commonwealth public service exam and came top in the South East Queensland region. She worked for 12-18 months as a base level clerk in the Department of Social Security. Even after she commenced work she would rise at 5.30am or so in the morning to do some yoga practice, and for a while she also added daily morning readings of the Bhagavada Gita.

It was through Gita that Muktanand met June Henry. She liked June's style of teaching and over time became quite deeply involved in June's school of yoga. It was from June and her then-husband Karl Jackson that Muktanand first heard tall tales and true of the Bihar School of Yoga in Monghyr and Swami Satyananda. These tales can now be described as an intriguing mixture of boot camp and "Exotic India" (the excellent website) and Sarah

McDonald's book *Holy Cow*.

In 1973 June and Karl and a few of their yoga teacher friends attended Swami Satyananda's Golden Jubilee in India. When they returned they regaled Muktanand and their other yoga students with stories of how wonderful it had been, and how terrible the food, the heat and the conditions were. They showed slides of the festivities and told how they had been allowed to do a kriya yoga course, which was then considered a fairly advanced thing to do. All in all they created an attractive albeit challenging picture of ashram life, the promise of the authentic tradition as it were, and in the end they managed to motivate not just Muktanand but several other students into going there.

Muktanand felt wonderful doing yoga but she still suffered strong bouts of depression. She found it very easy to get absorbed. When she was visiting Sydney about this time she had a week-long experience where she thought she was becoming psychotic. She kept on seeing herself from the outside, not just her physical body but her thoughts and feelings as well. She didn't know how to resolve it, couldn't see how to expand it. At the end she had a vision that she needed to do more yoga. This was one of the experiences that drew her to India.

* * *

When Muktanand came to Toowoomba she was still searching for a direction in life. She decided that her next step would be to go overseas. June had suggested to Muktanand that she could stop over in India on her way to Europe, pick up some yoga teaching training at the Bihar School of Yoga (BSY), and then teach yoga when she returned to Australia. Muktanand had never had any particular interest in going to India, but was prepared to go there to further her yoga studies.

In mid 1974 Swami Amritananda came to Australia and Muktanand went to Sydney to meet her and to take *Mantra Diksha*. Karl Jackson was about to leave for BSY for treatment of his heart condition and he asked Muktanand for "the hundredth time" to accompany him. Muktanand agreed to go.

One of the things that precipitated her decision was an old school friend telling her over the phone that she sounded "really depressed". The other was a very vivid series of dreams she had at the time, so vivid she had to struggle to wake herself out of them. She decided that if she didn't value her life maybe others would.

Enlightenment Dream

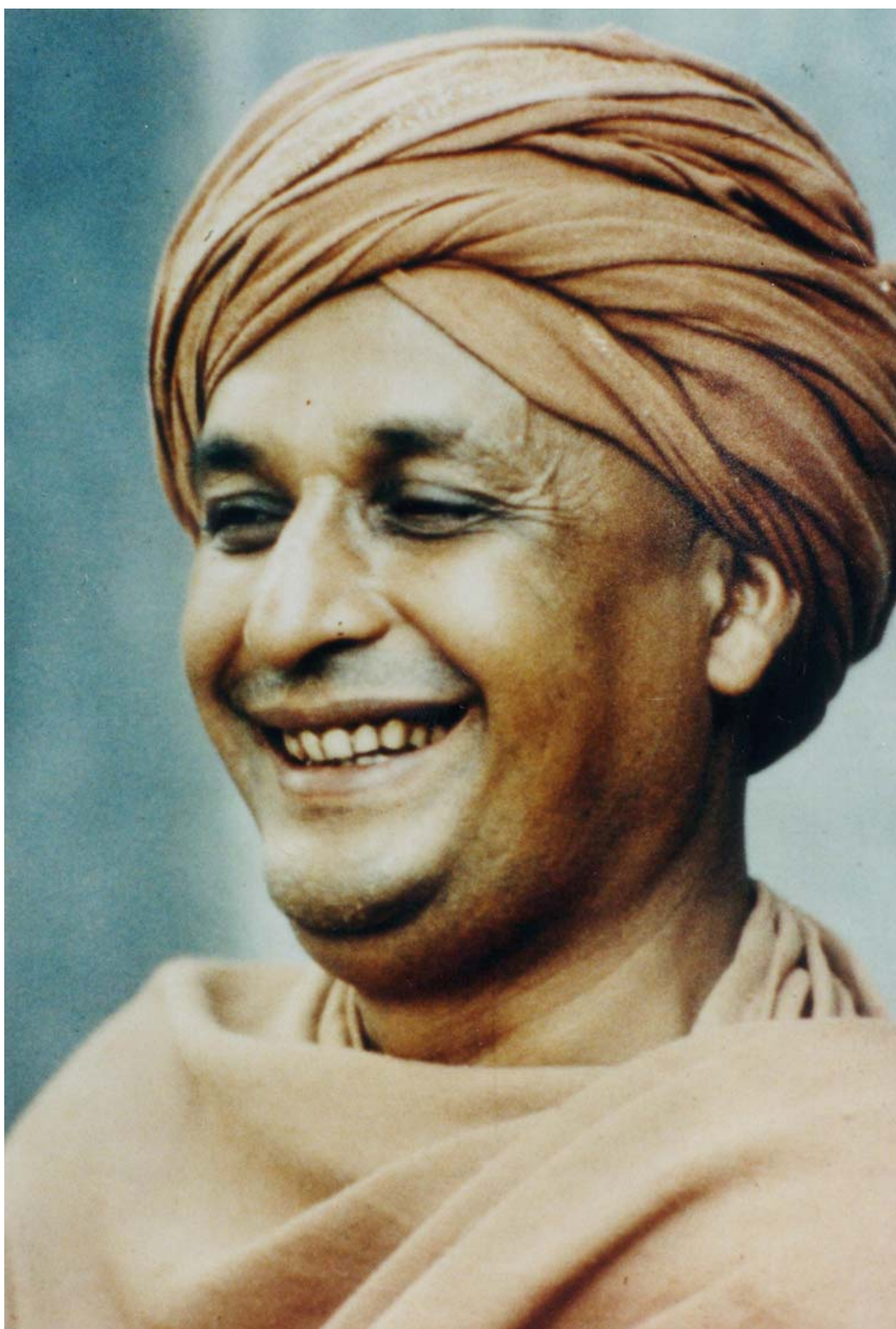
Muktanand purchased a ticket to London with a six week stopover in India. She thought she might never come back. She travelled straight to the ashram with Karl and Hridayanand, the current director of Mangrove Mountain Satyananda Ashram, Gosford. Just before she flew out of Sydney she had what she later called an 'enlightenment' dream:

In this dream I am killed many, many times. I am shot repeatedly. In one scene I am one half of an Asian couple and we are on a double bed in a hotel room and a group of gangsters rushes in and shoots us. I know that I die but somehow my body picks up and continues. The gangsters are wearing bright primary-coloured, glossy masks; animal shapes and designs like native South American and Maori designs. They are

wearing trenchcoats like 1940's movie noir and hats to match. They drive cars like those of the 1930-40's and carry revolvers. I am driving my own 1940's car to a headland, still being pursued. There are huge crowds moving along the coast road, which runs along the top of huge cliffs looking over the ocean. If I saw this scene now I would say it was a mass exodus of refugees. Many if not all are Asians. I get out of the car and we go down to the beach – the end of the world, the last of the land, we can go no further. There are thousands of people standing in the shallows. I start to move towards them. Then they all turn their backs on the sea and start running up the beach. A mighty wave of people. At first I think it must be something – a shark – in the water. Then I look to the end of the beach. There is a group of horsemen riding. They are wearing sheep or goat skins and skin caps and they have yellow faces and oriental eyes. I know they are Mongols, like Genghis Khan. They carry heavy wooden poles, almost as big as a man. As they come charging along the beach they use these poles or staves to beat off and beat down the people they are riding into. They use the poles to stamp on people's heads. I am an old man trying to get away but I know I can't escape. The Mongol band rides through the crowd and rides up to me. I know I am to die. I know that this time I will be really dead. I feel myself crushed beneath the horse's hooves, and I feel the staff striking down to crush my head. As this happens I hear a heavenly voice. It is a sweet and wonderful voice, neither male nor female, a truly transcendental voice. The voice says "You can kill me but you kill only my body. I am my true essence, my soul, immortal and eternal, and I cannot die".

Muktanand comment September 1996: I am reminded of this huge dream while reading Andrew Harvey. It had such an impact on me that I could not "come out" of the mood of the dream all the next day. I have recalled this dream from time to time, but not often. It has faded, although for many years it was vivid. What amazes me is that I seemed to have dismissed it, buried it. I did not "believe" it or incorporate it into my life or thinking in any way, at least not consciously.

* * *



Swami Satyananda Saraswati, c.1973

CHAPTER 2

INDIA

BSY

Muktanand arrived at the Bihar School of Yoga (BSY) on her twenty third birthday. At that time BSY was a small ashram in Monghyr, in Bihar State, one of the poorest and most crime-ridden states in India.

When she left Toowoomba she only intended to visit BSY for a few weeks. Although it was a huge struggle for her, she ended up staying there for a bit over four years.

It was very strange. The ashram was surrounded by 3-metre high brick walls with wrought iron spikes on top. The entrance was a big green metal gate that was permanently locked. Outside was a swampy area with a dirt road, along which there were regular funeral processions.

Nevertheless Muktanand was glad to arrive and her first impressions were of quietness and peace.

First impressions were soon overtaken by other aspects of ashram life. One of the biggest problems was the climate. Muktanand had arrived during the monsoon season and she found the heat and humidity a terrific burden. The Indians kept telling her how cool it was, but she felt she could hardly breathe. It took her the best part of two years to accommodate to the climate, but for ever after she had an aversion to tropical or sub-tropical summer weather, such as you get in Brisbane. A Swedish swami, Nirvikalpa, barely survived one summer before she had to return home.

Sleeping arrangements consisted of wooden beds arranged in sex-segregated concrete box dormitories with ceiling fans and fluorescent lights. Mattresses were made of packed cotton, like an extremely thin futon. Each bed had four sticks, like garden stakes, to hold up the mosquito net. These beds took a bit of getting used to for a Westerner used to inner spring mattresses. In the monsoon season the whole ashram would sometimes be flooded by the nearby Ganges River, so that everyone had to retreat to the roof to sleep.

There were flushing toilets and showers but Muktanand was shocked to find there were also open drains. The kitchen was an outside area under a tree, with a couple of coal-fuelled fires. All the food was prepared by the cook and his helpers sitting or squatting on the ground.

The food was a very basic Indian mixture of dahl, rice and chapatti, with sometimes a little seasonal vegetable thrown in. Everyone, including swamis and visitors, had to stand in a queue with their enamel cup and tin plate and accept whatever was doled out. It took Muktanand about a year before she really adapted to it, a whole year in which her hunger was never psychologically satisfied. Everyone suffered from food cravings and fantasised about what they would like to have for the next meal. The Australians fantasised about grilled

cheese and tomato sandwiches – not meat pies as you might have expected (this was the 1970s). Like most newcomers Muktanand periodically escaped to the local markets for sweets and chai (Indian-style milky spiced tea).

After it became clear she was staying, Swami Satyananda offered to put her in charge of the kitchen, but she vehemently refused, telling him it offended her feminist sentiments. Some time later, he explained to her that the food was deliberately plain and simple to provide the swamis with an outlet to vent their anger on. He said he could have provided a very nutritious and varied diet but he chose not to, because it would have defeated this purpose. As a result, the most common source of complaint was the food, and food was also the most common topic of conversation. Muktanand said the food was lousy and it was a wonder they didn't all die of malnutrition. None of the women menstruated, for example.

There was also illness. Muktanand suffered from diarrhoea for the first 18 months. She lost a lot of weight and was tired all the time.

She also suffered two very severe bouts of illness while she was in Monghyr. In July 1977 she developed a week-long high fever and the ashram authorities became quite worried she would die. This was entirely possible, as a Brisbane man, Graham Cathcart, had died after staying at the ashram in the early 1970s. In June 1978 she contracted a severe dose of cholera and again it looked as if she might die.

But her biggest bugbears were climate, food and discipline, and Indian attitudes and cultural assumptions. Visitors were indulged for a while but if you stayed you were expected to work. Muktanand only lasted a few days before she started getting bored and asked for work.

Karma Yoga

Swami Satyananda put Muktanand to work in the press. Her first task was to compile a glossary for a book on meditation: something she quite enjoyed doing. Then Bhaktanand, the American swami who ran the press came and asked if she could type. She told him very forcefully that 'actually not every woman is put on the earth to type', and 'no, she couldn't type'. Typing had been one of those skills Muktanand had vowed never to learn, because she didn't ever want to end up as a secretary. She had the same attitude to cooking. Nevertheless, Bhaktanand proceeded to set her up with a typewriter and there was nothing for it but to type. Bhaktanand kept a vow of silence and communicated solely by writing notes.

Muktanand worked in the press for some time and then she drifted into other things, for example helping Swami Shantanand envelope Kriya Yoga magazine for posting. She was unaware that she was not supposed to do this, and every now and then Swami Satyananda would call her back to the press, usually causing a mini crisis. Every few months she would decide it was time to leave, and he would persuade her to stay by one means or another. On one occasion he offered her a place in a kriya yoga course. On another occasion he extracted a promise from her that she would not leave until she finished her then current task, a glossary for one of his books. It affronted her to know that he would think she would leave without finishing, but then she discovered that the glossary became an ever expanding task, first a Sanskrit dictionary of terms used in Tantra, and then a Sanskrit dictionary of terms used in Vedanta. Although she knew she had been had, she stayed on and by the end of twelve months she was ready to take sannyas.

She was very angry a lot of the time. She had great difficulty adapting to monastery conditions and an authoritarian system where instant obedience was expected, especially obedience to Swami Satyananda. In the first three months she was permitted to go walking outside the ashram on her own, as a way of dealing with her feelings. Sometimes she would walk for a whole day, but she didn't realise what a tremendous concession this was: a white woman roaming around the countryside in the poorest and most violent state in India.

Later, she says, when she started to misuse this privilege just because she was restless, Swami Satyananda refused to let her go. She started a campaign to be let out by going to the gate every afternoon and asking to be let out. Eventually, Yogamudra, one of Swami Satyananda's messengers, told her that Swamiji had said he was not going to let her go and if she couldn't discipline herself, he would do it for her. She was furious for a while and then she accepted the rationale for this.

All of these difficulties were compounded by other things that were happening. A swami fell in love with her. There was sexual harassment from at least one swami and attempted bullying from others. When people tried to put one over her she was perfectly ready to give them a piece of her mind and she could be very cutting. She had a sharp tongue.

Finally, there were the yoga classes, or more precisely, the lack of them. She hadn't been there long when she discovered there were no regular yoga classes. The whole daily life of the ashram was devoted to karma yoga, which was work by any other name. Karma yoga was said to provide the dual benefits of spiritual training and productive work, that is, writing and publishing books of Swami Satyananda's teachings. One way of describing the karma yoga philosophy is that working in a spiritual community produces the same benefits as training for meditation. The three biggest work tasks in Monghyr at that time were the printing press, administration and cleaning the ashram.

Visiting yoga students could have lessons but there was limited capacity for this. Either Swami Satyananda assigned someone to give private classes, or the visitors persuaded one of the permanent swamis to give them lessons on the side. In the beginning Muktanand took some classes from Swami Shantananda, a Latvian war refugee who had lived in Australia before joining the ashram.

It was not unusual for aspiring yoga students to turn up at the ashram with plans to stay for several months, and then to leave after a few days when they discovered there was no regular hatha yoga program. But Muktanand stayed.

A Part of Me That Knows

Lousy food, terrible climate, acute and chronic illnesses, strict discipline, culture shock, and no yoga classes. Why did Muktanand stay when it was so hard? From the very first day Muktanand thought there was something special about the place. Her two week visit was extended to 6 weeks, then she deferred her plane flight and stayed for 3 months, then another 3 months, and eventually, after a couple of years she took sannyas and became a swami.

Muktanand always made a distinction between what she called her "social self" and her other self, the self that knew what was truly good for her. So for her, most of the difficulties she

experienced in those first few years, were experienced by her social self.

Although she was totally buried in the ashram process and lacked the perspective she gained later, she instinctively felt the challenges that were laid upon her were ultimately for her own good, both for her own true self – her spiritual process – and for her social self.

One of Muktanand's favourite sayings was "there is a part of me that knows". She made it her *sankalpa*.

The Cave

Muktanand brought to yoga a keen and inquisitive mind, a deep thirst for and love of yoga, and an unusual dedication to her practice.

How did she become such an excellent yoga teacher? Was it from her studies at the Bihar School of Yoga? Muktanand's own account of life in BSY has been published in book form (*Yoga, The Essence of Life* by Alix Johnson, 2004), but you will not find in there any reference to yoga teacher training courses. As already noted the overwhelming focus of BSY at that time was karma yoga directed towards the production of Swami Satyananda's teachings in book and magazine form.

Muktanand familiarised herself with Swamiji's teachings by working in the book production section of the ashram and by writing numerous articles for BSY's Yoga Magazine. She actually learned most of her yoga by snatching time to practise and then later by teaching. When she was at BSY she would rise in the morning two hours before everybody else. She also learned bits and pieces from other swamis in the ashram, although social contact was generally frowned upon.

Muktanand's last year in BSY was spent in the 'cave' or 'underground'. Alakh Analda (Swami Alakhmurti) is a yoga friend of Muktanand who was there at the time. Here is her recollection of how this came about:

The underground was a room downstairs that had no windows and was right next to the train track but under the surface of the ground. The overground was the room above it, eye level to the train track basically and it looked into the Siva temple next door, over the back of the ashram. One of the only places in the ashram where you could look into the outside world.

I remember it was in the afternoon probably about 5 o'clock when we'd finished our work, it was certainly very relaxed. Swamiji was standing near the main gate, the big green locked gates, on the edge of the maidan (square lawn). When he started talking to Muktanand there were 3 or 4 of us swamis standing around.

What I think swamiji said to Muktanand is 'I am going to teach you and swami Nischalanand about samadhi and you are going to write a book about samadhi'. And she said 'Oh swamiji, well, will swami Nischalanand be coming here?' Nischalanand was in the Dhanbad ashram at the time; he was considered a very senior swami and free to wander around.



BSY Monghyr, late 1974

Anyway this is great for me and I was just hanging on to every word. Then swamiji said – my jaw dropped – ‘Swami Nischalanand doesn’t have to come here for me to teach him’. Oh right.

And then he told her all the details – you’ll do this, and you’ll do that and you’ll have this book and that book and you will be by yourself in the room. You will be in that room because it is an underground room and that’s where you will sit and I will provide you with certain things to sit on. He also said “there is more carbon there”, meaning carbon dioxide. It was the equivalent of a traditional cave for meditation, dark and sort of airless.

There were eight mostly Australian swamis living in the women’s dormitory, and for Muktanand to be given this special job, it was like really amazing and we all thought she would go into samadhi. It was a very special thing to be given your own room with your own toilet and then to be separated and stay in your own space.

We were all living in the ashram in a dormitory type existence and we were working in different departments and all indirectly learning, but mostly we were just working. And here she was being given a special status, going off, studying with the master but by living in the underground where he used to live!

In the beginning she was fine with it. She seemed pretty okay for a long time but then I became aware she had hit a writer’s block. I could sense her frustration. I think she was putting a lot of pressure on herself to perform. She must have felt a fair bit of pressure to produce something.

Here is part of what Muktanand said about it in 1988:

I had actually started to write by the time I had to leave the Underground. I had quite a lot of notes, and I had been studying Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras in depth. I had a lot of ambivalence about writing on samadhi because I had never experienced it, and I didn’t see how I could do it. Swamiji had hinted he was trying to use me as a medium and if I tuned into him while doing my sadhana everything would just flow out of me. I think that there is something very genuine about that, but I couldn’t achieve it. When I look back on it, I feel that one of the problems was that I couldn’t believe in what I was doing. I could not believe in my capacity to write about samadhi. I felt totally ungenuine.

Muktanand said more than once that the chief driver of her yoga was her “black hole of abandonment”. A child’s way of expressing this might be ‘You don’t want me because I’m not good enough’ and it seems clear she decided something like this during her childhood. This was not because of any lack of love and care from her parents, but just a little girl’s response to particular events, such as her father working away from home and her mother confined for a long period in hospital.

The upside of this ‘I’m not good enough’ driver was her continual striving for perfection, which helped create her as an extraordinary yoga teacher. The downside was that she had great difficulty in acknowledging her amazing accomplishments.

For many years she struggled to deal with her ‘failure’ to become ‘enlightened’ during her

time in the cave. But by the time Alix Johnson interviewed her in September 2002 she had arrived at a more mature understanding. Here is Muktanand's account from that interview (see also *Yoga: The Essence of Life*):

Before leaving my guru's ashram, under his instruction I spent my last year meditating in a cave. When the ashram was first constructed Swami Satyananda used to live down there and use the cave for his own practices. Since then no one had been using that space. Swamiji asked me to use that room and gave me a particular meditation practice to do. He asked me to keep silence, not to interact with anyone and, also, to see if I could write a book on samadhi, which I was to do by making an intense study of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

Each day I had set periods of two and a half hours of meditation, one in the early morning, another in the middle of the day and again in the late afternoon. I lived in intense isolation. No one was to come to my room and I was not to interact with anyone. The intensity of the practice was challenging but at the time I was ready for it. I took it very seriously and, in some ways, I loved it.

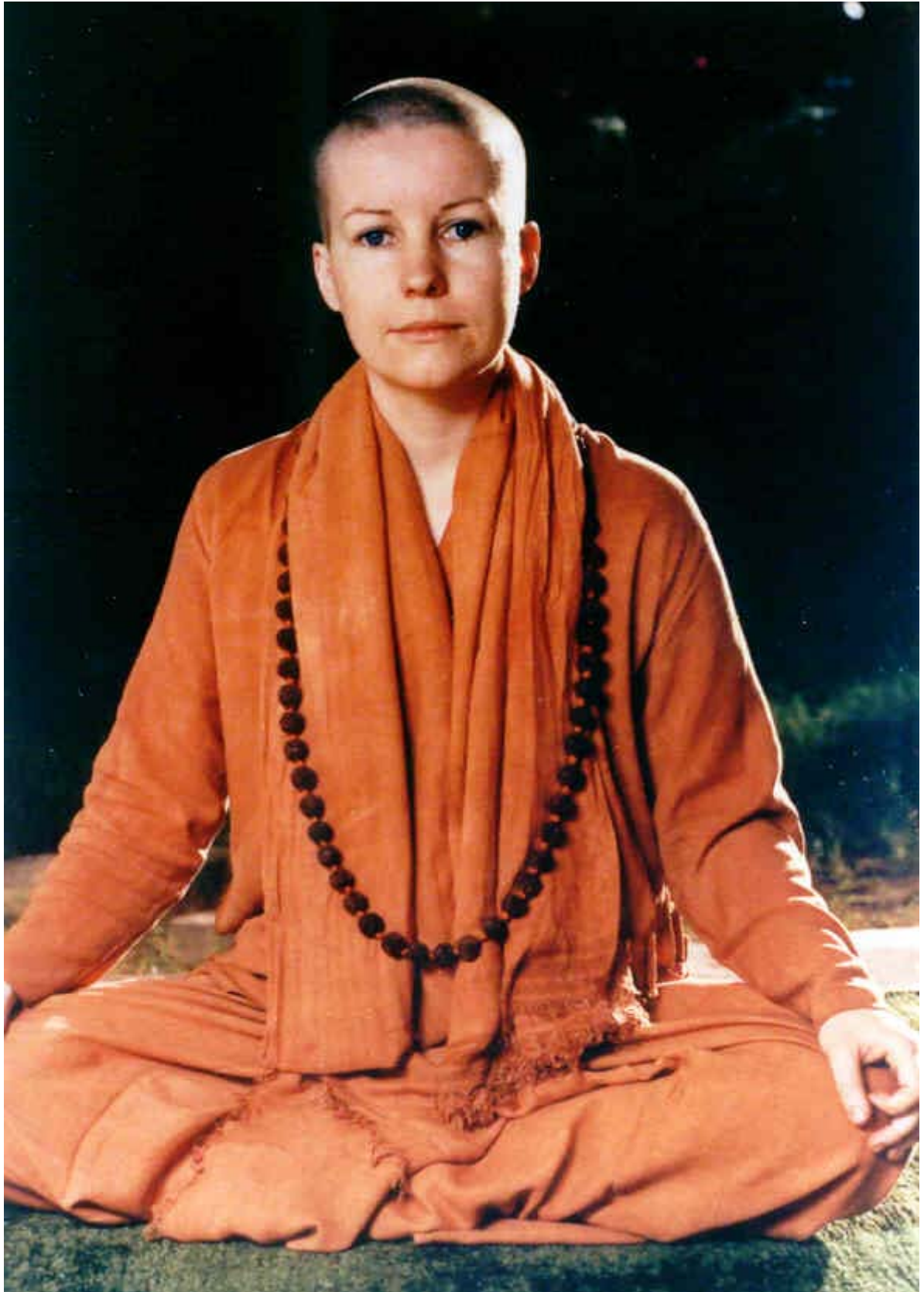
Those ten months of silence and meditation opened my eyes to many things. I learnt that noble silence, or mouna, is a very beneficial practice. It conserves energy, maintains your connection with the inner world undisturbed by conversation and it throws into relief your thoughts. When you are not speaking you become aware of how often you would have voiced a thought. You begin to see more clearly the pattern of your thoughts and even the impulses that lead you to communicate, or not to communicate. Silence is very self-revealing.

I also learnt that despite the fact that we lived in community there was a great inwardness of focus. We lived this paradox of personal inward focus as well as outward connectedness. I was trying to find a way to express this paradox and some years ago I wrote down this quote because to me it encapsulates it. It is from a book called *Wind, Sand and Stars* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. He writes:

"No one can draw a free breath who does not share with others a common and disinterested ideal. Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward in the same direction. There is no comradeship except through union in the same high effort."

So the last ten months in the ashram I spent like this, in silence, in isolation and in meditation. My subsequent teaching of meditation is rooted deeply in that experience. I was not a teacher at that time but afterwards Swami Satyananda asked me to start teaching. Teaching was seen as a combination of privilege and natural inclination. In order to teach you had to have passed through an inner purification and inner strengthening and to have reached a place where you could be a teacher without attaching a lot of ego to it. You could be a channel for the teachings without being "The Teacher".

Muktanand never completed her book on 'Samadhi'. But as Alakh commented recently, that was probably a secondary aim of the sadhana. It was obvious to everyone exposed to her later teachings that she had a profound understanding of the Yoga Sutras and that this was the fruit of both intense thought and intense practice. During her time in the cave Swami



Bangalore, 1980

Satyananda had given her the Shanti Path and Durga Path practices and later the Kali Yantra. She had added chanting the nine Upanishads. Despite her 1988 denial it is clear from her account that she spontaneously experienced deep meditation states - samadhi states – during her time in the cave.

By October 1978 the cave had been flooded three times because of the monsoons. Muktanand had become restless and was having thoughts of proving herself in the world, showing she could do something worthwhile. Swami Satyananda was preparing to go overseas and she resolved to ask him to send her to an outside ashram when he returned. Alakh comments:

I also ended up in an outside ashram after some years. Before I left India I spoke to every single swami who went to an outside ashram and each of us had reached a point apparently like her, where they couldn't stay in the major ashram any more. Swamiji in time would send that person to another place and he did that with me in 1979.

Muktanand didn't have to wait. Just before leaving on his trip, swamiji sent a message that he had arranged for her to go to Bangalore, a beautiful city in South India. A group of devotees had approached him with a request for a female swami to set up women-only classes. They particularly wanted Muktanand because of her just-published book *Nawa Yogini Tantra* (Yoga Practice for Females).

Before she left BSY, Muktanand had the following dream:

I dreamed of Swamiji. He took me outside and he showed me a wide expanse of what looked like desert. It was quite barren, all brown, maybe a little bit of foliage and green stuff but it was all dry and Spinifex type stuff. It was really brown, and hot, and dusty, and barren and bright sun and dry. No trees. He said to me that I had to make this wasteland into a garden. He also said 'you know how to do that don't you'. I said no, I didn't. He said, 'how could you not know when you've been here all this time?'

Anyway he whisked me inside and there was his laboratory. Long tables with all kinds of laboratory equipment on them, Bunsen burners and titration pipes and stuff like that. He had these flasks, and he ran round and worked very quickly. He didn't speak to tell me what he was doing, but I was able to watch him and he put together all this kind of stuff like making magic potions. I watched him at work and I remember being amazed at all the things Swamiji knew. I don't remember more than that. But I did have the feeling when I woke up that I had been taught something. That I had been shown something important.

Later it hit me that this was a form of initiation in dream. Swamiji was trying to teach me something. He was implanting things in me that would come out. In fact, the knowledge was within and this was a way of transmitting the knowledge.

Bangalore

Muktanand established beautiful yoga gardens in South India. The ashram she established in Bangalore continues to thrive to this day.

From the beginning she established a reputation as a dynamic teacher. She maintained an intensive personal practice, read extensively in the classical yoga and Buddhist literature, and taught thousands of yoga classes. Her students included householders, serving defence force members and executives of large companies. She gave yoga programs all over India and took a group of her students on a traditional pilgrimage to the source of the Ganges.

In accordance with Indian ashram custom she provided counselling on psychological and social problems, and yoga therapy for physical diseases. She lived and breathed yoga to the exclusion of everything else. In South India she was renowned as a brilliant exponent of the yogic point of view, and was regularly invited to speak, for example, at Rotary conferences. Swami Satyananda is reported to have described Muktanand as his best speaker on yoga (after himself of course).

Muktanand's friend Krishnaswami tells the story of one of these speeches. Krish had gone to Madras to watch a cricket test match but when the match finished a day early he decided to visit his sister in Bangalore. While he was at his sister's house he discovered there was a Rotary meeting close by so he went along to socialise, as he was President of his local Rotary club. Krish remembered the occasion very well: the meeting took place on the 18 January 1979, Muktanand was the guest speaker and she spoke on the topic *The Unfoldment of Genius*. Krish was very impressed with her talk and made sure he met her afterwards. From there he invited her to give talks and yoga classes in his home town.

In 1980 she contracted her third near-fatal illness, typhoid fever. Unfortunately it was nearly 18 months before this was diagnosed, and throughout all this period she continued teaching and touring. Muktanand was a very determined woman and a great fighter. Once she had made a commitment she carried it through, despite any personal costs.

In 1982 Muktanand was an invited guest speaker at an international conference on yoga therapy, sponsored by the Vivekananda Kendra Yoga Research Foundation in India.

After Mrs Gandhi was assassinated in October 1984, the Indian government decided to expel all Commonwealth passport holders, about 10,000 of them. Before Muktanand was forced to leave in November 1985, she established another yoga ashram in Coimbatore, South India, at the invitation of her Rotarian friend and yoga student, Krishnaswami.

When Muktanand left Australia she thought she had been a failure at everything - university, relationships, finding work that she could love. When she returned to Australia twelve years later she was totally transformed.



Bombay, 1980s

CHAPTER 3

AUSTRALIA

Brisbane

After initially staying with her mother in Toukley, Muktanand moved to Brisbane in February 1986 to live with me (John Ransley). At this time she changed her birth name to Muktanand by deed poll. In mid 1986 she found our Rosary Crescent house and we moved in that August. Despite being under-nourished and weak, she again took up university studies, completing her Psychology BA in 1988, just before the introduction of HECS. During this time she also trained with Lifeline, and then worked for a year as a voluntary Lifeline phone counsellor.

In 1988 Muktanand set up the Brisbane Yoga Therapy Centre and started teaching yoga classes in October. She taught for many years from her Rosary Crescent home studio before settling into the Kurilpa Senior Citizens Centre in Boundary Street. West End now has a dynamic yoga culture with a wide variety of yoga styles on offer, and Muktanand was one of the pioneers of this culture.

She took a year off from university studies in 1989, “so that she could spend more time with John”, but after a promotion in March I was so taken up with work that Muktanand felt she had no alternative but to throw herself into developing the Brisbane Yoga Therapy Centre. So her students can thank me for all those wonderful yoga classes!

She enrolled for her Master of Letters degree in Psychology at the University of New England in 1990. In December 1990 she submitted her theoretical thesis ‘The Self: East & West’. In simple terms the thesis canvassed similarities and differences between Patanjali – representing ‘yoga psychology’ – and William James and George Herbert Mead – representing Western psychology.

Over the 1990-91 Christmas break she visited yoga friends in Bangalore. After returning to Australia she had the following dream:

I am upstairs on the flat roof of the building, in India. On the roof of the next door building there is a woman shaking out a carpet and all these bits of dust and fine threadlike fibres blow onto me.

After the dream she went to her GP and said she had a parasite infection (threadworms), with related bowel symptoms. The GP disagreed but in response to Muktanand’s request named the appropriate over-the-counter medicine. Muktanand took twice what it said on the packet and after this her symptoms stopped.

In November 1991 Muktanand submitted her practical thesis entitled ‘Death Anxiety & AIDs: The Impact of Yoga Therapy’ (supervisor: Associate Professor Harvey Irwin). With a bit of judicious lobbying she persuaded her supervisors to give her the two extra marks she

needed to secure a High Distinction. The award of her Master of Letters in 1992 marked the end of her academic career. After qualifying as a registered psychologist the same year, she offered counselling as an adjunct to her yoga teaching.

From 6 to 16 August 1992 she conducted a 3-week yoga teaching training course in Sweden and afterwards visited Germany. When she returned to Australia she sat a 10-day retreat at the Goenka Vipassana centre at Blackheath. She was very appreciative of the support this organisation provided for serious meditation, but she could have done without the hassles over her name.

Once she had firmly established her yoga centre, she began travelling interstate, bringing her unique and classically based yoga teaching to students in Sydney, Canberra, Hobart and Adelaide.

Her workshop repertoire included dreams, shankaprakshalana, neti and chakras, as well as yoga psychology and philosophy. She gave numerous one-day yoga sampler workshops that mixed asanas with an introduction to classical meditation practices.

Muktanand had a keen interest in dreams and their interpretation and many students remember her dream workshops. She always argued that there was a large overlap between meditation and dream experiences, describing meditation as conscious dreaming. She drew great inspiration from her dreams and this in turn has been the inspiration for this book. The Buddhists say they take refuge in the Buddha: Muktanand said she took refuge in her dreams.

In the 1993 Muktanand studied for a few months with Sei'un Roshi Roselyn E Stone, a Canadian Zen Master who regularly visits Brisbane. Roslyn confirms Muktanand was not so much interested in Zen as in finding a senior teacher more qualified than herself to support her spiritual practice. The fact that Roselyn was a woman was a plus, but not essential.

During 1995 Muktanand ran a teacher training course in Tasmania in the summer and winter holidays, finishing in January 1996. She and everyone else who participated in this course all reported how much they enjoyed it.

Muktanand was a very skilful yoga practitioner and teacher, deeply versed in the tradition yet able to communicate its essence with clarity and heart. At the Mangrove Mountain ashram in Easter 1995 she introduced Australia to the extended silent yoga meditation retreat, wherein she alternated dynamic asana and pranayama with a progressive sequence of sitting meditation sessions. She followed this up in December 1995 with a special retreat for the swamis who lived there.

World Yoga Convention

Muktanand then accepted an invitation to MC the World Yoga Convention, to be held in Sydney in October 1996. This invitation was initiated by Mangrove swamis Premshakti, Dayananda and Kumar, as a result of their exposure to her 'strengths' in the previous retreats. She was led to accept the role by a major dream, and saw her contribution as an offering to her teacher Swami Satyananda. There was 6 months of considerable work involved on top of continuing to run the Brisbane Yoga Therapy Centre.

As master of ceremonies Muktanand deployed all her considerable abilities to great effect, introducing and summarising speakers in an unnervingly concise and clear fashion. Many people remember her for the great skill, clarity and diplomacy with which she performed this role. Premshakti, from Satyananda Yoga Melbourne, said in an email:

Who could ever forget the amazing job she did being the MC for the World Yoga Convention in Sydney. It was like she was on a transcendental plane; she knew what to say and how to deal with each situation. How she interpreted what Motoyama from Japan was saying was beyond my comprehension, she really saved the day.

The convention was a great success but Muktanand was very ill from November to January, later diagnosed as glandular fever. Because her Indian training always sourced illness in the mind, Muktanand became concerned she was suffering from depression, a shameful thing for a yogi. But then her questioning of this led to the realisation “yoga is not a health practice, it is an enlightenment practice”.

When she recovered she felt much more relaxed and less driven. She’d accepted at last that she would never be famous, never get enlightened and never make a major contribution in her life. Enjoyment of life was now her priority. Unfortunately she didn’t stick to this resolution.

Immediately following the Yoga Convention Muktanand accepted an invitation to be involved in the development of a set of ethics for the proposed Satyananda Yoga Teachers Association. Following several in-face meetings and considerable correspondence the ethics committee presented their first version to the general committee in May 1997. After a few small amendments this was adopted and continues largely unchanged today.

In the mid to late 1990’s Muktanand studied Ashtanga yoga for about a year with Iain Clark and before that with his teacher Graham. She gave it up because of an injury.

After conducting a course at Mangrove Mountain Muktanand in November 1997 Muktanand had a very vivid dream in which she saw a large test tube of her blood inhabited by an alien, a grub-like creature which filled the tube and had huge teeth. Upon waking she realized she had dreamed a very similar dream a few days before, so she went to her GP and told her she was pretty certain she had an infection. After establishing Muktanand had suffered a short bout of severe cramps and diarrhoea a week or so before the dreams, she ordered a stool test. This revealed a bowel parasite, and the alien dreams stopped after she took the appropriate treatment.

In late November 1997 Muktanand attended the Vajradhara Gumpa at Kyogle to provide yoga classes in a co-teacher role at a Vipassana retreat conducted by Zen Master Subhana Barzaghi. In the first week of December she fell off the unguarded veranda of the sleeping quarters at Vajradhara, sustaining a severe injury to her right knee and requiring crutches for a couple of weeks. Jackie Freeman had a dream about Muktanand breaking her leg before it actually happened.

Using intensive yoga together with weights, it took Muktanand the best part of a year to regain the use of her knee, although it never fully recovered. This injury forced her to cancel a long-standing commitment to conduct a 2-week residential teacher training course in Sweden. Petrea King has written that – anecdotally – leg breakages often precede the onset

of breast cancer, although for no known medical reason.

Subhana remembers the Kyogle retreat as a very powerful fusion of the two ancient traditions, Yoga and Buddhism. Subhana says that on all her retreats she still offers Muktanand's Yogic First Aid for Meditators, a set of practices devised to minimise or avoid pain in sitting meditations.

Namkhai Norbu

Muktanand started the 1998 year feeling tired, and as the year went on this became worse. In February she gave a workshop in Cairns and in March she flew to Singapore to attend a seminar with the Dzogchen teacher Lama Namkhai Norbu. She had gone to a considerable amount of trouble to buy a beautiful Aboriginal carving to give to Lama Norbu, but she brought it back after being instructed by his Italian retinue that a bottle of fine red wine was more acceptable!

Muktanand had previously come across Lama Namkhai Norbu in the book *Sky Dancer* by Keith Dowman, 'The Secret Life and Songs of the Lady Yeshe Tsogyel'. Yeshe Tsogyel was a consort of the great guru Padma Sambhava and the most famous female yogi – dakini – in Tibet. There are not many enlightened women in either the Indian or Tibetan traditions so Muktanand was always pleased to find one. Dowman credits Namkhai Norbu for much of his commentary on the traditional text, particularly the 'Dzogchen' viewpoint

In March 1998 Muktanand commenced her fourth and last yoga teacher training course. Over the Easter weekend in April 1998 she conducted her last silent meditation retreat at Mangrove Mountain. Her silent retreats were something she especially loved and from the feedback she received, were greatly valued by participants. After a setback caused by a severe mid-year attack of shingles, she gave her second Cairns workshop in July. At the end of September 1998 she conducted a silent meditation retreat in Canberra.

During the Canberra retreat one of the participants told her he had cured himself of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, and offered to give her a free consultation using his 'Vega' machine. When she returned to Canberra a couple of weeks later his Vega machine diagnosed multiple infections by parasites, a glandular fever virus, and bacteria. He prescribed homeopathic drops and recommended she change her diet to incorporate a high protein intake for the last 10 days before her period. He had a theoretical framework for this, which incorporated the idea of restricting the high protein to minimise the risks of heart disease and cancer. Muktanand tried the drops for a couple of months but stopped taking them after she had a recurrence of parasite symptoms (she believed his homeopathic drops re-infected her).

Before returning to Canberra in October, Muktanand had her first consultation with her alternative Brisbane doctor, who also recommended a high protein diet. At this time she was suffering from muscle wastage and night sweats, the latter a symptom of some kind of infection which started in 1998 but may have been a leftover from a really bad chest infection in 1995. At her second consultation a series of test results revealed a compromised immune system as well as gut problems. She was formally diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), and she also tested positive for *mycoplasma*, a bacterial infection that is commonly associated with CFS.

Having had two recommendations to change her diet Muktanand decided to try the menstrual cycle diet. She did this for a couple of months and found it helpful, but realized she needed protein all of the time. When she switched to a high protein diet – meat – her energy became much better.

She took a year off from her centre in 1999, handing over the teaching to Darshan, Ambikanand and Gaynor Long, amongst others, and the administration to Pam Harris. In mid February 1999 she attended a Yantra Yoga workshop in Cooroy, with Lama Namkhai Norbu, but she was constantly undermined by tiredness. Yantra yoga is a traditional Tibetan yoga, similar to Hatha Yoga, which rests within the Tibetan Nyingmapa School.

At this workshop she was prompted to compare her experiences in Asia with that of a Buddhist nun. The nun, Tenzin Palmo, described sexism and a lot of difficulties getting access to teachings. Except for Hong Kong and China, Buddhist nuns could not get full ordination. There was also an all-pervasive notion that you could only get enlightened in a male body. Muktanand commented that Swami Satyananda gave women full access to his teachings and put women in positions of power. His attitude was that if women came to his ashram prepared to work, they would be as fully supported as the men.

Muktanand said maybe she should have become a Buddhist, but she wasn't prepared to do all the thousands of preliminary practices, such as prostrations and mantras. Which was why she was drawn to the Lama Namkhai Norbu, who taught 'the essence of the practice'.

In early March she advised Mangrove Mountain she was too ill to take the 1999 Easter retreat, and Swami Nityabodha was invited as her replacement. She then went on retreat in a hut provided by two old yoga mates, Vedvyas and Pushpa, at their bush property near Bega in southern NSW. Despite the very cold nights and 'minor discomforts', she was very sad to leave, describing it as a 'really valuable experience' with 'very clear dreams'. Muktanand often wished someone in Australia would run a silent yoga meditation retreat that she could attend as a participant.

In June 1999 Muktanand and I went on a 3 week tour of Kakadu National Park with my Auntie Lena, her daughter Kerrie and her daughters' friend Phyl. There were lots of good things about the trip but Muktanand's experience was more about endurance than enjoyment, because of her poor health.

In December 1999 Muktanand was invited as a guest speaker to a yoga gathering in Tasmania, with her old friends Prashant and Vichara from India. I accompanied her and we enjoyed a very pleasant and relaxing few days, culminating with a Solo-led kirtan in their beautiful Yoga/Gompa hall.

At the beginning of 2000 Muktanand re-commenced teaching one night a week at home, with a special group of old students and friends. She also took on some part-time administration of the yoga centre, and gave a series of chakra workshops which she really enjoyed.

From about May 2000 I became involved in helping our friend Kathy Turner care for her daughter Zalehah. This rapidly turned into a major time and energy commitment which took me away from Muktanand for up to five days a week (I retired from work in mid-2000). It only ceased when Muktanand was hospitalised in February 2002.

In July 2000 Muktanand took over the centre administration on a full time basis to re-organise it for the introduction of the GST. Around this time she renamed her centre Authentic Yoga & Meditation, a name she chose to emphasise both authenticity and meditation. From the time she returned to Australia she campaigned ceaselessly to have meditation recognised as the core practice in yoga.

In September she finally decided against moving to Ruth Bruggman's Bhavana centre at Mudgeeraba, because (she told Alakh), she had been 'very sick'. Ruth had previously invited Muktanand to be resident teacher.

In November she commenced *Pilates* exercises with Phillipa Wright at the Chandler Sports Centre. At the end of 2000 Muktanand's senior teacher Ambikanand had to return to Tasmania because of illness in her family. Muktanand distributed her classes between herself, Darshan and Gaynor.

Early in 2001 Muktanand was bothered by a recurrent clicking in her left hip, which Phillipa Wright thought was due to tight hip flexor muscles. However, neither Pilates nor yoga would make the clicking go away and the tightness in the muscles continued, something that Muktanand had never experienced before. In hindsight it seems certain these symptoms were due to the spread of cancer to her pelvic bones.

In 2001 Muktanand increased her teaching load to 4 classes per week, including two large classes at the senior citizens hall in West End. Over Easter 2001 she co-hosted with Alakh a yoga and rebirthing workshop called 'A Woman's Journey Through the Chakras', at Ruth Bruggmann's centre. Afterwards Muktanand said she and Alakh had had a great time. The workshop had been "absolutely fabulous", very supportive for her, and genuinely helpful to the women who attended.

During the first half of 2001 Muktanand was involved in Australia-wide moves to gain government accreditation for yoga teacher training courses. A number of courses were ultimately accredited, although not as a result of any particular contribution on her part. Nevertheless she was strongly supportive of the accreditation movement.

Towards the end of 2001 Muktanand started preparing for another teacher training course in Brisbane. Muktanand's teacher training courses were much sought after by aspiring yoga teachers and there were enough committed people to make it worthwhile.

On Tuesday 27 November 2001 I was working on the computer in our downstairs study when Muktanand came in and sat on the floor, with her back to the cupboard. She told me she had received a phone call from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital mammography clinic saying they wanted her to return for a review mammogram and biopsy. I asked her if she could feel any lumps. She only felt around for a couple of minutes before finding the small lump in her left breast. She wept a little, quietly. We agreed we would both attend the mammography clinic the next day. Muktanand always said Tuesdays were bad days for starting anything, an astrological notion she had absorbed during all her years in India. She immediately decided to cut all her ties to the yoga centre.

PART TWO

IN THE BEGINNING

*“I’ll let you be in my dream if I can be in yours.”
Bob Dylan: Talking World War III Blues (1963)*



Victoria Point, February 2002

CHAPTER 4

CANCER: FEAR & LETTING GO

Muktanand Dream Diary

Muktanand always believed her dreams were an important source of information. After her cancer was diagnosed she was very disappointed her dreams had not given her any warning. She believed this was because she had been too sick to maintain her dream diary. However, she found one dream that was almost certainly related:

Muktanand comment 16 October 2000: I am writing this late at night before going to bed. Last night (ie this morning) I recalled the following dream which came back to me several times through the day, despite it being a busy one.

I am out in the bush – but not Australian bush. It is a high place of rock and moss, tall trees – a place where there is snow even in summer. It is summer in the dream, the scene very lush and green, the sun very white. The snow never melts completely, but does feed a pond/pool and the stream which flows from it. The water is extraordinarily clear and very, very cold. There are also hot springs nearby, although I don't remember seeing them. (Swamiji's hot springs at Beenbam?). I am here with a group of people, one of whom is Margie Barram.

At one point I am digging in some soil and I notice that it crumbles; it's soft and falls easily. There is a small hill of it. I turn, and I'm walking away down a kind of cutting: a deeper place with high walls well over my head, of this kind of soil. Suddenly there's a slip – an earth fall – and all the soil comes tumbling down. It's too high for me to climb, I run, but the slide is extremely quick. In an instant I am pressed against the wall on one side of the cutting, and the soil piles up over my head. I am covered with earth. I feel it as a kind of sharp pressure right in the centre of my throat, and before I can put my hands over my head to protect it or create an air pocket (I think this thought comes later, when I've woken or later) – instantly the earth covers my head and I realise I am buried and I will suffocate. I jerk awake with the realization – very definite – that this feeling in my throat and this scenario are very familiar. It is a shocking knowledge but the realisation is it's a clear, definite recognition of familiarity. It's this feeling more than anything that gives the dream its impact.

Muktanand comment: A birth memory? Narrow passage/canal/cutting. Soft pressure from behind and the sides. Cord around my throat. Or a past life memory? A past death? Is this related to my feeling that I don't like anything tight or heavy at the throat, my dislike of blankets over my face? My fear at times of not being able to breathe, as if I am/will be suffocated?

Muktanand Postscript: In November 2001 I am diagnosed with breast cancer. In January 2002 diagnosis of metastases in bones, liver, lungs.

John comment: Swami Satyananda sometimes took his swamis bathing in hot springs,

possibly the hot springs at Rajgir which are renowned for their medicinal properties.

Muktanand's mother, Eleanor Matthews, reports that when Muktanand was born she had the cord around her neck and the cord kept pulling her back. She wasn't blue, however. Eleanor says it was a very long labour – 27 hours – and they really should have given her a caesarean.

Muktanand had her first cancer-related dream on Wednesday 28 November 2001, the day after discovering her lump. She derived a lot of comfort from this dream, particularly as it came after a day of “being frozen with fear”:

Driving along in my car, in the outside lane. I went too far and missed the turnoff. I was supposed to turn into a driveway on the left – a proper formal driveway with big gates. I hadn't gone very far before I realised I had missed the turnoff so I started looking for a way to do a u-turn. When I looked at the road I realised that instead of what I thought was a dual carriageway, all the lanes were going one-way, the way I was going, and there was nowhere to turn around. I decided to turn around anyway, but I don't remember turning the car.

I have to get out of the car. I stand outside the car, leaning in through the left hand window and reaching through to manipulate the steering wheel. I can't drive the car - the car can't carry me - and I have to push it from the outside which is quite strenuous.

I looked up and back from where I've come. There was a bitumen multi-laned roadway going up into a hill in the distance, and just at the crest of the hill there was a set of traffic lights, ie on this side of the crest. The lights were red and I think there were 3 lanes of traffic waiting at the lights. Between myself and the lights there was no traffic coming towards me. So I thought it was safe to turn around, even though I was going the wrong way. I felt it was OK to do that – the way was clear. But, in pushing the car, I found I had to make a fair bit of effort because the road was now a dirt track instead of a bitumen highway. Anyway I manage to do that, take the car into the gateway and park, although I don't remember actually parking. That is, I turned the car around and pushed it back where it needed to go.

The place that I was turning into had fairly ornate gates, tall double gates that you open and close, they were opened slightly, and old fashioned, ie not the same as a driveway to a house. I understand this destination is a place of study and learning of some ilk, some kind. As I walked through I noticed that displayed on tables and walls were copies of qualifications that people had earned while they were here. Most of them were cream-coloured with maroon writing, and there were lots of them. I noticed one stand-out called 'Master of Desert Studies'. And another one called 'Master of Water Studies', as in water ecology – these were cream with maroon writing. Up on the wall there was another certificate with black writing on a bluey-green (blue and turquoise) background called 'Master of Pranayama', the colours were deliberately dynamic. Someone had done that course of study. I said to John oh look at this – pranayama is spelled incorrectly. John went away and got a pen and changed the spelling.

I was to meet John at this learning place. Somehow there in the dream we walked through the place together or something – don't know whether before seeing the

certificates or afterwards or before the car incident in another segment of the dream. I was looking for something to wear and John was bringing me clothes. I was trying on the clothes which even included clothes from my teens. Certainly I couldn't find anything satisfactory, I might have decided to just wear something and that I shouldn't be too fussy – or maybe I didn't even come to that point, (ie there was no satisfactory resolution to that segment of the dream).

Muktanand comment: The colours of the Pranayama certificate were more vibrant, attractive background colours. Blue = colour of Anahat and Air element, both strongly related to pranayama practice. A couple of days before that dream (Monday) I had a dream in which a friend of mine was getting married to a Pranayama master and she was wearing an all-white lacy dress and white veil, real traditional bride's stuff, and I was so happy for her in the dream that I began to weep and I bent down and touched her feet. Afterwards I remember thinking that white in Tibetan medicine is the colour of peace.

From experience, when I dream of my car is my physical vehicle, my body, it has to do with my health, so particularly in the context (the breast cancer lump discovered the day before) my mind was very focussed – already weeping and wailing. My reading of dream: this situation – body and health – had gone too far but not a long way past the turnoff. So I could turn it around but I have to make a fair bit of effort. I'm not able to drive the car; I had to push it from the left side. In previous dreams I have been sometimes driver, sometimes in the back seat driving with another person. Normally I would drive the car to turn it around; but here in this dream the car is like a dead weight, I have to push it. The engine is not working and the road is rough (ie images of difficulty).

Getting into the car park means I got to where I was supposed to go, but who knows whether that was a cemetery? For quite a few years Kundan (John) was not in my dreams much, but in this dream he was not there to help turn the car around. He was already at the place of learning or he came later. That is, getting the car there was my effort; after that it was a joint effort with Kundan (and he has been in my dreams since).

Pranayama a good thing to do, something that could interest me, I can relate to it, it is not strange or foreign. Plus, a kind of life studies topic, not literature. Desert Studies has the whole notion of trial – Jesus and desert fathers who sat in caves, extreme renunciates; plus physically dry, harsh, austere but something purifying; plus not many people; plus link to Alice Springs woman Satyasankalpa. The pranayama message pretty specific, we were in for a course of studies together.

There was not a heavy feeling around the certificates; it was something of interest, more like an outing together. I don't remember any really strong negative feelings about turning the car around – no excitement, depression, anxiety – no big deal (uncharacteristic of me in real life), no sense of urgency, just a recognition I haven't gone too far, I'll turn around. When deciding to turn around I thought it was two-way. When I discovered it was all one-way I assessed the situation and decided it was safe enough to go against the traffic, even though physically it was quite a huge effort. I break the rules but there's a break in the traffic.

John comment: After Muktanand commenced treatment at the Queensland Radium Institute she recognised the framed QRI certificates on the walls as the "cream coloured qualifications with maroon writing" she had seen in this dream. Muktanand regarded this dream as very important and it helped sustain her through the following months.

Muktanand often said "there is a part of me that knows". It was her *sankalpa* or yogic affirmation. She believed that "the part of me that knows" communicated knowledge to her visually, by dreams and sometimes meditation.

Muktanand's initial reaction to the disease was that it was fortunate she hadn't contracted it two years previously, when her Chronic Fatigue Syndrome would have caused her to "fall

over completely”. She’d had two years of building up her strength with time off from work and a high protein diet. Alakh Analda phoned to say this was a great opportunity to affirm her spiritual maturity: Muktanand responded she knew all that but it only applied if she lived to tell the tale.

* * *

Muktanand’s next dream was on Sunday 2 December:

I am in a place with a group of men including John. There are one or two women on the fringes. The group leader is saying that because that other woman has taken sick and gone to hospital, I have now been promoted to take on the task. I am given a small tree with shiny green leaves and I have to plant this tree at the bottom of this very steep and narrow pit, alongside a big mature “oak” tree already growing out of the pit. In Sanskrit the pit is called a “kunda”. The roots of the tree have lots of nodules on them, like the drainage or lymph system in the breast. I protest that it’s too hard and dangerous and I can’t do it. The head guy says I must do it; there is a sense of empowerment and initiation in the process of doing it. A second lead guy is more sympathetic and says I can instead plant “the seedling” at the top of the pit, but I must be sure it doesn’t get covered by “disease”.

Muktanand comment: Kunda has an association with Muladhara chakra.

John comment: Kunda might have also had an association with “Kundan”, the name given to me by Swami Satyananda.

In a dream she had on Thursday 20 December the initiation theme comes again:

I am taking initiation in a class with Subhana. Most of the class are dressed in white, signifying a higher level. I am dressed in blue but I’m happy with this. A turquoise blue not the sky blue of Anahat chakra. The initiation involves assembling a ritual object.

This was the first time the turquoise colour came to Muktanand in her dreams.

Book Dream

The next dream is from Vivian Jacquin, the partner of Gabrielle Jacquin, a yoga teacher who attended classes with Muktanand. This dream has no precise date but took place between 7 and 25 December, after Vivian heard about Muktanand’s operation for breast cancer. This was Vivian’s first dream about a book by Muktanand.

Muktanand is sitting at a table in the front of a hall signing her book. There are people gathered around the table. Gabrielle and I are sitting behind her. There are a lot of people in front of Muktanand coming towards her in a queue, apparently coming to have their copy of the book signed. All the people including Muktanand have beautiful faces, and they are young, not old. We are just sitting behind her watching. The atmosphere is good and Muktanand is happy.

During the course of Muktanand's illness I provided irregular email bulletins to an extended group of friends and family. Many of these emails discussed her medical treatment in considerable depth but this not is reproduced in this book. The first email was to two of my sisters:

Email #1 Thursday 27 December, 2001

Dear Judy & Robyn

Just to let you know that a mammogram screen on 21 November picked up a small lump in Muktanand's left breast which was confirmed to be malignant Wednesday 28 November. She had a lumpectomy 13 December and using the silhouette system the surgeon only needed to sample one lymph node which was free of any changes. The surgeon described the cancer as small (12-15 mm) and early stage. However a 2 mm annulus sample around the lump showed pre-cancerous changes so Muktanand is due to start radiotherapy about the second week of January. The prognosis is very good.

Of course it has been a shock but an early dream of Muktanand's indicated she would be alright provided she took the opportunity to get better. So she has given up work completely and handed the yoga/meditation centre over to her two senior teachers. She has told only a few of the yoga students and a couple of close friends about the lump, and I likewise (only Chris Powell and Tony Harper in Sydney). Muktanand is telling most people that she's stopping work because of sickness in the family - her mother has been having frequent angina attacks so that's also true!

Fortunately I'm not working so I can be supportive when needed. However, so far Muktanand has sailed through the operation and general anaesthetic without any problem - we are hopeful the six-week course of radiotherapy won't be so bad either. After that they are recommending Tamoxifen for five years.

We are approaching this as lightly as possible while still doing everything that can be done. People make a lot more fuss about cancer than about other illnesses and a lot of it is not justified. In Muktanand's case the prognosis is much better than if she had suffered a heart attack or a stroke or had a melanoma removed (each of which has happened to one of my friends). We don't need the aggravation. Plus we don't need that New Age stuff about creating your own reality, or ignorance about "karma".

That's it for now. Muktanand asks that you be very discreet. Lots of love, John

Muktanand's book is about her deep inner life and the book is a transmission of what she is – not a story or a novel, something very precious and very serious, something that is her, as if she was transmitting herself in the book. The hall is big with lights. Muktanand is happy, sitting and writing and there is a lovely aura around everything. There is a sense of happiness and joy but the atmosphere is at the same time serious. She is dressed in cream coloured clothes. There is also a man standing just beside her – don't know who – but he seems to be like a monk.

2002

As the New Year began Muktanand recalled a meeting with Swami Satyananda in the early days at BSY. He had called her in to do Tratak on her, a practice that is described in the traditional texts. At the end of the session he told her she would get a lot of sickness. She was so stunned she was speechless, a very unusual reaction for her.

On 13 January Muktanand dreamt she was organising a performance. But she was so busy organising everybody that by the time it was due to start she was not prepared. She thought this was about the ongoing discussions she was having in relation to the yoga centre. Typically, she had taken on the responsibility of organising a smooth transition.

Tarot Card Dream

On Wednesday 16 January 2002 a whole body scan revealed the cancer had extensively invaded Muktanand's bones, with secondary cancers in her hip, spine, sternum and skull.

Two days later Vivian Jacquin had the following dream. Vivian and his wife Gabrielle Jacquin, a yoga teacher, lived in Brisbane for many years before returning to France in 2004.

My grandfather appears in front of me, as if he is giving me an order or command. The atmosphere is very serious and my grandfather is wearing a three-piece dark suit and tie. He has seven Tarot cards in his hand, not the whole Tarot card pack. He tells me to write the cards down. He turns over the cards and then he hands them to me face-up in my hand, first, second, third etc. He makes sure I see each one. I have them in my hands and then they are gone. My grandfather tells me the cards are for Muktanand. I just do what I'm told. I realise I have to tell the dream to Gabrielle straight away as it is about someone else. After I wake and tell Gabrielle about the cards I forget straight away what the cards were.

The Tarot cards were handed to me in the following order: Hanged Man; Tower of Babel; Death; Lovers; Abbess; Hermit; Sun.

Vivian comment: I hadn't drunk any alcohol before sleeping. Every time my grandfather comes in my dreams he is always very serious and he never smiles. He always wears a three-piece suit and tie. Whenever he comes it's very important. There is no way I can control these dreams. I have never asked any questions in these dreams.

I have never dreamed about Tarot cards before and only seen them on very rare occasions, and then – according to Gabrielle - only the oldest, most traditional Marseilles pack. I know nothing about Tarot, but Gabrielle does.

Vivian's partner Gabrielle provided the following commentary.

The Tarot cards were arranged in the following order: Card 12 Hanged Man; Card 16 Tower of Babel; Card 13 Death; Card 6 The Lovers; Card 2 Abbess; Card 9 Hermit; Card 19 Sun.

The First Card (XII, Hanged Man)

The physiology of the first card is loss of vitality, weakness, bad health and disease leading to hospital or confinement. This card shows Muktanand's actual condition at the time of the dream: loss of vitality, disease; sacrifice; detachment from the material world.

The Second Card (XVI, Tower of Babel)

The physiology of the second card (XVI) is sudden diseases, accidents, acute problems, operations, break down. This card indicates an event which **suddenly** aggravates the condition: 'bad news' about her health; the consequence is to have to stop all activities; and to be prepared to go through a painful experience concerning her health. Her whole life is shaken by this, but it can lead to a new awakening and a new start.

The Third Card (XIII, Death)

The physiology of the third card (XIII) is diseases of the shin, the bones, and malnutrition. The card indicates that a radical change is taking place due to a life threatening disease, giving her an opportunity to evolve and transform herself, or prepare herself for the next incarnation.

The Fourth Card (VI, The Lovers).

The physiology of the fourth card (VI) is blood, circulation, and nerves. This card indicates: having to make a choice between two roads; two possibilities, two treatments; hesitation, doubt; the need to ponder before making a decision. She has two choices concerning that problem and that she has to think about which road she will take (material or spiritual?). She is surrounded by affection and has a partner (not a husband). The card also indicates she has support through relationships or that she should use those means to communicate.

The Fifth Card (II, The Abbess)(High Priestess)

The physiology of the fifth card (II) is anxiety. It indicates Muktanand as being the one who has been given knowledge (who has been initiated into 'mysteries', tantrism, etc) and who could **transmit** that knowledge or **receive** more knowledge. She is in 'waiting' to receive. It may also symbolise growths on a more physical level (watch the womb or the inside of the body).

The Sixth Card (IX, The Hermit)

The physiology of the sixth card (IX) is spine, bones, arthritis. It indicates the choice she makes which is the road of detachment and inner knowledge, a hard road of asceticism and meditation. It may also show support from someone who is on that road, a monk or a spiritual person who could help her to use her ordeal for her own evolution.

The Seventh Card (XVIII, Sun)

The physiology of the seventh card (XVIII) is the heart, the eyes, burns. This card indicates that she will find the **light**, love and bliss at the end of this road. She will gain strength, and power and be totally transformed as she started with the 'Yin' card at the beginning and finishes that line with a strong 'Yang' card. The Sun card corresponds to her astrological sign Leo in the House XII in her chart which is a house for liberation. She may also be very creative through this ordeal and give out all she has to give for the benefit of all.

This extraordinary dream was an amazing gift for Muktanand. However she took it even more seriously than she would have otherwise, because of the following two dreams Vivian had recorded previously, the first many years before:

Bus Dream (France)

The pilgrims and I are driving in a big red bus with a big logo on the side. The bus is going down a hill when all of a sudden it loses all four wheels at the same time, they all come off. The bus runs off the road and crashes and my grandfather is there trying to hold it back. In the dream he tells me not to take this bus.

Vivian comment: I was taking a group of pilgrims from my Besançon Retreat Centre to the Holy Land, Israel. We were staying overnight in Paris to break the journey. I didn't particularly want to go on this trip; it was making me feel uneasy. The day after the dream I told my secretary we were not going, the trip was off. She protested it was all organised, the bookings were made and we had to go. I reluctantly agreed but insisted we wouldn't go in the bus that had been booked; they would have to change the booking. We flew from Paris and when we arrived at the Tel Aviv airport the red bus from the dream was waiting there, complete with logo. I told the bus proprietor I wasn't going to take this bus. The proprietor replied he was giving us his best bus, it was brand new, it had only done 80km, and it had just been serviced. His only other bus didn't have air conditioning. I insisted we must go in the other bus and eventually the proprietor agreed and provided a very old bus. Sometime later I heard the original red bus had lost all four of its wheels and run off the road. Fortunately there were no passengers and the driver had managed to jump, otherwise he would have been killed. The owner conducted an inquiry which revealed the wheels had been bolted back on by apprentices, supposedly under the supervision of a senior mechanic.

Tuberculosis (TB) Dream (Brisbane)

My grandfather comes to me and says get your wife checked out for TB.

Vivian comment: That was it. When I woke up I was worried that we couldn't go to the doctor without a reason. The next morning after rising we get in the car, start driving and stop the car because Gabrielle is coughing. I say I must take you to the doctor. Gabrielle says why? I say I can't tell you. We go to my GP, Dr Lister, who says we'll check her for cancer etc. I say would you please check her for TB? Doctor says no, she hasn't got TB. I say you must check her for TB. Doctor agrees and when we return for the test result he confirms she has TB. He asks me 'how did you know?' I said if I tell you, you will laugh.

The TB was just starting; the diagnosis was just on time. Two weeks later it would've been too late. They insisted checking me for TB although I was sure I didn't have it. It was anyway a legal requirement but the test came back negative. The specialist told us it was very rare for people from France to have TB, unlike in Eastern Europe. Gabrielle pointed out she had worked in hospitals in France, although when tested before coming to Australia she was clear.

Muktanand did some follow-up reading in the Richard Cavendish book, *The Tarot* (1975). According to Cavendish the Hanged Man symbolised things being turned topsy turvy. The seeker stood on her head also symbolised the dying and rising god as in James G Frazer's *The Golden Bower*. The Death card could be compared to Siva, the destroyer of the old self. Both cards were saying the old self must be destroyed before the true self could be born.

The Abbess was a sign of initiation into power, associated with female divinity – Shakti and mother goddess.

Muktanand started the first of a total of eight pain relief radiotherapy treatments on Thursday 17 January. On Wednesday 23 January the locum oncologist confirmed her cancer was now reclassified to Stage Four, meaning there was no cure.

Nightmare

Muktanand had this nightmare in the middle of the night, Friday 25 January.

There are three main characters, myself, John and another woman. I'm not sure who she is, whether one of John's old lovers or one of his sisters. It's pretty clear she knows John better than she knows me. There is some sort of rivalry in a way between her and me: when we first meet she seems much nicer than I thought she would be under the circumstances, ie much nicer than I expect. Later in the dream it becomes clear she does have lots of strong negative feelings about me. At this distance from the dream I'm unsure what those feelings are; possibly jealousy, some sort of rivalry. She certainly doesn't like me – it might have something to do with John. I think she was infected first: she got bitten by this spider – small and black with lots of legs. There could have been a visual play on "crab", symbolising cancer (the German word for cancer is crab), even though they are the wrong colour small spiders and small crabs look alike. Anyhow when she got bitten by the spider that's when all her niceness seemed to fall away and it became clear she was trying to pass on the effects of the spider bite to me. There is lots of screaming and flailing about. At one point I am standing over her as she is lying down and her face is really fierce and full of hate. She picks up the spider and flings it towards me and it gets caught or lands in the lampshade above my head. From where it comes spiralling down onto me, spinning its web. The other woman is really pleased; I can see a kind of gloating expression on her face. Then there is a scene where I am standing looking down into the depths of my body. It's very fleshy, very red, and there is lots of bright red blood spurting everywhere. In some ways it looks like something from one of those TV biology shows where they send a micro camera down parts of the body: the gullet looks like an empty tube but it's not really empty, the walls press together and they are sometimes different colours, not always red or pink. It's very fleshy and muscular with lots of blood. The spider goes down into this like going down a tube or a well. I am looking down into the tube and the spider is down there spinning its web. There is a sense of looking down into the abdomen but also a sense of looking up into the abdomen; it's very 'internal'. Everywhere the spider spins its web there are fine fibres of a yellowy coloured mould – not white or cream – something like a jar of tomato paste that's gone off: a red, squishy, fibrous mould. It's just horrific. I am screaming, trying to get it out of me. There is an image of myself as if I am standing outside myself or maybe it's a reflection: my hair is in a dark bob all plastered to my head with sweat; I am naked and there is blood on me and blood everywhere as if I am giving birth. And then somehow the spider lands on John who is also naked, hot and sweaty. Blood is pouring out of him as he beats off the spider to make sure it doesn't lodge in him too. Then there is a scene where I have big gashes in my knees and hip. And then more scenes inside the body as though the spider is scarring me.

Muktanand: When I wake up I am lying on my side with a sore knee and hip. The centre of my chest is sore and I am panting heavily as if I have been exerting myself. The overall feelings of the dream are horror, fear and screaming. A sense of trying to fight off the danger.

In one way the dream is an embodiment of all my fears about the cancer spreading to my inner organs and all that means. I think the giving birth is an attempt to expel the spider/cancer. I don't know who the other woman is except a part of me that is full of violent horrible feelings and wants to bring me down. In Tibetan medicine red in dreams is the colour of danger. Of course blood is always red anyway. Maybe the dream is about the next CT scan: I'm particularly afraid they'll find it has spread to the soft organs. It would be a huge blessing if it was just confined to the bones.

John comment: Muktanand didn't comment at the time, but the 'other woman' could also be seen as Durga. In the dream Muktanand perceived this woman to be hateful and gloating – not surprising in the circumstances – but in the tantric tradition Durga is calm and detached. Whatever, the dream in retrospect foreshadowed the approaching nightmare.

In Tantra the colour of the petals in Muladhara chakra is specifically described as blood-red. The muladhara chakra relates to basic survival, life and death.

Murder & Invasion

Muktanand had these waking dreams on Saturday 26 January 2002.

A young foreign woman is coming to Australia just for a day, flying in and out. She doesn't speak any English and she turns up her nose at a lot of things. She complains that there isn't anything she can eat, the food is awful. I think she can eat cheese, but she has a strange definition of food and she won't eat cheese because it would make her fat despite the fact that she is very hungry. I can't remember why she is coming but I think I have arranged to kill her. There is also another foreigner in the dream, maybe an American or an official assassin or some sort of terrorist, wearing long robes like an Arab: he might have killed her. Later in the dream I have to acknowledge that I have killed both him and the girl. I think surely I can't have done that, killed two people. I have a bad feeling; I don't even like the idea of it as part of who I am and who I see myself to be. Another part of me makes the point that if I have killed them there is no point in denying it, especially to myself. I am conscious my mind is skittering around it. I have trouble accepting I have killed two people or been responsible for killing two people.

John and I have come away for a weekend in one of those guest houses or bungalows designed for couples. The guest house turns out to be way out in the country somewhere, on a kind of property or big station. There are some very big and beautiful trees around the rooms we are staying in. We move from the front rooms into the back rooms where there is less traffic noise. John goes off for a walk and I am getting ready for my morning shower when this guy walks in and starts putting stuff in the fridge. I say 'excuse me, do you mind leaving?' but he just ignores me, keeps doing what he was going to do and leaves. His attitude is very consistent. After a while another guy comes in and spends a long time fiddling with something in one of the cupboards or some piece of equipment he has stored there. His attitude is very dismissive of me as well. The place is dirty. He throws out one of those old fashioned bathtubs or a metal washtub full of water. It has blue poo in it, some of the water gets splashed on me and some poo sticks to my leg. Yet another guy comes in and puts down a piece of paper with a list of speakers and a kind of agenda. I realise they are going to have a meeting of some sort in these rooms. This is the last straw! I also realise the accommodation isn't permanently set up for guests. These men –

labourers or agricultural workers on this property – normally live in these rooms and they've been put out by the owners for the weekend so John and I can stay here. I decide to go up to the big house to complain to the owners about the invasion of privacy and the absence of peace and quiet. I push open the front door, an old wooden door, and inside is a Victorian atmosphere of aged and faded glory. They are holding some kind of party and the wife is carrying trays of nibblies. I am dressed rather weirdly in my morning clothes (before shower) with a towel around my head and they are all inclined to giggle and look down their noses at me. I ask to speak to the wife in private; she agrees and we go with a friend of hers into another room. She is short and wearing a bouche suit (made from a synthetic fabric popular in the 1960's amongst middle-aged women), neat, house-wifely, middle-aged and not very smart. Her friend is also short but more stylish. Once we are in the next room she starts wringing her hands and moaning how difficult it is with the rural recession, which is the reason they advertised the guest cottage to make a bit of money. I almost feel I should be comforting her but her friend puts her arm around her and I just stand there watching.

Muktanand comment: In Tibetan Medicine waking dreams are likely to be either symbolic or prophetic. I don't think the first dream was prophetic – it didn't have that feeling – more symbolic I think.

The feelings in the second dream were all very uncomfortable and irritating. I can see myself behaving in a way that is typical of me when I don't get what I want: I am critical and super-polite but very cold. I also feel frustrated and helpless, especially with the men who won't do what I want. I went to the big house to complain but that was reversed to where I should comfort the wife. Plus the unpleasant things, the dirt and poo on my leg, the fact I am prevented from having a shower; these have something to do with my illness. Dr Nida said that in Tibetan Medicine dreaming about being smeared with faeces or getting dirt on you is regarded as a bad thing: unpleasant in the dream but also negative implications for your health. I remember that being true in my own experience, dreams that were associated with illness. For example the dream I had after returning from India in 1991. Today's dream could also refer to a difficult phone conversation I had yesterday, in which I progressed through feelings of being invaded (my privacy invaded), responding with anger, and then comforting the person who had invaded me! Because of being sick I wasn't robust enough to handle it; I know shouting would have worked better, it did before.

John comment: Muktanand didn't offer any further comments on the first dream. However, since the starting point for all her dream interpretations were that her dream people were representatives of her, the dream conveys the idea that she gets murdered. The dream is thus prophetic rather than symbolic. Why two people? I don't know, except perhaps I – the man -- was 'murdered' too.

Car Dream

Another one of Muktanand's car dreams, from Monday 28 January.

John and I are in my Mitsubishi Magna, parked near the Mater Private hospital. At one point I think we are in my old blue Mazda 323, but then I realise no, the new car. I am sitting in the passenger seat and John has gone into the hospital, come out again, and we're feeling sick. I try to find out from John why he is feeling this way but I can't hear properly – he is mumbling – and I can't understand it. But I think I catch something along the lines that he saw a boy inside who was waiting for an operation but had killed himself before the operation and this had upset him. Anyway

John gets in the car and starts to drive away. Something happens with the car and traffic and I can see John is in no condition to drive. I insist we pull over to a side road and at first he resists letting me drive. But I insist and eventually he agrees. I get out of the passenger seat and as I do I notice there are two cars behind us. We aren't really pulled over into the gutter, we are stopped a fair way out into the road. I think they must want us to get moving quickly because we are blocking them. Then I see that one car has its bonnet up and they were jumper leading the batteries – "exchanging battery fluids". So I don't worry about rushing so much. I help John get into the back seat so he can lie down but he is having trouble fitting in. I try and get him comfortable and properly cared for, tucking him in with the windscreen sun protector – like a thermal blanket - and other arrangements. I get into the driver's seat and suddenly I find the garden hose reel on the passenger side floor. It is dripping and I try to get it turned off properly. Then I adjust the rear vision mirror and the driver's seat and at this point a guy comes from one of the cars behind me, he comes over and asks if we are ready to go because they want to get moving. He looks into the car through the driver's window and sees everything there and jokes that it's all very efficient, laughingly. Then he is joined by a second man, they are both Asian, and the first man realises I am a woman. In the meantime I am still not ready to go. I am shaking sand out of my shoes and getting ready to put the shoes on as I don't want to drive without them. Means more delay. One of the guys then offers me a soft drink which I accept. I lay down with my head on the edge of the driver's seat towards the accelerator, with my legs bent up towards the back of the seat and I put the soft drink in my mouth; it is the sort of plastic bottle you can squeeze. One guy says to the other 'oh look, she's shot herself!' I wake up.

Muktanand comment: The feeling in the dream was a sort of frustration. I felt I was under pressure to get all this done in time – perhaps a reference to getting up early for a visitor at 8am. I wake up feeling uneasy and disturbed, thinking just another weird crappy dream. It is interesting that John turns out to be sick today, with diarrhoea. On the basis of past dreams the car is associated with my physical 'vehicle', my body and my health, but in this dream the associations appear to be with John's health. Perhaps it is positive feedback on my earlier car dream, but it's not certain that the original destination in that dream is a longer life. Same with Vivian's dream: there are no guarantees but what's being indicated is wisdom and well-being. I'm willing to accept that. In a way the outcomes are open, but I still might be quite happy to accept that outcome (a shorter life), be satisfied with it, be reconciled at least.

John comment: Muktanand's car is stopped – near the Mater Hospital – and the driver (really her) gets sick and has to be tucked up with a thermal blanket. In retrospect the whole dream points to Muktanand getting sick and getting stopped and in the end she has to be draped in the driver's seat imbibing fluid, comparable in a weird way to her hospital fluid treatments in special chairs.

Breaking Bones

In my usual early morning walk in Dutton Park on Tuesday 29 January 2002, I was puzzled by a very bad or heavy feeling in my stomach. At 10.30am that morning Muktanand sustained a severe bone fracture in an area undermined by secondary cancer. Her right Lesser Trochanter bone, the attachment site for the major *ileo psoas* muscle, had ripped away from the femur.

On Thursday 31 January she underwent a major operation to insert a pin into her right femur. On the same day her oncologist told her the CAT scan of her abdomen had revealed

secondary cancers in her lungs and liver.

In Vivian's dream it is particularly noteworthy that the second Tarot card, Tower of Babel, is about sudden diseases, accidents, acute problems, operations, and break down.

Muktanand bore all this with great courage but she genuinely thought she might die at any moment. For me, waking up every morning during this period was like waking up to a daytime nightmare, I had to struggle with myself to believe it. We were both practicing awareness of breath and awareness of thoughts.

Durga & the Demon

The ferocity and speed of the attack on Muktanand's physical integrity and life energy had been simply stunning. The first CT scan had revealed she was extremely ill. Then the fracture to her lesser trochanter made things significantly worse, with a whole new set of problems around mobility, pain control and the need for a lot more physical support.

Muktanand commented it had forced her to let go and slow down emotionally as well as physically. It was like a kind of retreat but instead of focussing on the breath, she was focussing on a series of changing sensations. A very fierce and dramatic way of doing a retreat, but an effective way too. It made sense to her in warrior goddess terms. The warrior goddesses were ferocious in their nature but their ultimate aim was protective. They used ferocious means or techniques in order to do what needed to be done; fierce and fast rather than mild and kindly.

One of the names for Durga in the Durga Path was "she who uses awe-inspiring weapons". Another translation was "ferocious weapons". The weapons were terrible in the sense of terror-inspiring, awesome as in awe-inspiring. They were terrible and horrible and awesome and ferocious but they got the job done because you couldn't pussyfoot around with them. There is a famous battle between Durga and the demon *Bakta Bija* where it looks as if she is losing. Every drop of his blood that hits the earth reincarnates as another demon. Durga draws on all her resources and manifests Kali from her third eye, fully grown. Kali goes around behind the demon catching his drops of blood as they fall and drinking them. The tide of battle is thus turned. In this instance Kali is Durga's weapon, awesome and ferocious, a true aspect of Durga.

Victorious Woman

On Sunday 3 February I had the following dreams:

With a group of people – like a class of students – I am visiting a part of Melbourne that is usually blocked off to the public. We are lead by a teacher and it seems Vivian Jacquin is in the class. There are visions of devastated buildings, probably due to an explosion. Later I join a course in advanced igneous petrology theory. But the teacher is a temporary appointment – a stand-in – who doesn't seem to want to do it. He asks me why I want to do the course/theory. I explain my reasons and suggest interesting sites we might to visit. Again it seems we're in Victoria; I say I don't know the geology of this area.

John comment: When I first started working I taught igneous petrology at university level for eight years. Igneous rocks include lava flows and other volcanic ejecta, as well as large intrusive masses, granite batholiths. There is a common theme of teacher.

Muktanand comment: It jumps out that Victoria is in another state. John is going to a teacher in 'another state'. Why 'Victoria'? It suggests a victorious woman. In this other state – altered state – John wants to be a student. Igneous and devastation suggest a short term dramatic experience, hot, fiery and dangerous, primal. It could also suggest large scale intrusions in the rocky foundations of things.

Women's Group

Muktanand dream, 5 February 2002.

I am attending a women's self help group; it incorporates some element of self-discipline in the name. John comes in with exceptionally nice clothes for me to wear. I begin to engage in the exercises or activities they suggest we do. In every situation something goes wrong, although it's not necessarily my fault. For example they give me a pen to write with and it starts leaking all over my clothes. There are many, many things like this happening. I finish off an activity in my own way and they say this much is very good but you're required to do this and this. They make me do it according to the standard. They aren't harsh; they just insist a sort of steady discipline is required. In the end I burst into tears and say I can't cope. I understand from this I'm not quite good enough. All of these things going wrong have to be because I'm so tense. Then there is a singer who is allegedly Ella Fitzgerald but she is white and she doesn't look anything like her. Anyway she sings a song that starts "I adopted myself in 1923, I took myself in hand". I am really moved by her singing. I think I will buy some Ella Fitzgerald CDs but then I think I don't know which ones. I will start with the CD that has familiar tracks (from the dream).

John comment: Muktanand thinks she is not good enough.

Around this time I asked Muktanand if she was embarrassed about getting sick as a yoga teacher. She confirmed she wasn't but she recalled copping a fair bit about her CFS: like, what was there in her life that she needed to work through?

Discharge from Hospital

Muktanand was discharged from the Mater hospital on Friday 8 February 2002, but was re-admitted for severe sciatic and hip pain the following Tuesday. On Wednesday 13 February she had her first radiotherapy treatment and another major nausea attack. After five more radiotherapy sessions she was discharged on Friday 22 February. During this time her carer team – Sakshi, Anandapoorna and I – provided 24 hour support, including sleeping at the hospital.

On the night of 8 February I dreamt several times that Muktanand had birthed a baby wrapped in swaddling cloth. But the baby had been born by rising up through her body and coming out the top!

In a dream on the morning of 14 February I was describing to someone an earlier dream in which butterflies had been hovering in order to give me a message. As soon as I realised what the message was they shot off. I woke up suddenly thinking “messages come by butterflies in stomach”. A week later I woke up with the thought Muktanand was going through a very painful metamorphosis, like a caterpillar to a butterfly.

While she was in hospital Muktanand was attracted to the Tibetan *Vajra Sattwa* practice. This involves visualising a white meditative figure above the head, from which beams of light pour into the head on the inward breath. On the outward breath the illness is visualised being expelled from the body, via the excretory systems.

On Tuesday 4 March Muktanand discovered she could do without opiate pain relief and, most importantly, that cannabis was a very effective anti-nausea agent. Since nausea was her particular demon, this was a major bonus, especially since the nausea continued after discarding the opiate. Clearly there was a psychic dimension. Physically the nausea made her feel very weak and helpless and while it was happening it just seemed to go on forever.

Letting Go of Responsibility

Around this time Muktanand was reading Petrea King’s book *Sometimes Hearts Have to Break: Twenty-five Inspirational Journeys to Healing and Peace*. For Petrea King healing was about finding peace, not surviving. Most of her stories were about people who had found peace – let go of past hurts and grievances – through a process she called “bringing relationships up to date”. Then they died: it was a very confronting book with lots of death-bed scenes. The healing made no difference to the mortality rates but it affected enormously the quality of life and the experience of illness.

Muktanand didn’t believe she had any major issues. Was she fooling herself? One possible exception was her responsibility issue. From a young age she had felt responsible for her parents and then she had extended this as an adult to her whole environment. For example when she imagined her death-bed scene she wanted to “die in Kundan’s arms surrounded by friends”; but then she started worrying about organising food for everybody. Sakshi and I thought this was hilarious but Muktanand couldn’t see the funny side.

On 11 March Muktanand told her alternative doctor she was really depressed, she feared the nausea and she feared dying. When he asked her what she should do about the nausea, she said more meditation.

The doctor responded she needed to do less; that was one of the meanings of the nausea. She needed to be with the nausea and “find the mother around you”. She was a person accustomed to leading from strength but now she needed to unlearn that. Instead of going into her “I have to be strong” mode when she felt weak and helpless, she needed to allow herself to be weak. She needed to allow the people around her to take care of her, to mother and comfort her. He commented it was almost as if she believed she didn’t deserve comfort.

He counselled her to embrace the nausea, it was a grace and a blessing and there would be fear and anger there. Muktanand denied any anger but he was emphatic. He also said several times that fear was very close to enlightenment and she was closer to enlightenment than she thought.

Afterwards Sakshi (who was there) thought his linking of fear with enlightenment was very interesting. Muktanand recalled swamiji saying that in meditation you eventually encountered a barrier of fear and you had to go beyond that to reach enlightenment.

* * *

Muktanand had a memory of suffering nausea in the womb and being helpless to stop it. She had been helpless to do anything about it herself, and helpless in the sense there was no one else who could or would do anything about it. Plus a sense of timelessness; she was stuck there and would always be stuck there. When the memory came up she just had to wait for it to stop, because that's what happened eventually.

Muktanand believed it was a memory of a 'toxic womb'. During the first six months of her pregnancy her mother had been treated with penicillin pessaries because of septicaemia from a prior miscarriage. She also had morning sickness all through the pregnancy. And then afterwards she had needed ongoing penicillin for mastitis until she stopped breast feeding at 10 months. Muktanand's nausea memory was probably a combination of her mother's nausea, the effects of the penicillin and possibly even the effects of the septicaemia.

But something had saved her while she was there, something had kept her going. Although the memory of it was that she decided she was very weak, both physically and emotionally, actually on some level she must have wanted very strongly to live. Even her birth had taken 27 hours because the cord kept getting caught around her neck and pulling her back. The penicillin probably saved her life. She had been a very much wanted child; her mother had been very open and affectionate, very loving.

Alakh suggested that because Muktanand had started in a 'poisoned womb', the nausea she was now experiencing was like a spontaneous regression. Her nausea was a body memory of being in the womb. Unfortunately it meant there was no 'oceanic bliss' state to regress to, like other people. She needed to be present to it and breathe into it. Muktanand commented simple breath awareness wasn't working for her and she would try this.

Muktanand's shorthand term for her toxic womb was "a sense of abandonment". Her birth memory had been compounded by a serious motor vehicle accident when she was 8 years old. Her mother sustained a double femur fracture and was in hospital for 18 weeks. At first she thought her mother had died. Muktanand and her siblings were sent to live with an aunt. Her father told she had to be big girl and look after her brother and sister. After reprimanding her for behaving like a child – coming home from school in the rain she had taken off her shoes and socks to walk backwards in gutters full of rain water – her aunt told her she had to behave responsibly.

She had decided at this time "I have to be strong" and "I have to be responsible". Also – because she felt abandoned – she decided "I'm not good enough" and "I'm not lovable". These decisions were not the fault of her parents; they were simply the result of a little girl processing the situation as she understood it. Over time her responsibility agenda had become "I have to do everything for myself as I can't trust anyone to do it for me".

Muktanand decided to confront the nausea and all the issues it brought up. Alakh commented her decision meant she was already on the path of integration.

* * *

On 14 March our doctor commented he saw Muktanand on a spiritual journey back to the womb. He added that dependence was the big issue, not control, although she was used to always doing things for herself rather than relying on others. She was going back to the womb but this time she would be nurtured, supported and loved. She also had a big “abandonment” issue, stemming from her birth and childhood. He didn’t know what was going to ultimately happen but it was the process that was important. He saw a karmic link between myself and Muktanand and commented we were very lucky to experience this spiritual journey together, it was a wondrous thing.

* * *

Muktanand decided she could no longer offer her mother support. She was scared that telling her about the cancer might worsen her angina and stress levels. But by telling her she could let go of taking responsibility for her. With Alakh’s help she formulated the following declaration:

“The belief that I have to be strong to survive no longer has meaning for me. I let go of it and rise above it to a time and place where it has no power over me, and I am free.”

Practising this release formula lifted the heaviness around her heart. The thing that was trying to break through was telling her mother about her illness and telling her in effect she couldn’t be responsible for her any more. Alakh thought this was a kind of reversal of the decision Muktanand had made at age 8 to be responsible for everybody.

After putting in place a couple of support people Muktanand phoned her mother on Friday 15 March, and was pleasantly surprised at how well she took the news. In fact her mother was a bit annoyed that Muktanand hadn’t told her earlier, because for 3 months or so she had been subjected to a whole battery of unnecessary medical tests for angina, nausea and other aches and pains, which she was now able to identify as ‘psychic backwash’ from Muktanand’s disease! The next day she told Muktanand she felt much better and had driven herself to Mass after not being able to drive for 3 weeks!

Up until this point Muktanand had restricted the news of her cancer to a small group. Now she understood that letting people know was part of her healing process. Muktanand invited Michele Burford to dinner on 20 March and requested she tell all the senior yoga students.



Rosary Crescent, April 2002

CHAPTER 5

CANCER: LIVING WITH HOPE

Messages of Support

When the news got out Muktanand received a whole bunch of cards and letters from friends and yoga students. Here is one sample from Eoin Liebchen-Meades on 22 March 2002:

Dear Muktanand

I heard the news yesterday; it came pouring in like an unwanted flood.

Last week I had a strong dream where I was in a tall building with many floors and there were many other buildings around me. I saw out of the corner of my vision a tall building bending right over. I said "that's going to fall" and then it did. I got everyone to leave our building thinking that the effects of this would topple us all, but the danger passed and we were safe. I knew this dream had strong meaning and told Crissie that I felt someone close to us is going to have a large disaster. I guess now you are the tall building in our midst.

What life gives to us is also taken away. I heard my sister too has a tumour all in the same week. I think of us all at Michele's wedding so recently and not seeing, not knowing while you and John carry that burden and I know you were wise in your choices too.

Of course I, we all want to visit you like a river of well wishes that now wishes to flow towards you like so much that has flowed flawlessly from you. Good friends, fellow travellers, spiritual lights, our love is with you both.

Eoin and family

Muktanand was very grateful for all the expressions of support and love she received at this time. She also wished she and I had spent more time together, but she was completely reassured there was nothing more I could be doing for her now. Everyone had been terrific, especially Sakshi. Anandapoorna had been very supportive too.

The one thing that stood out was that, apart from yoga, she hadn't developed her creative side. Maybe it was too late. But she had to admit there might be worse things than dying young surrounded by her friends. Not that she wanted to ...

She regretted she had returned to work despite her ill-health: obviously she hadn't trusted enough that she would be financially supported. Alakh was correct to say it was her 'child' that had decided that, not her 'adult'. Her child was the one worrying about the survival issue.

On 28 March 2002 I sent the following email to Kerstin Liebchen-Meades and Michele Burford:

Muktanand and I thought this summary of might be useful in informing you as to precisely what happened. It can be forwarded to other people if you wish.

Muktanand was diagnosed with breast cancer from her first-ever mammogram in November last year. In December an operation at the Wesley Hospital to remove a small lump in her left breast showed no evidence of spread into the lymph nodes. However, because she had been experiencing persistent central chest pain for several months a bone scan was ordered by her GP in January, and this revealed extensive secondary cancers in her bones, particularly her pelvis and right thigh bone. Despite assurances from two oncology specialists that her bones were strong enough to sustain normal activities, she sustained a severe fracture shortly after the bone scan (the Lesser Trochanter parted with the main body of the right Femur), and was required to have an emergency operation on 31 January at the Mater Private Hospital to insert a pin in the thigh bone. At the same time she commenced a series of radiotherapy treatments at the Queensland Radium Institute, initially to her sternum (breast bone) and subsequently her left hip joint. On Tuesday 19 March she completed her third and last series of radiotherapy treatments, to her right femur.

Over the same period of time, she commenced hormone treatment (an anti-oestrogen drug called Femara) and treatment with a new drug called Aredia which is very helpful in reversing the growth of bone cancers.

Naturally all this was a huge shock. On top of everything else, Muktanand suffered three major bouts of extreme nausea caused mainly by morphine (for pain) and by radiotherapy, which meant she could not eat for many days. However, after she removed her opiate patch on 4 March she found she no longer suffered any bone cancer pain and since then she has not required pain killers of any type, not even Panadol. The doctors said this indicated the 3 therapies (hormone, radiation, and Aredia) were all working. The nausea was brought under control after Muktanand's GP diagnosed she was suffering from stomach ulcers, after which she was able to resume a normal diet.

She was fairly quickly mobilised onto crutches after the right femur operation. Because her left hip socket had been severely compromised by bone cancer, she was advised to stay on crutches for 2-3 months until the bone grew back. When she was discharged from hospital she stayed for a couple of weeks with a friend who lives at Victoria Point, in a house that has no stairs.

Muktanand thinks the cancer has been with her for at least two years and probably commenced as far back as 1998, the year she conducted her last yoga teachers' training course (and had a mighty struggle with her health while doing so).

Muktanand's Garden

Belinda Cox sent this letter to Muktanand in the last week of March. When Muktanand phoned back to thank her, she told Belinda “you don’t know what this means to me”. She was very touched (she was crying). She didn’t explain but in hindsight she was obviously thinking of the dream she had before she moved to South India.

Dear Muktanand

After this period of silence Muktanand, *Vishuddhi* needs to be opened. I would like to tell you these things. I have always appreciated the gentle yet firm guidance you have provided. The inspirations, depths and insights and your personal sharings. For me this has been a privilege.

I have watched you tend a beautiful garden and am aware of the level of nurturing and creative energy you have given each of us and our individual needs. Like a gardener, you have appreciated the different needs, promoted conditions for growth and appreciated our individuality. I hope Muktanand that you are able to sit back and reflect on what you have created, carefully and lovingly tended and sown ... a beautiful garden. In me, you have inspired and brought forth my innate interest in spirituality, philosophy and ancient wisdoms.

As I have always said: my greatest teachers (you are my greatest) have firstly been able to show me how to apply the knowledge, and secondly expressed and presented the information in ways that have taken me to new depths of understanding and dimension. My greatest teachers have internalised something, something that allows them to present the information in a way which is uniquely their own, demonstrates their depth of understanding and transports me someplace else.

This is something you have CERTAINLY done. Yoga was a two dimensional concept prior to my classes with you. You have not only taken me to multiple dimensions, but have shown me how to apply this to my life in a method that is practical and realistic.

On a more personal level Muktanand, I have really appreciated your integrity, your pursuit of truth, your honesty, and your particular dedication to women’s growth. You have embodied many goddesses.

I send to you my love and gratitude. Don’t forget to smell the lovely flowers in the garden you have created and continue to take the time and space that you need.

Love always, Belinda xxx

* * *

By the end of March Muktanand’s carer team had been expanded to manage a weekly routine of regular hydrotherapy and acupuncture sessions. Friends were also providing Reiki sessions, customised Bach flower essences and reflexology massages (Alissa, Sian and Sakshi).

It now seemed clear the cancer had been developing for at least five years. Muktanand was feeling very weak, vulnerable and helpless. She had let go of being strong and independent, which she always thought she needed to be in order to survive. A friend and healer said she was “a baby without an umbilical cord” and I was “mother”. Muktanand commented that unlike real babies she could appreciate all the care she was getting.

Muktanand commenced formal counselling with a mainstream counsellor, “to grow her umbilical cord and connect with people”. She was highly motivated because “her life might be quite short”.

During an 8 April consultation with her doctor, she “couldn’t completely let go of wondering how she could have let it get this stage”. She always thought her intuition would let her know first; she was ashamed as well as shocked. She hadn’t “lived wisely for the last few years”. The doctor responded that was like saying the thunderstorm that blew down my house was my fault.

Letter from Germany

The following letter is from Horia Crisan, a Romanian friend she met in South India whilst he was conducting research to qualify as a specialist physician in Germany. He visited Rosary Crescent in 1988 but Muktanand had lost touch with him. I managed to get his address with the help of a German student who was staying in a flat up the street. After the initial contact I told him the bad news.

Dear Muktanand,

There is not one single day without thinking of you and wishing you all the grace and strength in the world. I had been so happy to see we can get in touch again, and then ... shock! There was also anger and wonder at the ways of destiny: here you are, a wonderful woman who always lived a healthy yogic life, and now this! The many moments we spent together, so precious for me, occurred again in front of my inner eye. I wish, want and hope that you are going to stand this challenge and emerge out of it stronger than ever. It is difficult for me to write much about this, I find myself in a state of stunned speechlessness. Not writing much does not mean I am not thinking much about you, I am wondering what I could do, how could I help. If love can heal, you should get better, as I keep sending you all the love of my heart. Please do not feel obliged to answer, you need your power in other places and John does a wonderful job in maintaining the contact with your friends.

Always yours, (Dr) Horia Crisan. 7 April 2002

Black Hole Filled

Muktanand wound up her counselling sessions on Friday 12 April 2002. Something had shifted the previous Sunday, as if an internal “hollowness and black hole had filled up”. She felt “more solid and more optimistic”. Shortly after this shift she commenced a serious daily meditation practice.

Muktanand started intensively reading around this time. She was pleased to find that Sogyal Rinpoche’s *The Tibetan Book of Living & Dying* confirmed her own discovery that when you are too sick to meditate, the best thing to do was to try and relax as deeply as possible. Meditating while resting in bed in the mornings was almost as good as sitting.

In her dreams at this time she was often telling someone about how she had cancer. And telling them to look after themselves and get proper rest so they wouldn't get sick.

On Wednesday 17 April another shift seemed to take place. Instead of waking at 4am and thinking anxious thoughts until rising at 7am, Muktanand started sleeping in until late and enjoying it. At the same time although she still felt tired she no longer felt depressed.

When Muktanand and I went to see the first *Lord of the Rings* movie, she was particularly struck by a conversation between the wizard Gandalf and the hobbit Froddo. Froddo says he wished the bloody Ring had never come to him and he wished all this had never happened. Gandalf tells him to stop complaining and decide what he is going to do with the time that's been given to him.

Then came some good news at last. On 24 April a CAT scan revealed some of her lung secondaries had disappeared and others had shrunk, and the liver secondaries had also shrunk. Her oncologist advised there was no need for chemotherapy and her orthopaedist advised there was no need for an operation on the other hip. In a sign of how much better she was, Muktanand started complaining about her hair!

Conscious Dying – Ram Dass

People have different ideas of what constitutes a “good death”, varying from the fully conscious to Woody Allen's “I don't mind dying - I just don't want to be there when it happens”. Muktanand had previously been told her diagnosis was a blessing because it allowed her to consciously prepare for death.

Muktanand re-read some of her Ram Dass books. Ram Dass is a former Harvard psychologist who became a devotee of Maharajji - *Neem Karoli Baba* - after a period of intense experimentation with psychedelic mushrooms and LSD. In 1974 his Hanuman Foundation created the Dying Project, conceived as a spiritual support structure for conscious dying. Ram Dass makes a number of suggestions about facilitating conscious death, even in a hospital setting:

- Complete relationships with people both living and dead;
- Ensure legal, medical and financial affairs are all in order;
- Arrange a living will if you don't want your body kept alive at any cost. Also make arrangements if you want to donate organs;
- Choose where you want to die and how conscious you want to be at the moment of death;
- If possible, self-medicate for pain;
- People attending the dying person need to be able to sit in genuine peace.

How We Die

Also in May Muktanand browsed the book *How We Die* by Sherwin Nuland (1994). This book gave a detailed account of the different ways and processes of dying, information she had been keenly seeking. In what might be described as the motive for writing his book, Nuland writes:

Accurate knowledge of how a disease kills serves to free us from unnecessary terrors of what we might be fated to endure when we die.

Nuland distinguishes ‘easy’ deaths from other deaths. Some of these fit the idea of a ‘good death’:

By and large, dying is a messy business. Though many people do become ‘unconscious and unconcerned’ by lapsing or being put into a state of coma or semi-awareness; though some lucky others are indeed blessed with a remarkably peaceful and even conscious passage at the end of a difficult illness; though many thousands each year quite literally drop dead without more than a moment’s discomfort; though victims of sudden trauma and death are sometimes granted the gift of release from terror-filled pain – conceding all these eventualities – far, far fewer than one in five of those who die each day are the beneficiaries of such easy circumstances.

Cancer is a leading cause of death so naturally Nuland has a couple of chapters on cancer. He argues it is more accurate to describe cancer cells as *malevolent* rather than malignant, because of their killer tendencies. The following colourful extract illustrates his viewpoint:

Cancer, far from being a clandestine foe, is in fact berserk with the malicious exuberance of killing. The disease pursues a continuous, uninhibited, circumferential, barn-burning expedition of destructiveness, in which it heeds no rules, follows no commands, and explodes all resistance in a homicidal riot of devastation. Its cells behave like the members of a barbarian horde run amok – leaderless and undirected, but with a single-minded purpose: to plunder everything within reach. ...Its first cells are the bastard offspring of unsuspecting parents who ultimately reject them because they are ugly, deformed and unruly. In the community of living tissues, the uncontrolled mob of misfits that is cancer behaves like a gang of perpetually wilding adolescents. They are the juvenile delinquents of cellular society.

After reading a few chapters of Nuland, Muktanand decided to give this type of reading a rest.

Dreams with Women

Muktanand dream, Tuesday 14 May.

I am in a dark toilet with brick walls and a dirty cement floor. The toilet basin is full of faeces and the basin is very dirty – surreally dirty – as if someone has thrown up in it. I manage to leave the place without getting any of this on me. As I am leaving people are coming to clean it all up. Then I am with a group of women who have all had breast cancer. They are discussing something bitter, something good for the liver. I say that's what I need as I have liver secondaries. I was the worst cancer case in the room.

John comment: In Tibetan dream analysis contact with faeces is a sign of serious illness. Muktanand was pleased in this dream that she managed to avoid contact.

* * *

Muktanand had a couple of dreams about doing *Bhujangasana*, the cobra pose. In the first dream Gabrielle Jacquin wanted her to demonstrate some postures but she stopped before doing the cobra because she was afraid of breaking her spinal processes undermined by cancer. But actually Gabrielle wanted to demonstrate it **for** Muktanand and proceeded to do so. In the second dream on the following night Muktanand performed it without any problems. Although Muktanand knew from experience the cobra pose would relieve her thigh and psoas muscle tension, she still avoided doing it because of the risk of a fracture.

At the end of June Muktanand gave up hydrotherapy and took up weights instead. She revived her dream practice (diary) and discovered her dreams were populated with swamis and groups of women, as well as the occasional ancestor, her grandmother Kate and Kate's sister Auntie Maggie.

Yoga Centre Handover

On Friday 28 June 2002 Muktanand formally signed over the yoga centre to Darshan. In the morning just beforehand she had a long dream, part of which is reproduced below:

There is a fire ceremony. Buddhanand and Darshan are there. A dark looking man is standing near the fire as "material" – cotton cloth – is burned. The dark man is absorbing all the energy from the burning of the material. After this I leave the puja room and go outside, the ground is sandy. I pass the swami with his entourage; he meets my eyes but doesn't speak. There is a hall that devotees are preparing for a satsang with the swami. It is in the "lower" part of the building. There is a temple behind the hall but it is empty.

Muktanand comment: The cotton cloth being burned is the material expression of the yoga centre. The man absorbing the energy from this is like the cancer absorbing all my energy. The sandy ground stands for shifting foundations. The empty temple means "there is nothing sacred in this". Although the dream represents the ceremony as a sacrifice or offering, it is sad and I grieve for the loss, unlike at Christmas when I felt a surge of relief. But overall it is positive and conveys the sense of moving on.

A palm reader in South India once told Muktanand she would establish several yoga centres and then leave them behind. Authentic Yoga & Meditation (previously the Brisbane Yoga Therapy Centre) was her third yoga centre.

A day later Muktanand had a follow up dream:

The next morning after the fire ceremony there is a woman called Hari across the hallway from me or downstairs. She doesn't look like the real Hari but it is her. She is preparing for the swami visit. I ask this Hari whether I can help but I am given to understand I'm not worthy – that is, she says swamiji chooses who will do the preparation, and I understand I am not a devotee.

Muktanand comment: Paradoxically my spirits have lifted in the last few days after hearing the shocking news about Hari's cancer. Stop feeling sorry for yourself, Muktanand!

* * *

Muktanand had the following dream on Monday 15 July:

I am with a group of people and we have to go past a device that registers "your essential nature". When I go past it shows "killer" in black letters on an orange background! I protest but then I think I might be the only person in the group that is capable of assassination, or whatever is needed. I'm amenable to the idea of "killer instinct".

And another dream on Tuesday 23 July:

I am attending a yoga convention with a lot of swamis. I am immersed in people's care and concern and kindness, I'm very touched. A woman who was very sick twenty years ago gives me a white crystalline substance made from bacteria that was very healing for her. She says it might make me nauseous but it doesn't. There was much more, the dream was quite strange, the first part psychological, the second transcendental.

On Wednesday 24 July 2002 Muktanand celebrated Guru Poornima and the 27th anniversary of her initiation into sannyas by Swami Satyananda in Monghyr in 1975.

Hair & India

Muktanand attended Precision Cuts for her second haircut of the year on Thursday 25 July. But she wished she had shaved her head earlier when it looked like she might have to have chemotherapy (the hair falls out anyway).

Muktanand described a deep psychic connection with her hair. Even before she left Australia in 1974 she had decided she was going to have her head shaved. Later when Swamiji ordered her to stop shaving her head she had recurrent dreams of tearing her hair out. In 1985 a traditional astrologer in Coimbatore told her she would always be 'bald' and she would always look younger than her age. This astrologer also told her she would come very close to dying but wouldn't die. The astrologer's credibility was enhanced by his correct prediction

of the day on which ‘her time in India would end’ - the day she received her quit India notice.

Muktanand said the ashram (Monghyr, Munger, BSY) was very good at turning out obsessive-compulsive cleaners and people who loved to have short hair (long before short hair became fashionable in the West).

On Saturday 3 August Muktanand had a visit from Sambuddha, another ex-India Australian swami who lives in Yeppoon. Sambuddha bought some authentic Indian food for lunch. Muktanand dreamt the following morning that ‘John’ had told her a nuclear bomb had just been dropped on a city on the Indian-Pakistan border. In the dream she was crying, grief-stricken. Sambuddha’s visit had revived her grief for her life in India and all her Indian friends.

12 August CT Scan

This scan showed a clear improvement in her liver cancers and the disappearance of her lung cancers. Muktanand had been hoping the tests would show it was all over, but the result meant she would just have to cultivate patience and continue with what she had been doing. Her oncologist thought the scan was a very good result, better than average; the healing had been quite quick in terms of the time frame.

Another plus was the disappearance of Muktanand’s major ‘chronic fatigue’ symptoms since her operation in December 2001, probably because they were due to the cancer. She no longer had to sleep in the afternoons, whereas before she had no choice. She no longer suffered from the wild blood sugar fluctuations that had confounded her for many years. She was also able to sleep 10-12 hours a night, whereas before she would wake up at the least noise. She woke up feeling rested.

Spring Clean & Party

When she was laid up in the early part of the year Muktanand spent hours thinking about things to do around the garden and the house. After the August scan her energy became very externalised and she spent a lot of time being active in the garden and house. She found gardening less strenuous than cleaning although not quite as satisfying. Together with her weights exercises the gardening was a way of breaking up her liver stagnation (as it is described in Chinese traditional medicine), as well as being good for bone regrowth.

When she finished the gardening in mid-November, she moved on to the house. For Muktanand the spring cleaning of the house was about creating a nurturing and nourishing environment to provide a foundation for her to move on to other things. There was also the obvious symbology of cleaning up her internal environment. She found it both satisfying and lots of fun. She hadn’t done it for years; she would have liked to do it annually.

On her August 14 birthday Muktanand held a party for all her yoga women – her long-term students and friends. This was a wonderful occasion for Muktanand as well as being an opportunity for her to thank people for their support. The positive feedback from everyone was extremely helpful.

Muktanand was convinced she was dying at the beginning of the year, partly because she had applied the average survival statistics to her own personal situation. Now she quite genuinely felt she wasn't going to die soon. If that meant she was in denial that was OK because research showed that people in denial lived longer! She hoped the cancer didn't come back or creep up on her. She wanted to live for years and years.

Premonitions of Recurrence

In a dream on Wednesday 18 September Muktanand was driving her white Magna car in the centre lane when another car crossed into her lane in front of her. She changed lanes but couldn't get her right foot onto the brake pedal and crashed. The idea conveyed by the dream was that she couldn't prevent a crash in her health.

By the end of September she no longer felt her life had been wasted. All the feedback from family and friends and particularly her yoga students had proven that. The sessions with her counsellor had filled in the 'black hole of abandonment' and she wasn't driven any more. Her counsellor had commented it was never too late to have a happy childhood. She felt as if she was starting afresh. However, she still believed in the yoga psychology viewpoint.

In mid October she complained of being very tired and waking up miserable in the mornings. Was this a sign of a setback in her health?

In early November she took a long phone call from Anandapoorna. Anandapoorna described a work colleague who had been diagnosed with cancer. Following her treatment she decided to enjoy life and go shopping. Some of her workmates thought this was shallow. Muktanand agreed the most important thing was to enjoy life and be happy. For her this meant relationships and creative activities such as house decorating and gardening. After thinking about this Anandapoorna felt she had been given permission to enjoy life. She found this very liberating: Muktanand was very pleased.

CHAPTER 6

CANCER AS GURU

19 December CT Scan

John Ransley dream, Sunday 15 December 2002:

I am driving and then walking along the coast. I see lots of young people below, swimming and camping amongst the cliffs near the sea. Muktanand undresses to go swimming and borrows the suntan cream. Before I can pull her out of range, a large black snake rises from the ground nearby and bites her high on the right leg. The words “striking back” come to me and I think of her cancer.

John comment: The dream leaves me with a persistent feeling the scan is not going to be good. I had a similar feeling before her very first bone scan although I didn't say anything. Muktanand says the snake has good associations, eg with Kundalini. It is beautiful but frightening too. She has no hate towards it.

On the morning before her scan Muktanand had a very strange dream but woke up feeling really happy. She had been waking with a heavy heart for some weeks, starting about the November anniversary of her cancer diagnosis. The CT scan was a disappointment, showing there'd been no improvement since August and containing a suggestion that the cancer could be returning.

The oncologist and the radiologist agreed that Muktanand's lungs had cleared and there were no soft tissue secondaries outside the liver. However they disagreed over the liver, with the radiologist finding a new lesion and the oncologist not able or willing to see it.

Muktanand asked the oncologist, Dr Mackintosh, if the cancer was striking back. He conceded this possibility but said there wasn't enough evidence to change the treatment. The problem was that the cancer changed and developed resistance to the treatment. If it didn't have this characteristic, cancer treatment would be simple!

Mackintosh said the cancer could just remain stable and stable lesions could be just as good as further shrinkage. He counselled Muktanand not to get alarmed; the scan result was not enough to spoil her Christmas. He was impressed that everything else about her clinical picture looked good (no pain; regular muscle building exercise program; stable weight; good appetite, and good energy).

Despite his reassurances Muktanand was very upset and it took her several days to find some kind of balance and emotional perspective. She found her moods fluctuating sharply, and she had to spend some hours every day dealing with really black feelings. Her dreams had intensified and were generally very positive.

Alternative Doctor

The day after the scan Muktanand had a long consultation with her alternative doctor. Afterwards she felt 'shattered' by his repeated denials of her feelings about dying. Although he talked about her fear he seemed to be talking from the head. He reminded her of swamiji, dismissing her feelings as irrelevant or not something she should be having.

The doctor cautioned the scans were not her life. There was a difference between life, death and the scans. Muktanand conceded there was an issue about focussing on the scans, but if she got her inner life in tune, she could deal with anything. Scans were the only way she could know. She'd rather know than not know and deal with the fear. She wanted to work with the fear and come to a peaceful acceptance and reconciliation.

She believed her challenge was to live in the realm of possibility not probability. She was challenged by the hospital each month she went for bone treatment. But she would hang onto what was possible, even though the outcome might be the same.

Her doctor commented she was very well known in yoga circles. When he said this it made her feel 'you're a big girl now and you mustn't cry'. Just like the little 8 year girl abandoned on the side of the road at the scene of her parent's motor vehicle accident.

The next day a friend told Muktanand "how wonderful to know you're dying whereas all of us are blissfully unaware!" Muktanand wondered (privately) whether she would still say that in her position. Sometimes people said to her that anyone could get cancer or walk under a bus. This perspective failed to acknowledge her situation, and denied her feelings about her real prospect of dying. It was as if she must be a good girl and be strong in the face of the grim reaper! Of course she understood that when people were healthy it was very difficult to take death seriously.

Dreams of Hope & Critics

The day after Christmas Muktanand had another toilet dream:

I am in a long bare toilet with a cistern at the far end and the toilet bowl at the near end, on the right. The door to the toilet is broken. I am dying for a pee but both the lid of the bowl and the rim are smeared with faeces. The top of the bowl is much wider than usual and circular. The inside of the bowl is much smaller and is blocked with dark faeces. I leave the toilet without getting any waste on me.

Muktanand comment: I see this as an image of my liver, like the largest of the liver secondaries which has a black centre and a grey-white corona. The secondary is in stasis, it has not expanded; there is no growth.

On the last day of 2002 Muktanand had two dreams:

I am driving in my car again. The traffic is stopped in a dip – they're waiting for me to do a three-point turn. I drive on in the same direction as before. A red car comes alongside with Jackie and her Japanese girlfriend (Rieko).

Muktanand comment: I am driving. I complete the turn. It is a car not a bicycle and the road is sealed not dirt. I'm not stopped. The message is positive.

A master's degree arrives in the post together with my book. It has been sent by Gail, my bookshop friend in Sydney. The only book I can think of is my yoga psychology book.

Muktanand had this dream on Monday 13 January 2003 after talking to some yoga friends:

I have a job in the city in a nice office tower. In my break I go cruising to a coffee shop. There is a guy sitting opposite me, an Indian, a doctor. As I go to leave he starts speaking to me, gazing at the wrinkles on my hands and palms. He asks do I ever do yoga nidra? Is it very good for stress? I tell him I know about yoga nidra. He says he learned it from a book; I say I learned it in India from swamiji. As I am leaving the coffee shop I pack my things in a clothes basket. I go into the women's hospital. A very severe unsmiling woman says to me "with your experience you should be doing more". I say what more can I do? I have taught yoga to people and I have integrated yoga into psychology. I leave for work but get lost and go around in circles, around the women's hospital. I meet a woman who says she'll show me where my office is but by this time its dark and I am walking uphill. I never get there.

Muktanand comment: The feelings of the dream do not spill into the day on this occasion. Sometimes I have good dreams but still wake up depressed. On one level the dream is about me talking to doctors in the hospital. My inner critic is saying I'm not doing enough to get well. On another level it is about a couple of my old ex-India yoga colleagues who believe I have indulged myself by making a living from yoga. They believe I'm not doing enough for yoga and the ashram, ie I'm selfish.

In mid January Muktanand was waking up miserable again. She wasn't concerned about dying as such, but dying young and much sooner than expected. Once again she was feeling her life had been wasted. She was over the worst of this feeling but it still returned.

On Monday 27 January Muktanand had two dreams. The first was an action movie involving her and a female companion who got shot by a sniper while Muktanand escaped. The second went as follows:

I am driving a white van down a twisty mountain road without brakes. I have my left leg across my lap which makes it impossible to use my left foot to brake. My right leg is not usable. At the bottom of the hill there are two sets of lights. The first set turn red before I get there but by this time I have slowed the van right down and I cruise through the red light without incident. I am concerned about police but there is no traffic on the side roads. The second set of lights are red but turn green just as I approach. The road then turns sharply to the right and I am tailgated by a garbage truck until it pulls over to collect garbage. Then I am tailgated by a Kombi van. After a while I am able to pull off to the side of the still mountainous road. I get out onto a very narrow path which goes twistingly downhill.

Muktanand comment: I wake up with my heart pounding. Writing the dream is initially frightening but then alright. The words "going downhill", "out of control" and "going through red lights" stand out. Could the two sets of lights refer to two scans? I am not actually out of control because I manage to slow the van down by intensely focussing. But the outcome of the dream is what's important not the how of it. And the outcome of this dream is okay, a

narrow escape.

Letter to Sweden

In December Muktanand had been shocked to discover a year-old email from Nirvikalpa, the host of her Swedish teacher training course. Nirvikalpa had been diagnosed with breast cancer and undergone a mastectomy. Muktanand re-established contact and then sent the following email on 31 January 2003.

Dear Nirvikalpa

I was so relieved to receive your email – until then I was fearing the worst. Despite the distances between us I feel very connected to you and, for me at least, that closeness is always there no matter how long the silences between communications. I did not reply earlier because I was feeling very unwell and depressed from Christmas till mid January.

In April and again in August last year the CT scans showed that my tumours were responding well to treatment. By August the tumours in my lungs had disappeared and those in the liver had shrunk by one third. I began to think and act as if I would soon be better. However, just a few days before Christmas the scans showed that there had been no further shrinkage since August and that the cancer might be growing back. I had actually been feeling stronger and more energetic, so this came as quite as shock. With this news, and something said by one of my doctors, I plunged into one of those periods you described in your email, "very tired and depressed and desperate". So, although I was so very glad to hear from you I could not bring myself to reply until that issue resolved itself and the depression lifted. Since then it has taken me some time to recover from my monthly treatment.

Reading your original message (Nov 2001) and then your recent email I was struck both times by an impression that you do not feel very positive about the possibilities of long term recovery from your cancer. In your recent email you say "I simply somehow have to stay alive for eight years more..." If I'm mistaken in this impression please forgive me if what follows sounds to you as if I'm preaching.

Living with this illness must be terrible when you have young children. And – I suppose – you are still supporting the family financially (?). Of course, you've also had two more scares about possible progression, so that makes it harder to be optimistic. Your situation is serious. I'm the last person to minimize that, but surely your researches have informed you that your chances of long-term recovery are actually quite good.

When I found out about the huge tumours in my bones I thought it was the end, because Kundan's mother had died just seven years ago of breast cancer that had spread to her bones. However, since then they have developed new treatments for just this situation which one of my doctors told me has "revolutionised the treatment of breast cancer". My radiation oncologist also told me that all doctors working in this field had some long term survivors with tumours in their bones for ten years or more – he himself had inherited a patient who has had tumours in her bones since 1987 – and this before the new treatment that I'm having which has been available in Australia only for the 2 or 3 years.

You know so much about interpreting statistics – we have to keep open the possibility of being in the group that survives. Kundan found an article by Stephen Jay Gould, the biological scientist, that makes this point very clearly. He'll send it to you. (Like Omananda, he's been wonderful during my illness, which has brought us to a new level of closeness.) For myself, not a natural optimist, I see the challenge as holding in view the possible rather than the probable.

I am helped in this by my dreams which, since the day I found the lump, have been frequent,

intense and often very clear, even commenting on the course of the cancer as well as the issues of deeper healing and awakening. For instance, my dreams since Christmas indicate that the cancer is NOT growing back. It will be an interesting experiment to compare this inner knowing with the actual medical scans.

On New Years day I woke with four very clear dream sequences, one of which I'd like to share with you. When I received your email the next day, I immediately felt there is a level on which this dream also relates to you.

I am living in a hospital which is also a kind of ashram or monastery. The men and women here do not wear robes but they have spiritual names; they are secular monks. I am assisting another woman in the infirmary. The patient is a young woman with dark skin and dark frizzy hair – an Aboriginal or Islander. She has a problem with her leg and is worried it's cancer.

She asks me if I can diagnose, and I tell her I don't have the skills. The other woman I'm helping has more skill and experience. I put my arms around the dark girl and hold her close. I feel such a love/compassion for her and try to comfort her while the other woman does doctorly things. I also ask her some questions based on my own experience.

I am sent to collect her records. She does have cancer, but I find she actually has a very good prognosis. This kind of cancer responds very well to treatment and has a good cure rate. I want to tell her this, and to share my own experience to help her. But I'm diverted to other duties. I have a clear sense that the most important thing is to be positive, to give her hope. In any case her chances are good and it is only her own fear that could damage her recovery.

The *hospital/ashram* is my illness which is also a sadhana. The 'I' in the dream is not the part of me with healing skills, but I am helping the part of me which heals. Of course, *the dark girl* is my own shadow self – young and afraid. I am 'mothering', nurturing my own fearful self. Supporting her with love. She needs comforting and love. Even though, objectively, my prognosis is NOT good, the message of the dream is that, in my unique case, it IS good and only my fear is the biggest obstacle to healing (both physically and emotionally).

You know this, and like me, have heard this dream's message many times. Yet I needed to hear it again, obviously, or it would not have been repeated in this dream. On the other hand, the link I feel between you and this dream is perhaps not so much in the message as in the feeling - wanting to share love and comfort and support.

I'll keep in touch - please don't feel you have to respond if you don't feel up to it.

Much love, Muktanand

The day after drafting this letter Muktanand dreamed of cancers everywhere, on the back of a dog being walked by a short fat woman in our street, on the hibiscus hedge in the front garden, and on the walls of the house. Everything was "blighted".

13 February CT Scan

In the days before Muktanand said she had never been so concerned about her scans as with this one. She just hoped she would be able to cope with the outcome, whatever it was. She was feeling once again as if she had had a life unlived. For years she had been going through the motions, pushing herself against tiredness, sometimes pushing herself hard around the yoga centre. It was her life and now she had to sort it out before she died.

On the morning of the scan I had the following dream:

Muktanand and I are leaving the house where Subhana is lying sick in bed, quite ill. She is lying on a single bed in a plain room with a plain black cupboard. She is quite sweet. The room is set quite high with a window overlooking a garden with some trees. I am packing our bags. I stuff some long pants in my backpack and as I am about to close Muktanand's bag she comes in and says hey, what about my meditation things? There is a book and some notebooks on the floor besides her – as usual – large bag which is half empty. She comes and picks up some small bottles – like Jackie's Japanese herbal medicine bottles – nestled in the left hand corner of the bag. I wonder about the plainness of Subhana's room. There are no Buddha pictures on the walls but she is quite happy with it.

John comment: The night before I had attended a talk by the Tibetan lama Sogyal Rinpoche. The theme of the dream was we're leaving our house. The ill Subhana seemed to be a version of Muktanand.

* * *

Muktanand had both bone and soft tissue scans on this occasion. The bone scan looked much the same to us, but both the radiologist and the oncologist saw improvement.

The radiologist saw significant improvement in the lungs but a worsening situation in the liver, with the two largest secondaries increasing in size. On the positive side there were no signs of cancer in the other critical soft tissues. However, in a repeat of the December results, the oncologist disagreed with the radiologist, noting that most if not all of the original very small liver lesions had now disappeared, leaving only the larger lesions.

The oncologist said there was not enough evidence to start chemotherapy. However he changed her hormone medicine from Femara to Aromasin: studies had proven the latter kept working when Femara had stopped. Faced with the conflicting opinions, Muktanand decided to take an optimistic view. She was supported in this by feedback from her dreams and Reiki sessions.

Aromasin Not Working

On 13 March Muktanand was very upset by a blood test result described by her oncologist as “not so good”. One of the critical liver enzymes had become abnormal for the first time, prompting Muktanand to start thinking about chemotherapy. She was glad she was much stronger than a year before, when she couldn't have stood it.

She had two dreams the next day. In the first “John was weeping inconsolably, not just

crying”. The second was another toilet dream:

I am in a toilet/bathroom with another woman. There are newspapers on the floor with brown stains like early menstrual stains. I show these to the other woman and she agrees they are probably menstrual. Then there is second scene with newspapers on the floor but this time with fresh blood. Otherwise the bathroom is very clean with no dirt or faeces. When I see the blood I say “Oh no, this must mean the Aromasin is not working!”

Muktanand comment: A negative dream with positive consequences. Chandrabindhu reminded me last week that in Tibetan medicine fresh blood means the body is healing and discharging toxins.

On 16 March Muktanand had another car dream:

I am driving in my old car with a woman passenger. We are stopped and surrounded by a group of adolescents, mostly boys, trying to get into the car. My door is locked and I tell my passenger to lock her door but she can’t and there is no central locking. The car can’t move. The adolescents knock on my window but I don’t want to let them in. After a while a group of dark coloured adolescents get into the back of the car. I don’t want them but they are not violent.

Muktanand comment: The dark adolescents are my tumours. [Her alternative doctor once described cancer cells as uncontrollable adolescents.]

Muktanand continued to suffer severe bloating and hormonal type symptoms until she persuaded her oncologist to stop the Aromasin on 20 March.

* * *

The December scan came as a shock, despite the ambiguities, and her energy then became more internalised. From December her orientation was about being ready to die rather than simply getting physically better. The cancer had become her guru.

Apart from the cancer she was less stressed than she’d ever been. She didn’t have to work and she didn’t have to worry about money. The last several years of teaching had been an enormous strain; she was always tired and sick. She enjoyed the yoga classes but she had not allowed enough time to rest and recover. She had stopped teaching several times.

April Dream

On Wednesday 2 April 2003 Muktanand dreamed:

I go to the station to go somewhere but I don’t know my destination. I try a second time with Sakshi and Narelle Thomas but again when I get to the front of the queue I don’t know my destination. Then Sakshi or someone says it’s “Ramsey” and this startles me and I wake up. I feel something is wrong.

John comment: Ramsey was the name of Muktanand’s radiation specialist.

Muktanand was not so much worried as curious about the next CT scan. The uncertainty was the main issue. Intuitively and emotionally she didn't feel the liver was getting out of control, but if that was the case she would accept it. Overall she was feeling a lot lighter. Not necessarily more optimistic about recovery but no longer oppressed by a sense of dread; she had a deepening acceptance of her situation. She was more able to be in the present and there was an emotional sense that everything was basically OK, despite the difficulties. There were days when she felt more intensely alive than she had for years.

Jade Amulet

John Ransley dream, Tuesday 8 April 2003.

Muktanand and I go to a place where people have a sort of holiday or yoga camp. We go into a wooden building which has a series of large rooms built in layers. We go in and through them in a sort of spiral fashion. The entrance is a large bare room with an exit on the other side. There are no stairs but an impression of going up. At the top we come into a room which was swamiji's room or at least the room where he stayed. We are looking around and then Muktanand becomes upset after opening a cupboard drawer and finding a green jade amulet in a little carrier or container. She says the amulet was given to her by the ashram as instructed by swamiji, and then stolen by one of swamiji's personal assistants. It was meant to be a farewell gift when she left the ashram. I ask her if she is certain about this. She said it has an inscription on the back to this effect and she shows it to me: a round amulet (or talisman) with a silvery metal surface with incised words in Sanskrit, or I thought, Hindi. It said to or for Muktanand and something else in a very compact way, that is, some quotation. Muktanand agonises whether to claim it back or just take it. She is reluctant but wanting to take it. I suggest I take it for her, that way it will not be on her conscience. Then I give it to her.

Muktanand comment: The jade is equivalent to liver. The dream could signify an attempt to dissolve any remnant feelings of anger or disappointment towards swamiji.

10 April CT Scan

The radiologist and oncologist both agreed there was unequivocal evidence of progressive liver tumour disease, with "an increase in the size and number of lesions". They also agreed the lungs were clear and that there had been a lot of healthy bone regrowth in the skeleton, without any sign of new tumours. There was no sign of new tumours in other abdominal organs.

The oncologist had 'no hesitation' in recommending single agent chemotherapy with Taxotere, to commence in a month. Chemotherapy could be postponed for a month or two, but no longer. The risk could be monitored via Liver Function Tests (LFTs), ie by tracking the critical liver enzyme levels in her blood. Basically, as the cancer progressed these enzymes became elevated. It was important not to let the liver deteriorate beyond the point where it could cope with the chemotherapy.

He also said that although Taxotere usually caused complete hair loss it caused less nausea

than other chemotherapy drugs. Muktanand explained that for many years in India she had shaved her head, but he struggled to believe that Muktanand was genuinely unconcerned about losing her hair.

The oncologist also reiterated his opinion that despite the gross asymmetry in the pattern of her cancer spread – major bone secondaries, moderate liver secondaries and minor lung secondaries – it had probably all happened simultaneously (instead of one organ after another). And although the chemotherapy was a systemic or total body treatment, he wanted her to continue with her oestrogen-blocker and Aredia drugs, which had proven their effectiveness in treating her lung and bone cancers.

Freak Out

The CT scan and consultation was more or less expected. However, Muktanand got a real shock the next day – 11 April - when she saw her personal doctor. He first asked whether the oncologist had nominated a percentage outcome. Muktanand replied he had said the goal was to shrink the tumours as much as possible and keep them shrunk as long as possible. Her doctor said the oncologist should have provided a treatment flow chart showing the percentage rates for success and failure. The shock then came when he brought up some treatment rate diagrams for Taxotere on his desktop PC, which showed 48% median improvement in Phase II trials, with only 4% showing a complete response. He also found another study showing 54% improvement, and concluded in Muktanand's case there was probably a 50-60% chance her tumours would respond.

He said Muktanand should ask the oncologist for more details about the anticipated response and how long it could be expected to last. He noted one study which said that untreated subjects survived for 8.7 months versus patients treated with Taxotere who survived 11.5 months, ie the latter group gained only 3 months at the cost of the considerable ill-health caused by the treatment. He said he had patients who complained that they wouldn't have chosen the treatment if they'd known this. Muktanand commented she had understood that was the worst-case scenario, but now he was saying it was the average.

Her doctor said chemotherapy (he was not a great fan) basically provided a window, but she should ask her specialist for how long. Afterwards Muktanand said she nearly burst into tears at this point. Although he is an excellent practitioner, this was not the first time his honesty had upset her. When the first bone scan revealed Stage Four disease, he told her she had been given the privilege of facing her death consciously.

Muktanand had 'three horrible days' after this appointment. She only stopped weeping after reading an up-beat press release from the pharmaceutical company that manufactures Taxotere.

Talking to Alakh

Muktanand had a long conversation with her yoga buddy Alakh Ananda. She was not afraid of dying as such, but afraid of dying without having lived life to the fullest. She hadn't lived; she'd just endured most of it, the last ten years particularly. When she looked back she saw a waste – she hadn't done anything; she'd been depressed or stressed all her life. She'd never

plugged into any sense of nurturing and always had to generate it for herself.

In 2002 she had been so immersed in her illness that the toxic womb experience had come to the surface, enabling it be resolved. Perhaps the process of going through the chemotherapy would dislodge other things from her unconscious in a similar way. The chemotherapy was toxic and could be another kind of toxic womb experience. Alakh suggested it was a *Vishuddhi* chakra issue - where toxins were turned into nectar – and Muktanand thought that was correct. There was a *Siva* story where he drank poison and it turned his throat blue, hence the name ‘blue throat’, *Neela Kantra*. Alakh commented that because Muktanand was choosing the chemotherapy voluntarily, she was going back into her toxic womb in her power, not as a victim.

Alakh plugged into the fact her liver disease was about power and powerlessness, a *Manipura* chakra issue. It was connected to anger, frustration and helplessness, and lack of control. Muktanand had known forever that the thing most likely to make her angry was feeling helpless. This was also the source of her anger about the Iraq war and the local ‘Green Bridge’ project.

The cancer chakra was *Muladhara*, basic survival, life-death.

Her challenge was to believe in her inner knowledge and to believe in her possibilities. The possibilities of being healed psychologically and cured physically, as opposed to the probability that it wouldn’t happen. Every time there had been bad news she’d had a dream that things would be alright. After the December CT scan she’d laid around for weeks depressed then one day after a dream she awoke feeling fine.

Sunshine Coast Holiday

On 13 April we went to the Sunshine Coast for a holiday in Kim Zafir’s house.

Muktanand had the following dream on April 19:

*I was talking to a woman who trains yoga teachers. It was quite clear in the dream that I had retired from doing that. The woman was recommending that I do the full – mahashankaprakshalana, because it was so cleansing. I agreed it was cleansing but I was **emotionally** resisting her suggestion, pointing out the dangers and unwanted side effects of doing MSP. At the same time I was thinking if I do that I won’t be able to do anything else. And that felt really appealing, the idea of stopping everything.*

Muktanand comment: The whole issue was about just stopping. Everything, reading, projects, socialising, and just going into myself or just being with whatever came up. Looking at the chemo in that context that might mean I just stop and meditate.

Muktanand decided in principle to go with the chemotherapy. It seemed like the only alternative. The chemotherapy would challenge how well she had resolved her toxic womb issues. Her expectation was that without the psychic distress the nausea would be more bearable; it might be really awful physically but not emotionally awful as well.

She wasn’t reconciled to dying yet. She was unsure of the source of her resistance. But maybe the challenge was letting go of everything, including letting go of feeling bad; and

expanding her awareness to the point where she could absorb the pain of dying before she was ready, before she had really lived.

She would postpone it as long as possible in order to ensure she'd done everything possible to prepare herself. She would stop thinking about the house and cleaning and the bug that was eating the hibiscus hedge. She would stop everything and go into a kind of retreat. She would treat the chemotherapy as an opportunity for spiritual practice. Sakshi commented, 'Fancy having to have chemo in order to stop!'

Tarot Card Review

Muktanand reviewed Vivian's Tarot Card dream in the light of a book titled *Beyond Prediction: The Tarot and Your Spirituality* by John Drane, Ross Clifford & Philip Johnson. This review took place in the context of an article by Sue Taylor, sent to Muktanand by Vichara, a Tasmanian yoga friend. In her article Sue describes how she managed to reduce recurrent liver tumours by a combination of meditation and hormone therapy, without chemotherapy. The article can be found at <http://www.quangduc.com/English/psychology/18cancelliberation.html>

The Beyond Prediction book said the key to the first card, the Hanged Man, was "I cannot have a risen powerful life without first of all dying to self". The second card, the Tower "helps us face up to who we are ... through this card we encounter the most feared part of ourselves". The third card, Death, directed us to identify what was dead in our lives so we could move on; it was about the need to change.

Thus the first two cards were about the first stages of her illness and the third card was about how the illness forced change, not necessarily death (she hoped).

At the heart of the fourth card, the Lovers, was love; "we were born for harmony with each other, the world and the divine". The fifth card, the High Priestess, depicted a woman who was open to her spiritual potential and waiting to receive knowledge. She could take the journey without relying on instructions, temples or objects. The sixth card, the Hermit, called her to meditate and referred to austerity and isolation, ie retreat. These cards described themes in her illness process; they were not necessarily time-linked.

The final card, the Sun, represented optimism, joy and light. A different kind of life but if she died, she would die happy. The Sun card was her inner self at its best – confident, free and at ease. It was a reminder to laugh, to play and to love more. It was about finding the healthy child within.

Clearly the illness was a spiritual process, an ongoing spiritual practice on its own, like a particular form of meditation. The process had the same force and function as if she had decided to go into retreat for two years or more, only there was a lot more suffering attached to it!

Alternative Treatment

The Tarot card review, article and book made her wonder if she'd missed the point. She had always looked at her illness as a spiritual process. But she hadn't meditated intensively in the

way many people expected; she hadn't felt like it and she hadn't disciplined herself to do it. If she had understood the card dream in the way she did now, maybe she would have meditated more. And if she'd meditated more maybe she wouldn't have to have the chemotherapy.

This raised the issue of whether she needed to have the chemotherapy in order to thoroughly address her illness as a spiritual practice. Could she take the risk of believing she would not die from this illness? Did she have to believe the chemotherapy was the only way she could manage not to die? She had strongly resisted meditating in order to get better. That seemed like a kind of bargaining to her, like people praying and bargaining with god. She had always meditated because she wanted to and it felt good and it was relaxing. She believed that even if she meditated there was no guarantee it would make her get better.

Before her illness she had always thought she would go away and do serious meditation if she got cancer. Instead what she got was the need to connect with people.

* * *

The Sunshine Coast break reminded us that Kim's mother had successfully treated secondary liver cancers with an alternative therapy using a camphor laurel tea. Muktanand decided she might as well give this a try. Because of her dream she decided to substitute *lagu shankaprakshalana* – yogic washing of the digestive system – for the enemas in the camphor laurel therapy protocol.

The camphor laurel therapy apparently originated in Japan but there was a practitioner who lived on the Sunshine Coast. It was based on the theory that cancer was caused by a parasite, a theory that is not so bizarre given recent research on the role of viruses in breast cancers. Anyway, the logic seemed to be that because *camphor laurel* trees were so poisonous for insects (which is why birds avoid them); a tea made from their leaves should also be poisonous for the cancer parasite. The Sunshine Coast practitioner had reportedly had some success with his treatment.

Muktanand was also attracted to the C/L therapy because it reminded her of Durga's famous battle where the demon's drops of blood produced more demons. Camphor Laurel trees spread themselves by a similar mode of propagation: when the tree is cut down it generates multiple suckers. Muktanand's cancer was like the demon, spreading itself through her body [it had literally spread through her blood system]. Perhaps a foe that operated in a similar fashion could defeat it.

Muktanand commenced the camphor laurel (C/L) therapy on 22 April and added Lagu Shankaprakshalana (LSP) on 24 April. She gave up her weights exercises to devote herself to these practices. On the first night after starting the C/L she dreamt she was using steel wool to clean a wooden panelled bath. As wood stands for liver in traditional Chinese medicine, she understood the C/L was cleaning her liver, ie she was on the right track.

The therapy seemed to work, although whether it was the LSP, the C/L or both is impossible to tell. Given its advocates say the C/L program usually takes a few months, it seems likely that the LSP was responsible for most of the effect. Anyway, a blood test on 8 May showed her liver enzymes had remained at the same level as 10 April, after trending steadily upwards since December. Muktanand says the LSP was initially very energising and brought about a

positive shift in her attitude to her illness.

Unfortunately the effect didn't last. In Satyananda yoga therapy there is an LSP protocol for diabetes that says you cease the practice after 3 weeks. Muktanand felt very good during the first two weeks, not so good in the third, and debilitated by the fourth when she gave it up. However, she says that despite feeling weak and horrible at the end of the fourth week, a lot of stiffness had gone out of her body and she felt very relaxed.

On 24 April we attended a hospital video presentation on chemotherapy. The theme of the video – conveyed mainly by a handful of ex-patients – was that chemotherapy worked and it wouldn't be as bad as you expected.

Elephant is Ill

Chandrabinthu had this dream on 25 April 2003.

I am walking towards Muktanand who is sitting down with an elephant lying in front of her. Muktanand says "the elephant is ill" and she looks devastated, as if it is the end of the world. She has grey curly hair and is depressed and tired and not able to do anything. I woke up suddenly in shock. I couldn't sleep for several hours but when I went back to sleep I dreamed exactly the same dream, something that's never happened to me before. After I woke up I thought of Muladhara chakra and then Vishuddhi chakra which has the little elephant.

Chandrabinthu comment: I was quite uncomfortable telling Muktanand about the dream, as deep inside I feared that it was about her having to die, and I did not want to accept that, and did not want her to think that that was the message of the dream. There was only a trace of hope that she might see something in it that could help. I probably said that I thought the dream was about me; most dreams tell us more about the person who had them than about the people who appear in them. This could be the reason the dream was exactly the same the second time - to force me to come to terms with its content.

John comment: During his first South Indian tour after Muktanand had moved to Bangalore, Swami Satyananda told some devotees in her absence how pleased he was with his program. He said Muktanand had acted like a "baby Ganesha", ensuring the tour had run very smoothly. It was a great compliment, comparing her to the elephant god.

Both Muladhara and Vishuddhi chakras have elephants. Muktanand as a sick baby elephant conveys the two ideas of stopping her speech and threatening her life.

Exam Dream

Muktanand dream 3 May 2003:

I am sitting for an exam that I haven't prepared for properly. It is in a wooden room, bare wood desks, chairs, walls and ceilings. As I wake from the dream I am calculating I can pass the exam by using a certain strategy. I hadn't read the article which was the subject of the exam. I hadn't realised it was an open book exam until the woman sitting next to me told me. The pages of the article are all in the wrong order and some are fastened together with metal pins. The examiner is confident I

will pass but she is going to be strict. I had to take off a whole lot of clothes to get comfortable.

Muktanand comment: I am starting to get exam anxiety in anticipation of the next blood test results.

May Poems

Michele Burford emailed this poem to Muktanand on 5 May 2003:

I feel the whispers
The throbbing energy of the life
That surrounds us
The whirling mists of a misunderstood truth
Grasping the meaning in the ebb and flow
The gentle lift of a feather
Drifting, floating
Sending forth love and hope

* * *

On 18 May 2003 Muktanand wrote the following birthday poem for Eoin Liebchen-Meades.

Eoin Maharaja ki jai!

It might be fate, or karma.
We could have (should have?) met
on that first retreat in '74
where you sat behind Terese.
But I cancelled and went to India instead.
Destined (?) to meet, we did eventually.
So I came to treasure your
exuberant hellos and expansive hugs;
Practical support with
needles, pills and potions;
Tall tales and true of mystery tours
with psychics, saints and sadhus.
A Buddha in suburbia!
A mystic mate
Reminding me of magical possibilities.

Happy Birthday Baba
With heart and hugs

Muktanand

From 1-30 September 1974 Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa held their first-ever course in Queensland in the Diamond Valley, just below the present Chenrezig centre. Almost 200 people attended and at the end of the course they all went up the hill for a formal ceremony to



Rosary Crescent, April 2003

hand over the land to Lama Yeshe's organisation. Eoin Meades attended and sat behind Teresa Booth, a friend whom he first met on this course.

Muktanand had booked into this course from Toowoomba, but in August 1974 she flew to India instead. Eoin maintained his connection to Chenrezig, marrying his wife Kerstin there in 1990.

Teresa subsequently became a yoga teacher with Maida Palmer, in her Turiya organisation. For some time Muktanand attended classes with Turiya where she became friends with Teresa. Teresa died 27 September 2004 in Canada, a few weeks after being diagnosed with advanced ovarian cancer.

May Dreams

Muktanand dream Saturday 10 May:

There is a pile of my faeces on the floor of the toilet some distance away. A large, flat thick parasite wriggles out of this pile. I don't touch the faeces or get any on me. The parasite metamorphoses into a very active insect which I struggle to catch and eventually succeed with an iron lid. I take it to the doctor but it is Tuesday, the doctor's day off. I am very upset that I can't get advice from the doctor but I decide to use citrus seed extract.

Muktanand comment: Talking to Chandrabindhu about parasites and citrus seed extract the night before. The citrus seed extract is taken at the time of the new moon. In terms of Tibetan dream analysis I avoided contact with the faeces, a positive sign.

Muktanand ceased her shankaprakshalana practice on 21 May. She would rely on intuition when deciding whether to do *amroli* (dilute urine therapy), by mouth, not the rubbing-in-the-skin variety. But a full *amroli* was a very intensive practice requiring collection of urine night and day. The same applied to pranayama: a full practice would take four hours a day and she didn't have the energy.

Muktanand's blood test on 23 May showed her liver enzymes had once again resumed their upward trend. The oncologist recommended she start chemotherapy in 2 weeks, subject to the results of a new CT scan. On 26 May Jiang – Muktanand's acupuncturist – reported she could feel the liver cancers as hard lumps.

Muktanand reaffirmed that she would keep on going with all available treatments until she got rid of the tumours.

Hard Lump

On Sunday 25 May Muktanand developed a hard lump in her palate. Next day her acupuncturist confirmed it could be cancer and Muktanand got into a panic. She also had a stomach pain which felt like an ulcer.

A yoga friend told her on Sunday that when she first heard of Muktanand's cancer she was

very shocked. Then she had the thought that Muktanand always got the best challenges for her evolution. Muktanand commented she just wanted permission to weep and wail and behave like everyone else.

During the night of Monday 26 May to Tuesday 27 I had the following dream:

I have a very young blonde child in my care, apparently not my child. We are returning from somewhere alongside a canal, along a narrow pathway. The bank is straight, and the water shelves away very quickly. The child is walking beside me and then decides to walk in the shallow part of the river or canal. I allow this but watch carefully. The child goes under, up to his or her neck. I say you must be cold and she/he says no, only my head is cold in the wind. Then the child slips, the bottom gives away and he/she slides into the depths. I can clearly see the blonde hair. I hesitate. The child rises near the surface where I can grab him/her but I'm too late. She/he sinks again. I must dive in to rescue but I hesitate while I take off my watch and red jumper first. The child is disappearing into the depths. I wake up...

John: The message I took from this dream was not to hesitate. Don't let the child go under or go in too deep, watch very carefully. If I don't watch out she could slip away very quickly.

Muktanand felt it was all going as badly as it had in early 2002. She was strong in April but she had weakened herself with the lagu shankaprakshalana (LSP). The stakes were very high. She was also finding it extremely difficult to let go of all the things that needed to be done around the house and in preparation for the chemotherapy. On top of this she felt pressured because “everyone expected her to get well without chemotherapy”.

The lump went away by itself.

Muktanand reiterated her mantra that despite all the setbacks it would all turn out right in the end. She totally believed she would either be cured or die in the light.

Muktanand Dream Diary

Muktanand recorded the following dream on 28 May 2003:

I am going on a journey and must take only the most important things. I have gone from where I am living into town to go to the hospital. Then I go to work at 'Officeworks'. Half way through the day, I realize that my present home is to be evacuated and I must return there to pack my things. I am shocked with myself that I could have forgotten this and gone to work instead.

I am living in a foreign country, in the desert, hostile. The authorities – red Chinese Red Guards – are coming to force me and others there to leave. On my way home I am followed by a photographer who wants me to stop for photos and interview. I refuse. He pesters me, but I keep walking. At one point I tell him I'm anxious and afraid of being abandoned. I reach home and things are chaotic. Judy (John's sister) is there, and Roger (her husband) somewhere. They are packed and almost ready.

I expect to find Buddhanand there packing etc. But he has packed his bags and left,

without making any other preparations or arrangements. I'm shocked. My sister is there to help me – she's sorting through boxes. I give her some instructions about what's important. Time is running out.

I get on a bus to take a trip to the railway station. I think I intended to then return for more packing up. But the normally brief trip takes hours, with many stops. I'm upset and anxious about my sister. The women I'm travelling with point out that I don't have many clothes. I can leave most behind. I want to take my shawls. Where the bus stops – the terminus – is also the waiting room for the train. It's dark and I can't see – I ask for light but the bus driver protests. Finally someone opens a door and there is some light. I'm still sorting through clothes and packing.

Muktanand Postscript: I began chemotherapy on June 5 – a week after this dream. I can see now that I was very anxious about the chemo – the journey – and felt not prepared.

John comment: Buddhanand was an Australian swami who worked with Muktanand in the Bangalore ashram. He discontinued his connection with the ashram (and with Muktanand) after he was thrown out of India in 1985, along with all other Commonwealth passport holders.

* * *

Muktanand recorded the following dreams on 2 June 2003:

First dream: I meet a woman with dark, curly hair. Later, I am in a bed where I feel caught in a state of terror. The 'I' in this dream is a man – like Robert Carlisle. The image shifts from this man to the woman – here she has long hair. She too is terrified; has had this experience. I realize that she is the woman I met before, but by the time I met her she had come through her ordeal – she had short hair by then.

Second dream: I am sitting on a high narrow place – not extremely high. Like a pillar. On one side is a flight of stairs. There is a landing in front. I am petrified with fear – cannot move to get down. I don't know how I came to be there, but now I'm aware I can't come down. I'm afraid of falling and injuring myself. There is a woman nearby watching and encouraging, but she doesn't try to talk me down or force me – support and watching. There is also a kind of map spread out around the base of the pillar but I can't read it. Then suddenly I'm down. It was actually not very difficult or really dangerous. I laugh at myself as I explain to her that it was really a trick of my perception.

Third dream: I am sleeping in a bed with my young lover. I roll over and reach my arm out – he's not there. I wonder where he is. Then he comes back to bed. He reaches for me – we turn to each other and begin to kiss – soft, exploring, tender. It feels very good. I wake up from this dream.

Muktanand comment: I feel the two dreams are reflections of my expectations about the coming chemo (starting 5 June). The fear is a real fear but unnecessary. It is based on a trick of perception. In both dreams there is reassurance that I will come through safely.

The young lover dream was lovely – perhaps a comment on my relationship with John, which will necessarily become closer through the chemo. Some of my fears about starting just now while Sakshi is away have been fears of needing to depend on John totally, and fear that he

can't cope. The challenge for him is to be totally responsible for me – more so than when I was in hospital and on crutches last year.

June 2003 Chemotherapy

Muktanand commenced chemotherapy with Taxotere on Thursday 5 June. Her monthly Aredia treatment (for bone cancer) was juggled to ensure there was a weeks' grace between it and the 3-weekly chemotherapy. A baseline CT scan on 4 June showed "progressive hepatic metastases".

The oncologist said Taxotere response rates were about 70 percent, with complete responses (ie cancer all gone) about 10-20 percent. The median recurrence-free period was about 18 months but the statistics showed a wide scatter. The reason the liver cancers had made a comeback was most likely because the original cancers had included some cells that were not oestrogen-dependant.

Muktanand took on the chemotherapy not to extend her life but because she thought it offered the only chance of life. She hung out for the possibility of a miracle cure, what in medicine is called an 'outlier' or rare medical case; she did everything in her power to create the circumstances that would allow that to happen.

The main side effect for the first three treatments was severe general weakness, especially for the first week after treatment. Nausea was fortunately minimal and otherwise her side-effects were like having a very bad flu.

Puja in Tasmania

In early June Hari Saraswati, a Tasmanian yoga friend, offered to arrange a traditional Indian puja for Muktanand's healing. Kusum, an Indian woman pujari, was staying in Hobart with her daughter and had already conducted a couple of pujas for Hari. As it turned out the puja was conducted on Saturday 21 June 2003, at the time of the Winter Solstice - 5.15pm. The ceremony involved Kusum doing a special puja for Muktanand (using a photo for focus) followed by group chanting of the Mahamrityunjya mantra 108 times. My eldest sister Judy attended with her husband Roger. Here is Hari's description of the ceremony:

The puja last night was beautiful and felt very powerful. It took 2 hours to complete. Even Kusum Devi commented on the energy and power she felt. As preparation for the puja she had done other practices and mantras over the previous couple of days, which included making yantras in coloured powder on a metal plate. The puja was actually a compilation of rituals dedicated to all the Gods, to Ganesha and of course to Shiva as Lord Mahamrityunjaya.

Fifteen of your past students and some of our current teachers whom you have never met, participated, which involved worshipping a Shiva Lingam, making offerings of rice, sesame, white flowers and a yoghurt, ghee and milk mixture. John's sister Judy and her husband Roger came and though it was quite different to anything they'd experienced before, they were very appreciative and enjoyed talking with Kusum Devi afterwards. After the puja we distributed prasad (carrot halwa) and shared a light supper. Many commented on how well and clear you looked in the photo. A number of others who were not able to make it due to other commitments, said they would participate by chanting Mahamrityunjaya at 5.00 pm.

Atmadhyanam will be collecting and sieving the ash and we'll send that up to you when it's ready. Kusum Devi asked me to pass on to you her heartfelt thanks for the offering and wished you the healing blessings of the Gods.

We hope you were able to feel the effects of all the prayers at some level, whether consciously or not, and I know all your many friends continue to support your journey of healing however that unfolds itself. Hang in there, keeping trusting the process and know that God's grace is with you.

Much love and Oms, Hari & Atmadhyanam

In Brisbane a small group of yoga friends conducted a fire ceremony and chanted the Mahamrityunjaya mantra at Sakshi's place at the same time as the Tasmanian puja. Muktanand's first chemo session was on 5 June but her liver enzymes showed their biggest improvement between 16 June and 26 June.

A sad postscript is that Hari died from a stomach cancer on 29 October 2004.

Mid-Year Dreams

On 26 June I had a long dream involving trains, stations, a half-built new building and a strange girl. The theme was that I had lost Muktanand's car but I was very determined to get it back and I was not going to abandon it (her).

Terri Field had this dream on 31 July 2003:

Muktanand arrives looking healthy and well. She takes a yoga class which includes: going outside and observing birds, then laying on right side for awhile, then laying on left side for awhile. I am intensely inspired by this class and feel like something important has been 'revealed'.

Terri comment: Muktanand made a very strong impression on me. I never went to any of her regular classes but I did participate in a Chakra workshop she held - over a number of sessions. She had the most grounded and open approach to yoga teaching that I had ever experienced. I really liked the way she facilitated a very stimulating and meaningful dialogue between the participants.

Everyone was invited to share their understanding of the subject matter, from their own particular experiences and knowledge. From my past experiences, dialogue between such a diverse group can often break down in disagreement or fizzle out in a state of extreme relativism ("oh well, we're all different and can't connect in any way"). However, Muktanand amazingly kept the threads together and I, for one, came away with a greatly enriched understanding from that workshop. I also always felt Muktanand was very "present" as a person and this came through in her teaching.

7 August CT Scan

This scan showed "an impressive response to chemotherapy" with the multiple liver secondaries present at the beginning reducing by approximately half. Muktanand's personal doctor agreed this was an excellent result and commented his nutritional program would have undoubtedly contributed.

However Muktanand now reported severe general weakness, dizziness, headaches and shortness of breath. The oncologist explained this was due to the cumulative effects of the Taxotere on her bone marrow, reducing the production of red blood cells and therefore the blood's capacity to transport oxygen. This was normal and could be fixed with a blood transfusion, which she had on August 21.

Muktanand Dream Diary

This dream is from 8 September 2003:

I am taking a morning stroll along a suburban street, and I see Atmapuja. She invites me into a house – old-fashioned wooden fence, wide floorboards recently sanded to white and not yet stained and polished. Large rooms – eclectic furniture, some quite nice. She takes me through to a room with a really large table and a number of people sitting having breakfast. Some men and boys, a large number of young women of various ages. There's a spare chair towards the lower end of one side of the table and I sit there. Next to my Auntie Maggie who's presiding over the meal. The girl next to me says she recognises me, remembers me from a little girl. I tell her that the woman next to me is my Auntie Mag, my grandmother Kate's younger sister, Maggie. Someone speaks to Maggie, calling her June – as if this is her real name. June to them, Maggie to me. Maggie doesn't speak to me but I don't sense any hostility – I feel welcome here.

Prior to this I dream I had been preparing my farewells for a number of people (other than this group). I'm going away (for good it seems). I had been making fruit salads with fruit and flowers, and lovely little colourful and artistic touches. It had taken two days, and some anxiety. At one point I saw exactly the salads I wanted readymade but very expensive. Given my anxiety in preparing my own – getting ingredients and preparation, etc – I comment more than once that I probably would have been better off to buy them despite the expense and save myself time and anxiety. Once made the fruit salads were to be gifts for the groups of people – women, two or three – that I am farewelling.

Muktanand comment: Maggie in my dream again. So rare. This is only the second time ever I think, and not since about this time last year.

John comment: Maggie is long deceased. Muktanand didn't connect June to anyone in particular.

Muktanand recognised her day to day emotional weather depended very much on what was being done to her body. Thinking about her liver function tests just caused worry so she had stopped thinking about them. She had decided to live her life "as if" there was reincarnation of essence: she didn't know if that was true but it felt much better. She still felt she would survive but confessed she didn't know.

Recurrence?

On Wednesday 1 October I remembered two dream fragments:

A planet-like, dark secretive mysterious ball is coming towards me/us like a meteorite.

There is a fish inside a fish, a “secondary” fish in a tank of water. I get all messed up trying to get it laid out flat to show the doctors, but they are not cooperative. The secondary fish fills the stomach of the first fish.

I thought the first dream might be about a forthcoming catastrophe. I explained this to Muktanand and asked if she had thought about a strategy if the cancer came back next year. She “did not thank me for raising this”. It was “something she had not even thought of and it made her feel like bursting into tears”. She was “concentrating on getting through the chemotherapy and having a future”. My raising this would cause her to worry for which she did not thank me. I responded the purpose was to have a strategy and then not think about it. She replied she could see few options except for more chemotherapy.

She said a recurrence would require a major lifestyle change, including preparing herself for dying for which she hadn’t done yet. She had tried to grapple with the idea of dying but had been unable to come to terms with it or manage it; it just slipped away.

In the morning she talked to Sakshi about travelling to India in 2004 to see swamiji and her friends in the south. But now “John had thrown a spanner in the works”. In the evening she told me my catastrophe feeling was probably related to finances.

Muktanand Wave Dream

Muktanand recorded the following dream in her diary at 4.15am on 5 October 2003:

The sun is shining, clear blue sky – more lapis than turquoise – a perfect day. The ocean is a brilliant deep blue. The sunlight is golden and the beach richly coloured sand. I am at the beach sitting on a small rock platform that sits above the water, not far from the sand.

Suddenly there is a huge towering wave. It sweeps over me towards the beach and I ride to the top which is just cresting over. Fortunately it does not break and crash down on me. I am lifted by the water – well out of my depth – and swept away.

Wave after wave comes like this, and I find I can’t swim towards the shore. Each wave sweeps me further away from the shore, into deep water and the strong current carries me out and down the beach. Several times I see a wave tipping, but I manage to stay near the top so the waves pass without crushing me down.

After some time I see that there are lots of people in the water in trouble, and a lifeboat has been sent out to rescue them. I have been swept diagonally away from the beach and the lifeboat leaves the beach at right angle to intercept me (and others). It is a regular lifeboat but the lifeboat I attach to myself to is more like a mediaeval boat, or a Viking boat.

I see Kundan striding through the shallow water near the shore, following the boat, looking for me. He is amongst several people trying to rescue the people swept out by the tidal wave but I understand he is really looking for me.

At some point I think, or someone shouts, ‘Can’t you ride a wave in?’ I manage to catch a wave – although not with skill or aplomb – but I manage to ride sufficiently far to bring me near the rescue boat. Then I find I am nearly swept under the boat and to prevent this I brace my legs against the side as I’m pulled through the water. Not in the boat, not even holding onto it really – those in the boat don’t see me – but being swept along into shallow water near the boat or in its wake, braced to prevent myself from going under it.

The mediaeval boat is constructed of mellow coloured timber with black metal bars at the front, back and sides – like bull bars on a car. The wood stands for liver and the iron bars, lungs (iron = air in Traditional Chinese Medicine).

The boat drops me off in shallow water at the beach, where I started before being swept away. But I am disoriented and unsteady on my feet. Also my whole vision is affected, like when you are under water and you don’t know which way is up when you open your eyes. Somehow I sort that out. The water is chest high. I look around and all these people are just swimming around oblivious, as if nothing has happened. I’m confused and can’t orient myself to decide where I must go. I ask directions from a woman swimming with a man nearby. I explain what’s happened – she’s sympathetic and helpful. Then I understand which direction I need to go to get to the beach.

By this time the water is ankle height. I start walking. There’s a transparent barrier in the shallow water that I must cross to get to the beach. As I approach the barrier I see a pair of feet in the sand, and realize they belong to a body buried under wet sand and shallow water. Then I notice a number of partially visible bodies buried this way and realize that a number of people were drowned and buried by these huge waves. But not me.

The barrier is transparent – glass or Perspex – with a chrome steel-metal rail on the sea side. There are a number of young people sitting on the other side, the young men with their backs to me. I try to attract their attention so that I can climb over, but they don’t respond.

So I walk to the left around the barrier and onto the sand. I see Kundan indoors, doing some yoga. As I walk closer I wave and call out, but at first he doesn’t see or hear me. He has two guys with him – they were helping him find me. He’s on a mobile phone. When I walk in the two men leave quickly, before I can thank them. I walk up to Kundan and give him an enthusiastic kiss.

Muktanand comment 5/10/2003: Feelings – The strongest feelings were the lurch of dread/shock when I saw the buried bodies and recognised what they meant. And the fun/joy when I kissed Kundan at the end.

While being swept away I realized I was in serious danger but was not gripped in a strong fear or panic. Alert and clear but not alarmed. I lay half awake after this dream, recalling and

feeling it again. I asked what is the thing that can both rescue me and harm me? That is, what is the rescue boat? The answer came really clearly: the chemotherapy. It was then I thought this dream was about the cancer – I was swept away by this experience ‘from out of the blue’, with each event taking me further out of my depth into deep and dangerous water.

The rescue boat is the chemo, and it has helped me get back to shore even though it's a danger in itself and I have to brace myself so it doesn't kill me. I finally make it, although many people don't – good outcome: kissing K. The swimmers are all those people whose lives go on unaffected. Who cannot comprehend or relate to the cancer experience. All the while the sun is shining – as in last card of Vivian's Tarot card sequence.

Muktanand comment 11/10/2003: I took this dream as a summary of my cancer experience so far, and assumed it meant I would receive good news with the CT scan on 8 October. But I was wrong – the CT scan shows chemo is NOT WORKING. Situation dire. Now at last resort.

The last few days I have been swept into deep emotional waters. I see that the dream was previewing what has and is now occurring. The shock of the result, the tears and grief of realising (again!) that I **really** might die soon. Is the challenge here to hold on to the vision of joy at the end?

The dream was showing me that all I had to do was stay afloat – and that I could stay afloat. And go with the current. I recognized that the current was too strong to fight and I didn't even try. There'll come a point when I have to make an effort – but I do manage to catch the wave despite my lack of confidence.

The chemo so far has been awful – very, very uncomfortable. Mostly just lying in bed, at most sitting up. I have been wondering how I will cope with it every week. Then I looked back to the dream today, and the recognition that I was nearly swept under the boat seems much stronger than I recalled. If the boat is the chemo, the dream is telling me it will be gruelling.

On the other hand I find that I am no longer as freaked out about dying. Not because I'm reconciled, but because – once again – I feel that I will recover: at least enough, or temporarily. Kundan suggested the choice point in my Wave Dream might be a choice between chemo and alternative treatment.

Muktanand discussed the dream with several close friends. The dream showed her being swept off her rock, her solid foundation; swept away, out to sea, all at sea, leaving nothing firm to stand on.

Kathy suggested the waves might represent her fear of dying. Muktanand rejected this because in the dream she had no fear or panic, she was calm and clear. The waves represented emotions: she floated over a succession of waves, floating over deep emotions. She understood this to mean she should work with the fear feelings when they arose, but she shouldn't try and force them by focussing on death.

Kathy thought the point when Muktanand decided to catch a wave was a critical turning point. It required a bit of effort instead of just being passive. Muktanand agreed. Kathy was very clear that the dream was prophetic, it created the future. It was so powerful a process that it would just unfold and Muktanand just had to watch.

Sakshi and I suspected the dream barrier represented the barrier between life and death and said this to her. Kathy also thought it but didn't say anything. Muktanand rejected this

interpretation because in the dream she was still ‘alive’ after the storm. In response to the dream she re-started work on her translation of the Durga Path.

The two guys helping at the end of the dream may have represented her two specialists, the oncologist and the radiologist.

In the following months Muktanand recognised some of the dead bodies on the beach: Jamastami, the former member of the Brisbane Satyananda Ashram who died of a heart attack in November 2003; Jhotiswamiji from BSY; and a friend of a friend of Chandrabindhu, who died on Christmas day after self-medicating her cancer with coffee enemas for ten years.

8 October CT Scan

The news from this scan was certainly dire. The Radiologist reported numerous new hepatic lesions in the right lobe, and pre-existing lesions had increased in size by 80-100%. Clearly the Taxotere had stopped working and the liver cancers were making a comeback.

Muktanand was sick for the whole of the second half of the Taxotere cycle. She had been missing meals and starting to lose weight. Her critical liver enzymes had been trending upwards since August. The oncologist said the symptoms could be due to the cumulative effects of the chemotherapy, or the cancer, or both.

The oncologist made a 16 October appointment for her to commence treatment with a second-line anthracycline drug called Epirubicin. The cancer was “behaving somewhat aggressively and resiliently, at least in the liver” and he conceded it was a difficult situation. Muktanand commented it looked like a last resort.

The oncologist said the mean response rate – the likelihood of the liver tumours responding – was about 50% (Taxotere was 70%). The protocol would be weekly treatments and the effectiveness should be apparent within 2-3 weeks, via liver function tests (LFTs). The most that could be achieved was to stabilise or even shrink the cancers, as long as the treatment kept working. It was unlikely they would go away completely. It was unusual that the lungs were still clear.

Muktanand wept for the next few days. Her mother wept and prayed all Wednesday night when I told her the news.

The scan actually made no difference to the way Muktanand lived her life from day to day. But now she actually had to deal with the possibility of a very shortened future. There was nothing else she wanted or needed to do. She had even begun to accept her life had been okay, letting go of the feeling she had missed out on enjoying life. But she still had flashes of anger that none of her doctors had suggested an earlier mammogram.

It was even more important to complete her translation of the Durga Path because it was the practice to do when all else was lost.

The next day, Thursday, Muktanand was having a lot of difficulty holding the two things together: the grave possibility of dying from the illness, and her feeling she would get better.

She went to see Nina Davies, a Buddhist nun specialising in death and dying issues. Nina counselled she sensed ambivalence in Muktanand about whether she really wanted to get well. Muktanand denied ambivalence but if the therapy wasn't working she wanted to acknowledge she might die.

A birthday card in the hospital pharmacy prompted the thought she would not be here for her next birthday. She couldn't believe what was happening. She wanted to die at home even if it became like a hospital ward. She didn't care whether she was burned or buried.

On Friday I dreamt the war had come sooner than we thought. I looked out the window and saw explosions and bicycles racing by. Someone was announcing "stay inside, stay inside".

* * *

Muktanand recorded the following dream 13 October 2003.

I am working in a hospital with a doctor – some kind of specialist. He was a whiz-kid, inventing some medical device at an early age: around 16. He's been doing well on it since. Now its time to create another invention. He's working on it, and I'm somehow working with him – perhaps as a research assistant. He's demonstrating his machine to other medical staff. It looks complex and impressive, but its aim is to take measurements in such a way that even relatively unqualified staff can read them. I find I can't follow all the details. Others are crowding round, I can't see well. I'm tired.

A woman comes to me – medical staff. She asks for donations to the security fund and leaves me a receipt book. I tell her I am leaving the hospital that night (the end of this day's work is my last). Still I will contribute. When writing a receipt I realize the donation amount is minute – less than I thought – most people giving only \$2000. I have to describe my position. I think of writing 'casual' but write 'temporary' instead. My partner comes to take me home. He notices I'm not finished, how tired I am.

Muktanand comment: Tired of the hospital/medical model. My commitment there 'temporary'. Getting ready to leave behind my commitment and engagement with medical model??

Muktanand told Belinda the most important contribution to her response to the illness had been her yoga perspective. She believed no one who was not already established in their meditation practice would be able to do it while undergoing chemotherapy.

Muktanand spent the day reviewing her relationship with swamiji. His assembly of yoga teachings was invaluable. He had established an organisation to spread yoga as far as possible and arranged through Niranjana to keep it going. She had not liked aspects of his personality and he had thought she was too judgemental. It must have been as difficult for him to relate to her as it was as difficult for her. She had felt let down by him and by the ashram. But these difficulties didn't seem to matter anymore. She wanted to acknowledge him for the things he had done, rather than the things he hadn't. She wanted to give him the deep respect he deserved. She would dedicate her translation of the Durga Path to him.

Country Cottage

Muktanand had always had a dream about moving to a country cottage. In October 2003 Muktanand and I purchased a house in Palmwoods on the Sunshine Coast. On 19 October Muktanand remembered she previously dreamt about a country cottage and the dream seemed to relate to the Palmwoods purchase. Here is her dream from 9 July 2002, and her October commentary:

John and I are moving to my grandmother's place in the country. My mother's mother – maternal (not paternal) grandmother. I see my grandmother as I knew her when I was a child. Tall, overweight, grey hair almost white pulled back in a bun. Rimless glasses, floral dress and apron. She looks relatively young though, healthy and happy – she's actually smiling and looking relaxed (unlike my memories from childhood).

The area where she lives has a number of houses on large blocks, and most houses are built north-south. They are long and narrow and set in the middle of the rectangular blocks. My grandmother's house is built east-west so that it bisects the block and there are huge gardens in front and behind. I see an overview, like an aerial view of the blocks. A pattern of rectangles. My grandmother's house in the middle of the pattern.

Scenes of wild forest, blue gas escaping – imps, devil's gas. Blue flames of natural gas from the ground around horse's feet. I don't see much of the house itself. There is an outside shower. A wooden door apparently leads to a wooden sauna (like Europe) at the back. I see another over-view of this place. Squares in a kind of chequerboard pattern, round bushes at the corners of each square. I realize I could take a shortcut by sliding across this 'board' diagonally – like skating.

Muktanand comment: The aerial image with the houses built north-south on large rectangular blocks was one of the strongest impressions of the dream. Today I recognise it as a preview of the place at Palmwoods John and I have recently purchased. The layout of the aerial view in the dream is very similar to the map showing the divisions of the blocks in the area. The house at Palmwoods is oriented east-west, with long north and south walls facing huge areas of bush in front and back. When I read the dream to John today, he immediately recognised Palmwoods.

It's amazing to realize that I dreamed this place more than a year ago. I recalled this dream today in connection with the issue of trusting my dreams, living from that dimension of myself from which dreams come.

My real grandmother did not live in the country. She lived directly under the flight path near Mascot airport. This is a figure of the archetypal granny – nurturing, wise, a symbol of homely comfort. She looks younger and more relaxed than my childhood memories – granny at her best (she never let us call her gran or granny).

Trying to get close to this symbol. I have never been close to this grandmother, and have never dreamed of her before. I realize she stands for family and connection. Her home was where all the dozens of grandchildren met and played, where all the aunts and uncles came. Perhaps she represents the possibility of a 'family' or small community of friends, which is part of my vision for acreage in the country.

There is a shed on the Palmwoods property that could be converted to a studio. I have played with the idea of installing a shower on the outside, as a way to make it self-contained.

When we purchased, it was with the idea that we would rent the house for some time to defray costs. There is a possible reference in the dream to ways of arranging for several people to live on the property in community but with lots of flexibility and autonomy.

October 2003 Chemotherapy

Muktanand commenced treatment with her second chemotherapy drug, Epirubicin, on Thursday 16 October. Epirubicin is one of the red anthracycline antibiotic groups of chemotherapy drugs. The oncologist said the anthracyclines and the taxans were the two most effective groups of chemotherapy drugs.

Muktanand's first chemotherapy drug, Taxotere, was one of the Taxan group, derived from the bark and needles of the European yew tree, *Taxus brevifolia*. Taxotere inhibited cancer cell growth by damaging the microtubules – vital structures involved in cell division – essentially freezing the cancer cell's internal skeleton. Although the precise mechanism was unknown, Epirubicin and the other anthracyclines stopped cancer cells from dividing by deforming the cell's DNA structure and scrambling the subsequent synthesis of DNA and RNA. Although the two drugs preferentially targeted cancer cells because they were the fastest growing – and therefore fastest dividing – cells in the body, the action of the two drugs was thus very different. Mackintosh started Muktanand on Taxotere because research showed it was usually more effective with liver cancers.

On Friday 17 October I dreamt I was trying to talk to a specialist in radioactive rocks. I saw him outside a building and followed him inside, carrying two specimens of uranium ore in my pockets. I followed him into his lab where I lay the specimens on the bench and succeeded in getting his attention. When I woke up I thought “why not radiotherapy to the liver?” Muktanand initially framed this in terms of my recent visit to a gastroenterologist but changed her mind later.

Muktanand was suffering from constant nausea and stomach pain, although these eased at night and she normally slept well. During the day she could do little except lie around on her bed. She managed the pain with panadol and the nausea with cannabis and Zofran - a prescribed anti-nausea drug. Her stomach had swollen and felt quite hard; she looked as if she was pregnant.

The increasing pain and swelling in Muktanand's abdomen prompted an emergency consultation with her oncologist on Sunday 26 October. He ordered another CT scan to exclude the presence of fluid (asciites). The scan confirmed his diagnosis that the symptoms were due to her swollen liver. The radiologist reported “innumerable liver metastases with doubling of diameter since the previous examination three weeks ago”. The oncologist was surprised at the rapidity of the spread of the liver cancers, but advised Muktanand to press on with the chemotherapy. He would only know if it was working after 4-6 treatments.

I asked the oncologist if it was true that chemotherapy drugs worked by targeting the fastest growing cells in the body. He said yes, essentially. I said it seemed to me then that the chemotherapy process was basically exerting a Darwinian survival-of-the-fittest pressure on the cancer cells (or organism), selecting for the fastest growing cancer cells over the slower ones. The end result was a faster reproducing or more “aggressive” cancer.

The oncologist said this might be partly true, but I think he was just being polite. He said rather that the cancer “develops resistance”, which is what he said a number of times. When I pressed him he said it was all to do with the DNA. When I asked him if there were any chemotherapy drugs that worked by targeting biochemical mechanisms instead of cell division he said they all worked by targeting cell division. He cut short the discussion. I was seeking an explanation for the incredible explosion in the number of cancer secondaries during the chemotherapy, given the much slower rate of growth beforehand.

Muktanand had her third Epirubicin treatment on 30 October. She also had a consultation with her radiation oncologist to ask about liver radiation. He said when the whole liver was irradiated the dosage had to be kept low to avoid permanent damage to normal liver cells, but this meant the dosage was usually too low to have a strong effect on the cancers. However, some people showed a good response. He confirmed that it was possible to irradiate one lobe of the liver at a time, leaving the other lobe to carry on normal functions. When this was done it was OK to use a high dose of radiation because the normal liver cells would eventually regenerate. However, the procedure would potentially generate a lot of nausea and there was no guarantee it would work. It was up to her and he certainly wouldn't be pressing her to do it.

Muktanand admitted her liver condition was pretty scary and the information from CT scans, blood tests and clinical examination showed a grim picture. Despite this she remained in good spirits generally. Partly this was due to her natural tendency to believe in survival and partly because there were no signs of cancer anywhere else in the body. But also because she saw the metaphorical information from dreams, readings, feelings and so on, as positive. The illness was a wonderful training for keeping her attention focussed in the present.

In fact, one of the most remarkable features of Muktanand's illness was the recurrence of strong positive dreams just before or after news that the cancer was gaining the upper hand. The consistent message of these dreams was that after considerable pain and suffering Muktanand would graduate into joy, light and love. She believed there was “a very strong hint” that she would live but if she didn't, she would settle for the rest.

On 30 October Muktanand dreamt she was travelling with swamiji. Her relationship with him felt much easier than before. He was travelling somewhere with his current consort, the swami of the year who got to spend a year with swamiji! When I commented her swamiji dreams always seemed to involve travelling she joked she might soon be going on the ultimate journey.

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On 4-5 November I experienced spontaneous images of white light “pouring” into Muktanand. She was “surrounded” by and “attracting” white light. Muktanand said she hoped it was not angelic light because she wanted healing light! Kathy had tried sending her golden light but it didn't work so she sent green light instead.

The following is a fragment of a conversation with Michele Boyle, who was visiting on Sunday 16 November 2003:

Michele: They always say you spend the rest of your life trying to replace your first yoga teacher. I never believed Muktanand was going to die until John's last email raised it as a

distinct possibility. My deep down intuition – I don't think its denial - is that Muktanand will live.

Muktanand to Michele: Please hang on to that!!

Muktanand to John, after Michele left: I don't want to be too controlling if people come. It may well be the last time I see them.

More Bad News

On Thursday 13 November Muktanand attended the Mater haematology/oncology clinic hoping for some good news. Unfortunately, the blood tests showed her liver enzymes had climbed sky high, and she was hovering on the verge of liver failure.

Her oncologist favoured continuing with the Epirubicin even though he conceded that the cancer was progressing. He said another dose would prove conclusively one way or the other whether it was working. Alternatively she could start another chemotherapy drug, Navelbine. Navelbine was a member of the third class of chemotherapy drugs; he was clearly going down a list of diminishing effectiveness.

Muktanand and I thought it was quite conclusive that the Epirubicin wasn't working. Muktanand was so sick that she could hardly eat and dehydration was becoming an issue. The oncologist raised quality of life as an issue, the first time he had done this. He offered Muktanand a consultation with a palliative care specialist which she declined.

After a consultation with the radiation specialist Muktanand decided to cease all chemotherapy and proceed with radiation. The radiotherapist said he would target the whole of the liver because Muktanand's tiny tumours were spread throughout. The usual protocol involved an initial burst of low dose radiation accompanied by a high dose of dexamethasone (8-12mg) to reduce the oedema around the little tumours. If the response was positive – that is, if the tumours shrunk – this could be followed up with a consolidating dose of radiation about two weeks later. He said that because the radiation dose would be very carefully calibrated to avoid damaging her normal liver cells, the chances of it working were not very good – he thought about 30%.

Muktanand was very, very touched at this time to know that she was the focus of so many people's love and concern.

Muktanand dream, Saturday 22 November 2003.

I am in Stan Foote's house except it has many more rooms than I imagined. All parts of the house have a view of the garden which is 450 years old. A very large bedroom and another large room have plate glass walls overlooking the garden, but very heavy 1930's style dark oak furniture is blocking the view. Plus the furniture is all arranged the wrong way around. It's a fantastic house and I wonder why I never saw it before. But it's very dirty and needs a good clean. I say to Alakh (who I can't see) why can't you and Tapas spend some money on cleaning it up? But it's not my house and I can't force them. I go into the garden, there is a narrow path on the side of a hill or slope which goes past a pit six feet deep. The pit is round with a round clay mound on it, and a black snake moving its head. I avoid the pit and go out through the garden

onto the main road; it's like the South Bank Arts Gallery complex with the road bridge overhead. I look back and can see the gate into the garden.

Muktanand comment: I don't know what it means but its concerning that it's Stan's house and he is dead. Wood equals liver in Tibetan medicine. Does it mean liver blocking the view into the garden? That the liver has got everything the wrong way around?

We had started taking steps to obtain Tibetan medicine [see more detailed account two pages on]. On the same night Muktanand dreamed she was visiting Stan Foote's house, I dreamed we were visiting a house in north India:

Muktanand and I go to a house in Dharamsala to see a Tibetan monk or teacher. We go and sit on cushions on the floor with some other Westerners, typically 'Indian wallah' types. Junior monks bring the teacher down the stairs but it is apparent that he is giggling. The satsang is cancelled and we go away. The house was of wooden construction with at least two stories and appeared to be what I imagine a Dharamsala house would be. There was no special feeling of disappointment, more curiosity.

John comment: The possible message – which I am resisting – is that we came away empty-handed, that is, no medicine is available from Dharamsala.

Palliative Radiation

On Friday 28 November Muktanand attended the Queensland Radium Institute for a palliative dose of radiation – one fraction – accompanied by a big 8mg dose of dexamethasone.

Muktanand's mother and sister visited from 18-22 November and on 23-24 November we also had a visit from Dr Sundar, an old yoga friend from Bangalore in South India. However, Muktanand had a very limited capacity for visitors.

Some friends asked if Muktanand would qualify for a liver transplant, but the oncologist confirmed that liver transplants are not offered to cancer patients because the cancer tends to re-establish itself in the transplanted organ. In any case Muktanand had ruled it out: there had to be a point beyond which you let go, a liver transplant was one example. Despite what Muktanand called her "grim" situation, she remained calm and positive.

"I am very aware of how much love has been coming to me, particularly in the last few weeks. Without the wave dream I would've gone to pieces."

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In early December Muktanand acknowledged her gross oedema and thin arms meant she could go at any moment. "All I can do now is hang onto the dream. Thoughts come but I don't follow them up (or down). I wonder how close I can get to death without dying?"

She wondered whether she was bluffing herself with a wrong interpretation of the dream. On the other hand she thought bluffing was probably a good way to handle it. The dream was a

buffer against indulging negative thoughts. Kathy thought it was “beautiful there was a part of Muktanand that loved her enough to give her that dream.” Muktanand agreed it came from “the part of her who knows”, her awakened or enlightened self. She could deal with the dying issues when they came.

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The results of the first palliative dose of radiation were mixed but, according to the radiation oncologist, sufficiently encouraging to proceed with a second treatment on 12 December.

When we attended the Queensland Radium Institute, Muktanand commented the stainless steel railings in the QRI lift were very similar to the steel in her wave dream lifeboat. Her bracing against the lifeboat thus symbolised two things, the radiotherapy and bracing for massage. (Around this time Sakshi, myself and Anandapoorna had started massaging Muktanand to manage the fluid retention in her legs.)

Muktanand interpreted her situation in terms of the wave dream:

“I am bracing against the Viking boat with the steel bands, trying to stop going under, trying to stop drowning: drowning in fluid retention?”

The medical oncologist had always said the LDH liver enzyme was the critical indicator of cancer activity. This dived from a high of 2006 on 3 December to 500-odd on 2 January. On this measure the direct radiation to the liver had reduced cancer activity by three quarters.

December 2003 Consultation

Muktanand saw her personal doctor on Wednesday 17 December. She told him she’d had a very positive dream before the Taxotere chemotherapy ended. “It was horrific but there was a lot of love and light at the end”. The dream sustained her; she “hadn’t given up hoping for a miracle.” Her doctor responded that miracles could occur.

The mammogram issue came up: why hadn’t she been referred for a mammogram earlier? The doctor explained there was a huge debate about the merits of early mammography, with the statistics shifting in favour of the camp that said it made no difference to the survival rate.

He was the first doctor to diagnose her bone cancer, despite her consultations with several breast cancer specialists. On this occasion he expressed concern about her white clothes, saying white was a funeral colour in Eastern societies. The white shawl that Muktanand was wearing was one of her favourite shawls.

Tibetan Medicine

Muktanand commenced taking Tibetan Precious Pills on Sunday 21 December 2003. The story of how this came about is as follows.

On 20 November 2003 Muktanand spoke by phone with Dr Nida Chenagtsang, a Tibetan trained in traditional Tibetan medicine, who was visiting the Gold Coast. After she explained

her situation he told her a “rare Tibetan liver mineral treatment” would be best for her. He said concurrent Traditional Chinese Medicine was okay, but she should take no other chemotherapy or mineral treatment. The “Precious Pills” he prescribed were normally taken once a month – as the Dalai Lama did – but he prescribed one daily.

Muktanand had seen Dr Nida for a brief consultation on his previous visit to Brisbane in October 2001. On that occasion he had diagnosed an ‘inflammatory process’ in her left shoulder blade, the same place a later CT scan revealed cancer. He prescribed some Tibetan medicine but Muktanand was unsuccessful in obtaining it. On the night she spoke to him by phone, Muktanand dreamt that Dr Nida came to her and apologised for not diagnosing her liver cancer. In the dream she assured him she didn’t blame him.

Dr Nida was based in the Medical Department of the Shang Shung Institute of Tibetan Cultural Studies in Italy, under the direction of the Lama Namkhai Norbu. The first batch of pills was obtained from Italy via a loan from Chandrabindhu’s husband Bob, who had also been prescribed them.

The pills are very hard and dense and come wrapped in turquoise coloured silk. They are taken first thing in the morning after soaking in boiling water overnight. In the Tibetan and Chinese traditional medicine systems they are very ‘cold’, and hard to digest. The precious pills are also known as ‘Old Turquoise’. One of the reasons Muktanand was attracted to them was because she had dreamt “lots of dreams with turquoise blue in them”. They were her last hope of an effective treatment.

Before the pills arrived in the post she wondered whether their importation from India had been stopped by Therapeutic Goods Administration, represented by the dream barrier in her October wave dream. In a similar vein she speculated that the helpful woman and man in the wave dream represented Chandrabindhu and her husband Bob. She was now convinced the mediaeval lifeboat in the dream represented Tibetan medicine, rather than chemotherapy.

Krishnaswami obtained more pills for her from the Tibetan Medical Institute in Dharamsala. She kept taking this medication until Wednesday 11 February 2004, when she vomited up the last one.

* * *

Muktanand received some lovely presents for Christmas including particularly a silver torque with a turquoise pendant, a beautiful turquoise hand-made silk dress, two gorgeous off-the-rack “pregnancy” dresses, and a bedspread and pillowslip set covered with dancing baby elephants.

January Conversations

The day after the New Year started I said I needed to do her Will. After a long pause she answered “do it before I get worse?” I said yes, while you are still clear. She said “wait until I get better”.

I apologised for my omissions and commissions. Muktanand felt there was no need for any

apology for anything. We'd been together a long, long time and whatever happened in the past, now we were here. "Despite the discomfort, I feel really happy and sometimes really blissed out. This is the first time in my life I am saying that. I don't think about the past; I am consumed by the present."

Because Muktanand was still giving directions about work needed in the garden I thought she must be alright. On Saturday 11 January I had another snake dream in which Muktanand and I went looking for snakes in the 'deeper channels' protected by thigh-high boots, gloves, protective vests and masks. When I woke up I thought I must do everything possible, everything protective, full-body protection, to prevent snake bites.

Muktanand noticed for the first time that she now looked yellow all over – jaundice. Whatever happened, happened. "For the first time in my life I'm able to indulge my princess complex and have people ready to perform at every request. But I'm a princess with a bad liver."

"It's becoming harder to hold onto the idea of recovery, but I'm buffered by the wave dream and by other people's optimism and my own optimism. However, it may take a long time to recover. The frequency of the weekly blood test results makes it harder."

Victor Visit

Victor Von Der Heyde visited Muktanand on 14 January 2004:

What stands out in my memory the January visit with Muktanand is much more how she was in spirit rather than what she said. I remember saying to someone afterwards that it felt like darshan. She was so at ease and in the moment and I can remember her saying how she had an open mind about what the future held. It all seemed consistent with a very light identification with the body/mind. Apart from talking about what was happening to her physically and things around (like her appreciation of the dancing baby elephants) we talked about my blood problems and she also suggested Gary Deed to me (who I have been seeing and who has found through hair analysis that I have a too high level of lead in my body - which I'm now in the process of trying to leach out). Right now I can't remember what Muktanand said when I asked about learnings/what she had learnt, but in a way the response was more in how she was than in what she said. One of the things that really struck me was when she talked about letting go, and in particular letting go of the wish to do some work - even small work – in the garden just outside her window. It looked so close to me and seemed such a small thing to want. I had the sense that this was one little "letting go" which followed in the wake of a long line of other bigger (and probably also small) "letting go's". That in itself gave me some sense of what the journey was like. Stay well, Victor

Muktanand had been expecting a question about what she had learned from her illness. She told Victor that although everyone knew the dictum about living in the present, that's what she was now experiencing. The illness was totally consuming, and she only thought day to day, not about the future or the past. She was living very intensely. She was generally happy. She was really enjoying her food, and she enjoyed the house and its outlook, especially in the early morning. She found herself using words about food such as 'heavenly', 'delectable' and 'delicious'.

During January my sister Judy was able to stay and provide support for Muktanand and myself. Muktanand was very comfortable with Judy. The piece that follows is in memory of

this time.

MUKTANAND

M mantra / meditation / memorable / merry / meticulous / ‘mountaineer’

U understanding / unique / uplifting

K karma / keystone / kindness

T teacher / tenacious / tolerant / tranquil / transcendental / trustworthy

A accepting / admirable / affectionate / alive / apostolic

N natural / necessary / nice

A accomplished / adventurous / agile / amazing / aware

N nimble / noble / nurturing

D dainty / dear / decisive / dedicated / delightful / disciplined / dynamic

Judy Fitzgerald

Christina’s Dream

Christina Burford, a long term student and yoga teacher graduate of Muktanand’s, had the following dream at daybreak on 18 January 2004. Chris lives at Redcliffe.

The dream seemed to start at a social outing. I was sitting down and Muktanand was behind me playing with my hair. I looked up at her and she said ‘I’ve just realised how pretty you are’. On the wall was a picture of me as a teenager at my Grandmother’s wedding.

The scene changed and suddenly I knew Muktanand was much sicker ... then she was dead, lying very peacefully on a ceremonial table. Her head was tilted back with a roll of cloth (blue and white I think) under her neck. There were many monks and Christian priests of Old (hand-woven garb with sash around the middle) around her body. I asked a wise man with a white beard what they were doing, he said they were preparing herbs and concoctions to help release Muktanand’s soul into a higher plane. I felt pleased about this.

Suddenly I woke up and thought Muktanand is dead. I looked out of the window – the sky was blue after many days of rain. I felt the newness and freshness of daybreak. Then I heard Muktanand say ‘Enjoy!’ Actually I FELT the whole meaning of what she meant by Enjoy! I felt a release from my concerns about her suffering and death.

After Muktanand died I found this poem she had written at Rosary Crescent “around 6am” on the same date as Christina’s dream:

BEING HERE

my reward
for getting up early
the first sunlight
gilding the gums
blue sky and fragrant air
washed clean by days of rain;
the quiet, the birds
that spurt of joy!

Christina comment (later): In the weeks leading up to the dream of Muktanand on 18 February, I had been thinking a great deal about her and her illness. I was worried about her pain and state of mind and wondered if anything could be done to help.

The day after the dream I phoned to check if Muktanand was alive and then on a logical level decided the dream had come to release me from the pattern of anxiety I’d had.

On a spiritual level the hearing of Muktanand’s voice saying “ENJOY” while I was very awake, had a multilayered effect. At first it (the feeling and the word) would come at certain times, often to do with nature, a feeling of stillness and appreciation. I interpreted it as – enjoy all the beauty and opportunity there is in each day.

Now I feel it is a distillation of many of the lessons I’ve had from Muktanand into one truth: each moment contains the divine – within us, around us, everywhere. Through the sound of Muktanand’s voice and the feeling that came with it I have felt encouraged to connect with the divine.

On the day of Muktanand’s funeral I heard her poem “Being Here” and felt shock that on that same morning (the 18th) somehow our experiences were connected.

This is one of the many gifts Muktanand has given me. I continue to feel her support when I teach yoga. She taught us as teachers we could ‘call upon those who have gone before and ask them for support’. In some way her energy is still available – in times of need or in special moments, there is a sense of sharing. Muktanand, love always.

* * *

Muktanand refused to believe she was dying and we both thought she could make it through. For example, the medical evidence showed that her lung cancers and bone cancers had both been successfully treated, and (in January) her liver enzymes had stabilised after the liver cancer indices had substantially reduced. In addition, she had been taking Tibetan Precious Pills since Christmas 2003, and there were various indications that these might work.

Despite the difficulties with the ascetics, Muktanand had a good January. With the help of her yogic chef, Chandrabindhu, she experimented with different foods and discovered new tastes she thought were wonderful, probably for the first time in her life – she had never been a food gourmet. She loved being at home with her Durga paintings and Tara statues and the little breezes we enjoyed because of our position. She maintained a daily meditation practice. She reported being happy much of the time and sometimes “blissed out”.

CHAPTER 7

TRANSITION

In the tradition, particularly in Tantra but in yoga generally, there is a strong emphasis on transitions, as times of power and times that are very fruitful and potent for practice. For example, we are advised to begin our practice in the twilight zone between night time and daytime. That time before and around sunrise. The other times that are recommended for practice are just before sunset, and in the middle of the night. These transition times have been recommended because things are in flux, they are less rigid, and in these situations it's possible to effect a change. In the re-formation of circumstances to gain an insight that we might not have had. It is possible for us to put the facts together differently, so that we develop that wider vision that is wisdom.

Muktanand, World Yoga Convention, Sydney 1996

John Ransley dream, late January 2004:

Alan Connolly, a friend I have known since high school, says to me quite forcefully "Let's face it, John, she's dying!" I answer "Yes, I know". He says 'Well, bloody good!' I hadn't seen or spoken to this friend for years. I realised I must have incorporated him into my consciousness as the voice of "brutal reality".

Muktanand's aspartates started to increase in the last week of January. Her LDH liver enzyme – the main indicator of cancer activity – remained level until 2 February, after which it started to rise. Her total bilirubin – the main indicator of liver failure – had also plateaued through January but rose quite markedly in the last week.

The direct radiation to the liver had been successful in suppressing the liver cancers temporarily, but they were making a comeback. Nor was her liver able to recover its function, the result of the accumulated insults from the cancer, chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

On Australia Day, 26 January, she said "I'm pretty close to dying aren't I?" I said yes, you're walking on the edge. "Yet I don't feel I'm dying." I said neither do I, but objectively it's pretty dicey. The feeling is the best guide though. "If I die, I die. I guess it'll become increasingly apparent if it's going to happen. But it would be nice if it didn't. I can only believe in the dream."

On 2 February Muktanand insisted on attending Jiang Man's clinic on the north side for an acupuncture treatment, despite the difficulties with her very swollen abdomen. Jiang gave her a new energy liver formula to reduce fluid. The next day Muktanand explained to Anandapoorna that beds in the Mt Olivet hospice were reserved for people very advanced in

illness. She did not believe she fitted that category.

* * *

Gabrielle Huggett had these dreams in January and early February 2004:

The first one was about her illness - I remember feeling she was really bad and I was really distressed and felt the urgent need to contact her. In my dream however she was set free of the disease - got over it. At the time I did wonder if this freedom was not death so I was reluctant to write to her about it. I remember waking in the morning stunned and alerted that she was really sick but going to get over the illness.

The second dream was at her funeral at the cemetery. Muktanand was there sipping a bottle of water at her own funeral, looking quite casual and relaxed. There were train tracks on the ground. The train tracks were weird in the sense that they were 'going/heading nowhere' and 'not attached to the ground'. They were 'loose' if you like, free. There was a fire and we kept trying to put it out, however it kept re-igniting by itself. My sense of the train tracks was that Muktanand wasn't going anywhere, she was still around. The train tracks being free - she was free. She was not attached to the ground - not attached to the physical realm, not attached anymore. My feeling in this dream was one of surprise that she was there, but also that it was a lovely ritual at the cemetery.

Gabrielle comment: I had these two very strong dreams about 2 weeks before Muktanand died; hence I sent her the card at the very end of January. I did the dream workshop with her years ago and remember she said early morning dreams were the important ones. These dreams were both in the early morning, the first around 14 January, the second in very early February.

Muktanand too had dreams about trains. In May 2003, for example, she dreamed she was packing clothes to go on a train journey.

On the evening of Friday 30 January, I went to bed asking a question about Muktanand's ascites. At 5.45am the following morning I dreamed about the 'legs up' position, resting with legs up against the wall. Just before waking there was an image of boiling kidney bean soup. Muktanand thought the boiling was a reference to her Chinese herbs. The kidney beans were vegetarian but also a pun on 'full of beans'. Muktanand's chef, Chandrabindhu, went home and prepared some delicious bean soup.

February 2004

On Wednesday 4 February Muktanand attended the hospital for her first and only *paracentesis* – ascites drainage. The radiologist guessed there was about 4-5 litres pooled in her peritoneal cavity. It took about an hour to drain the 3 litres they could comfortably extract. Afterwards Muktanand reported considerable improvements in her breathing, appetite, body temperature, and mobility, all the result of removing the compressive effect of the ascites.

A Mt Olivet nurse visited on Thursday afternoon. After she left I offered to arrange a

forward health directive for Muktanand. Muktanand said this was OK but she didn't think it would be needed. I said she was very vulnerable – more than most people – and she could go down if for example she had a fall. I said I must do her Will. She replied “They all think I'm going but I don't have to believe them”.

On Friday Muktanand had just taken her first cannabis for the day at 6.30am. She sang the little kirtan that Indian sadhus sang when they smoked their bongos: “*Bom Bom, Bom Bom, Maha Deva*” or “*Bom Bom, Bom Bom, Bom Shanka*”. Shanka is Lord Shiva.

Muktanand was too sick to see her doctor, so I went instead. I gave him an update on how she was and he described a Chinese herbal formula for liver failure and a Ukrainian herb for liver cancer. When I told him Muktanand did not see herself as dying, just living with a serious illness, he was clearly alarmed but didn't say anything.

In the evening Muktanand reported she was getting a mid-chest catch in her airways passage, but she thought it might be due to smoke irritation. The next day Muktanand managed to clear her chest wheeze with Neti. She felt like she needed oxygen all the time now.

The beneficial effects of the ascites drainage seemed to peak on Sunday. On Sunday afternoon Muktanand pottered around her room listening to music, which demonstrated “a huge improvement in my emotional tone; sometimes I can't stand to listen to all that emotion”.

Vivian Jacquin sent this dream from France:

I had a dream about Muktanand. In my dream Muktanand gave Gabrielle a book she wrote and told her that this was her heritage, her will and treasure for her. Muktanand was in a large and strong halo of light and said to Gabrielle to take care of it and to transmit it to those who only would be able to understand. I woke up and felt the presence of Muktanand near our bed.

Monday 9 February

On Monday 9 February Muktanand dictated this reply to Vivian:

Dear Vivian & Gabrielle

Thank you for telling me about your amazing dream. It is very precious that you dream for me, and your dreams are always sustaining. I'm not sure which book your dream refers to, but before I began the chemotherapy, I had the idea for a book that's not the usual yoga text book. A friend and I planned to do a limited edition of hand-made copies and to give these to dear friends. Of course there was always going to be one for you both. I've had to stop work on it for several months but hope to resume when I start to feel a bit better. I think of you a lot and I wonder how all your plans are progressing.
Love to you both, Muktanand (dictated to John)

Muktanand's book idea was a translation of the Durga Path. In the course of drafting the above reply, she reaffirmed she still trusted her Wave dream. In the end she would get back to the beach, on solid ground even though it was a beach, and get back to me. We discussed again the issue of getting in extra carers, but she trusted that everything she needed would come to her, and to me too.

In the afternoon Muktanand got a bit upset when I passed on the blood test results for that morning. All of the critical indices were significantly higher, for the first time since the New Year. [The specialist said the liver cancer was probably making a comeback, but I didn't pass this on to Muktanand.] Muktanand commented she just had to have faith. What she was most afraid of was suffering more pain and discomfort. She acknowledged she might be in denial, but she was relying on us to tell her if she was. I told her it was up to her, she knew best, and neither of us felt she was going – she agreed with this.

Later I said to Muktanand the medical people [Mt Olivet nurses] all think you're just going to go to sleep. She agreed they thought it was just a matter of time. We just had to have faith in a solution. I said "But we should also remain open". She: "Oh yeah, always open and will say if it comes down to it".

Later again, Muktanand remembered Kathy's comment that the Wave dream came from some part of her that wanted to protect her from suffering as she went through this process. She wanted us to spend more time together when she wasn't sick. She successfully cleared her chest wheeze again with Neti.

Tsunami Dream

I wrote the following dream at 4.20am on Tuesday 10 February:

A group of us or just various people are sitting on a rocky platform overlooking the sea. Someone is complaining about how difficult it was to get to this possie, or perhaps complaining how difficult it was going to be getting back. I look up out at the sea and amongst the normal rough waves I see a huge tidal wave coming towards us. I swear and jump up and start running back to safety. Others run directly back but I think that it may not be enough to run back along the rocks or the rocky platform, and so I veer off left and run, climb and scramble up the cliff face. I think maybe I should take my shoes or heavy leather boots off and climb bare-footed and quicker with better purchase, but I decide there is not enough time. I successfully reach the top and run back into an area that is built up, like a suburban area. I look for a wooden telegraph pole or similar structures such as wood or metal posts to grab and wrap myself around so I won't get washed away. Other people are running around too. The big wave however passes by below, I am not washed away and the people in this area are left unscathed. I go looking for Muktanand – she wasn't amongst the group sitting on the rocks. I don't have any sense of what happened to the others who ran away along the rocky platform (like a bench structure) and it seems as if I was the only person who scrambled up the cliff.

John comment: Before going to sleep the night before I had asked for a dream on the situation. I interpret the tidal wave as a metaphor for Muktanand's passing. The dream also seems to cross reference Muktanand's own 'Wave Dream' of 5 October 2003. When I described it to Muktanand she was most concerned to identify the feeling at the end.

* * *

Muktanand was finding it very hard to breath, even with continuous oxygen. She couldn't cope with a shower, and Kathy did the damp cloth thing.

At 9.20am there was a mini-crisis when I couldn't lift Muktanand out of a low chair (I have a severe low back disability that limits my lifting to 10kg). On Sunday Muktanand had been doing all her transfers by herself, but now she could no longer contribute any pushing. When I was phoning Kathy to come back and help, I described Muktanand as a "dead weight".

After breakfast I was cleaning Muktanand's cannabis pipe while Kathy was helping her settle on the bed. Suddenly I said "ashes to ashes, dust to dust". Just like that, the words just tumbled out of me. Neither Muktanand nor Kathy said anything but after a couple of minutes I said "I can't believe I said that". Both of them laughed. Muktanand said it reminded her that her deceased father – a Catholic - used to say:

Ashes to ashes,
dust to dust,
if God won't take you
the Devil must!

Later that day Muktanand said to me it was a spiritual training for both of us. I said you mean detaching from the body? She said no, no, she meant being in the process; it took up the whole day, for me as well as for her.

Rosemary McBride had the following dream on Tuesday night while she was still in Ireland. Rosemary wasn't a close friend of Muktanand, but has long been a very good friend of Kathy Turner:

Kathy Turner is going around Brisbane organising a funeral. I keep asking and asking whose funeral. I know it's not Zalehah (Kathy's daughter). I think it is a mother who has died, but I know Kathy's mother is already dead.

Wednesday 11 February

About 9.30am I spoke to Muktanand about the possibility of her succumbing to her illness. She replied she didn't feel like she was dying but she knew it was very grim. She needed oxygen all the time, but even with oxygen, her heart pounded and she felt breathless whenever she moved.

She didn't care whether she was burnt or buried but said a local grave might be nice for me. If she died she wanted to stay in the house for as long as possible, at least for a few hours after. I told her Mt Olivet had said they could come if this happened and it would be fine to keep her here. We both shed a few tears. She offered to be admitted to hospital but I said her wish to stay at home would be honoured even if she became incontinent. She joked 'there were always blueys' (incontinence pads).

At 6pm Samadhi phoned from Tasmania to say she hadn't been able to get Muktanand out of her head for the last 2-3 days – she thought she must be very ill.

On Wednesday evening I emailed Premshakti and Bhimiratna that Muktanand was extremely ill.

Thursday 12 February, Morning

Muktanand signed her new Will about 7.30am, with Kathy and Anandapoorna as witnesses. Muktanand had decided on most of it in October, but it had been very difficult to finalise. She was always saying there was no hurry, and it seemed as if there was a psychological barrier blocking me from doing it. By the time she came to sign the Will, she had difficulty writing.

This day was the first day she did not take her Tibetan precious pill tea. The day before she had vomited it up.

Muktanand also decided against a second ascites drainage, given that the first one had only relieved her symptoms for a couple of days (instead of a week to a month as suggested by Mt Olivet).

I asked Muktanand for permission to phone Trish and Eleanor to come to Brisbane. She agreed reluctantly but was upset. When talking to Eleanor I should refrain from using the term 'liver failure', because this had freaked Eleanor when she talked to her on Monday. She had told Eleanor it was a technical term. I could tell Eleanor Muktanand's situation was temporary until she improved. I could, however, use 'liver failure' in my next email bulletin about her illness.

Given Muktanand's reluctance, I refrained from phoning Trish immediately. Sometime later both Kathy and Anandapoorna told me Muktanand had found this conversation a shock because she didn't think she was dying. For her, asking her mother to come to her bedside was equivalent of me saying her death was imminent.

Chris Mcanelly, the Mt Olivet nurse, came at 9.45am and asked Muktanand how she saw where she was in the illness. Muktanand said she was very tired and had deteriorated considerably, although when she was sitting up she was almost OK. She was not keen to have another ascites drainage, although she wanted to keep the option open. Chris said another tap could increase swelling in her arms and legs due to low blood protein. It might deliver a reduction in her ascites for a day or two, but that's all.

Muktanand complained her ears were blocked and it was driving her nuts! Chris said increased fluid in the Eustachian tubes was a very common side effect of oedema, but there was no medical explanation and no cure.

Muktanand said she could breathe more easily reclining, but when Chris offered to organise an electric bed she thought this was a bit extreme. Chris said she would organise it anyway. Muktanand said she could no longer walk to the toilet unassisted, and was having great difficulty doing transfers (from bed to chair to standing). Also she could hardly eat anything: Chris said the cancer released hormones that suppressed appetite.

Muktanand wondered how safe it was to go to 24 hour oxygen. Chris advised using the oxygen concentrator as much as possible, it increased the oxygen level but not to 100 percent.

Because of her breathing difficulties Muktanand was finding it more difficult to take cannabis, but she still found it very beneficial.

Chris said she wanted to focus on how to make Muktanand as comfortable as possible. She could see Muktanand was coping but clearly she was suffering from general debility, nausea and breathlessness. However, there was no reason she couldn't stay at home.

Muktanand said the nausea was the worst thing, the pain was alright. Chris suggested Maxolon for nausea, subcutaneously. Muktanand said she was taking oral Maxolon and Zofran. Chris thought Zofran would not affect the type of nausea that Muktanand had, which was probably due to mechanical pressure on the stomach. Muktanand said Ondine, the liquid morphine mixture, made her drowsy and increased nausea, which she didn't want, she preferred clarity. Chris offered a subcutaneous syringe driver, delivering morphine and an anti-nausea agent: it would be pain-free with reasonable nausea control.

When Chris asked Muktanand whether she wanted to know what to expect, Muktanand asked her to talk to me privately. We went to the kitchen where Chris told me Muktanand was suffering from multiple organ failure: her body was very tired and her heart and lungs were also tired. When I raised the blood test results she said they were not always the best indicator of what was happening. The last few days would be a quiet and peaceful time; the body told people when to go, it was not a conscious decision. It depended on how strong she was. I said she had fought all the way. Chris guessed Muktanand had only a few days to a couple of weeks.

While Chris was talking to me, Muktanand told Anandapoorna "they think I'm going to die". Anandapoorna said "that's pretty scary isn't it?" Muktanand replied "it's getting close to the edge". Anandapoorna asked "you haven't thought of being in this situation?" Muktanand said no. Anandapoorna commented "there are different realities, eg the medical model. Your will has a lot to do with surviving?" Muktanand said "I have the dream" (the wave dream).

Thursday, Afternoon & Evening

At 1pm Muktanand reported she felt much better sitting up. Chandrabindhu was doing hand massage and Anandapoorna was sitting for company. Muktanand asked Anandapoorna to organise the sprinkler for the front garden!

Gaynor came at 5.40pm to channel energy to Muktanand. Here is Gaynor's account of the session:

I had been channelling prana to Muktanand on a regular basis for some time. When I sat with her I wasn't asking specifically to heal her, just to give her whatever it was she needed. I hoped on each occasion she got what she needed.

During Thursday's session Muktanand told me that she was dying and the family had been notified and she just needed to be comfortable for the little bit there was to go. At the end she said it was scary for her. I just nodded and said yes. When she said that I could see a symbol – a rectangular block with thick black lines at the end and the centre, representing the duality of 'yes, I'm scared', and on another level, 'I'm not scared'. I think it was opening up the possibility she could go. One level frightened her, the other not.

She was quite peaceful when I went, she could breathe easier and felt comfortable and

relaxed. She often saw things in chidakash when I channelled prana but she was having difficulty getting into chidakash that day.

Neither Sakshi nor I could believe Muktanand said she was dying: Sakshi believed Gaynor must have mis-heard, and that what Muktanand had said was “they think I’m dying and it’s only a matter of time”. Muktanand told me later it was the first time in one of Gaynor’s sessions that she had really felt a definite physical effect, better and easier breathing, which is what she asked Gaynor to focus on.

At 6.45pm Muktanand was having a lot of trouble breathing when lying down, but found it much easier sitting up. She told Sakshi she was now willing to have an anti-nausea shunt inserted in her arm or shoulder. Because she was also having a lot of trouble staying awake she felt she had to eat something to boost her blood sugar.

I phoned Trish at 7.10pm and she commenced organising travel for herself and Eleanor. Eleanor had sensed Muktanand was worse than she was saying. Trish offered to stay and help look after Muktanand. When I told Muktanand this she said it was a very generous offer and she was very happy to have Trish help. Eleanor phoned at 8.45pm and asked us to “just wrap Muktanand in love”.

At 7.45pm in the middle of a salt water gargle Muktanand told me she still thought it would work out alright. At 8.35pm I said to Muktanand “so you still think you can get through it?” She said “yes”. I replied: “you’re fantastic”. She: “do you ...?” and gestured I didn’t have to answer. I said: “I don’t know what will happen”. Muktanand: “I guess I’m still taking refuge in the dream and until I come to a point where it’s clear my interpretation was incorrect, I will hang onto that – I guess I can only keep doing it.” Muktanand wanted to review the wave dream with me again but we didn’t get around to it.

* * *

Rosemary had another dream about a funeral, this time during Thursday night in Ireland, probably equivalent to late Friday, Brisbane time:

The same dream is repeated. Kathy Turner is again going around organising a funeral, getting flowers etc. I ask again who is dying but this time I know it is not a mother. The dream changes and I am going through a dictionary with a whole list of ‘m’ words, like mr, mrtā, mrtgu, muni until I get to mu. Then I hear ‘mu, mu, mu’ being chanted and I see the image of ‘mu’. The dream is clearer this time and I understand that Kathy is collecting things for Muktanand’s funeral. I give Kathy a little statue of Guanyin for her to put on the altar for the funeral service.

Rosemary comment: When I woke up I wondered if mu was the Zen koan MU. In Zen Buddhism MU is used to clear the mind and it is said that if you chant it often enough you will get enlightened. At the time I was a third year Sanskrit student but when I was in Ireland I was trying to learn Gaelic and all conscious thoughts of Sanskrit had fled. Anyway I wasn’t aware of the Sanskrit meaning of MU. Guanyin is the female Chinese Buddha of compassion; she traditionally holds a vase of flowers.

John comment: According to Muktanand’s Sanskrit dictionary, when used as a title or name Mu is a name for Siva. Its other meanings are: final emancipation; a funeral pile or pyre; a reddish-brown or tawny colour.

Friday 13 February, Morning

Early on Friday Sakshi had the following dream:

We were in this house but it didn't look like this house. John's bedroom off the veranda was the same as it is, but it was detached slightly from the house, and very modern looking, with the balcony wrapped around French windows. Both the door and windows of the room were open, and it was very light and airy.

I was aware that just outside the door there was a very large crow with its feathers fluffed up, with bits of white where the wings met the body, where shoulders would be if it had shoulders. It was huge and round with its wings folded. It made no crow noises. It was slightly dishevelled, a bit scruffy, like a crow 'thing', not an actual crow.

I knew we had to close up the house, but I had to be with Muktanand. I was frightened of the crow, not badly frightened, but it concerned me. John appeared - as his usual imperturbable self - and I told him about the crow. John said 'It's OK, I know him', and seemed amazingly unconcerned. John started to amble towards the room and I said what's the crow doing there? John said he's just after the tissues. I said to make a nest? John said yes as he went off towards the room.

John comment: There were a lot of crows hanging around Rosary Crescent that year. I used to wave my arms and then clap to send them away. After a while I got them trained so all I needed to do was clap. In his book *The White Goddess*, Robert Graves says:

The raven or crow was Bran's oracular bird ... Mary Magdalene appears in Celtic legend as Morgan le Faye, King Arthur's sister. Morgan in Irish legend is 'the Morrigan', meaning 'Great Queen', a Death-goddess who assumed the form of a raven; and 'le Faye' means 'the Fate' ... The raven denotes death and prophecy.

Muktanand had her first cannabis pipe at 7am and her second at 9.45am. When Kathy came to help in the morning Muktanand told her she was thrilled that Trish was coming. She was full of admiration for Trish, who loved her boys so much. When Kathy suggested Trish might remember Muktanand looking after her when she was a child, Muktanand chuckled and said 'we'll see about that'.

Muktanand was falling in and out of sleep and having difficulty following conversations. She managed to eat some breakfast. She complained the oxygen prongs in her nose were producing a roaring sound in her ears.

In the morning I phoned the South Brisbane cemetery to inquire about plots. I intended to arrange a burial for Muktanand, partly because I liked the finality of it. But the main reason was that I believed yogis were supposed to be buried. Swami Akhandananda was an Indian swami who had been appointed to head Satyananda ashrams in Australia. When he died on 16 June 1997 (ten years after he had left the ashram), Swami Satyananda phoned from India to ask that he be buried, because 'sannyasins are not cremated'. Although this request was not met in Akhandananda's case, Muktanand was a sannyasin and I thought the rule would apply to her.

Sakshi purchased some Hopi candles and started treating Muktanand with these at 12.15pm:

they seemed to help with the ear blockage. At 12.35pm Sakshi started spoon-feeding her soup.

Helen, the Mt Olivet nurse, came just after the candle treatment started. She ran through a list of questions about symptoms. Muktanand reported she was feeling very nauseous; part of it was she couldn't eat because of the constriction on her stomach (due to ascites), but the worse part was probably the liver. She was vomiting a lot, a white frothy phlegm, worse in the early morning but also through the day. Pain control was OK.

In response to Helen's question whether cannabis made her drowsy, Muktanand said it did not. There was a lot of weakness and fuzziness associated with the nausea but the cannabis eased the nausea and clarified her mind. She could not remember any dreams unfortunately. She had been doing very extensive oral salt water gargling to prevent thrush, but less now with her restricted mobility.

With Muktanand's agreement, Helen used a needle to install a plastic cannula in her left shoulder at 1.15pm. She explained that after insertion no needle was left, just the cannula which could last for up to a week. The cannula was connected via a tube to a battery operated syringe driver, which was programmed to supply 2ml per hour of Promethazine (Phenergan), an antihistamine with both anti-nausea and sedative effects. The 2 ml ampoule in the driver contained 50mg of Promethazine. She thought it wouldn't make Muktanand too drowsy. She also made up five needles, three of Promethazine (12.5mg in 0.5ml) and one of saline and one of Maxolon, which could be given 6-hourly if needed. She instructed us in how to inject the needles into the cannula, and how to flush the cannula with saline.

Friday, Afternoon

After 2.00pm when Muktanand had finished a whole bowl of soup she suffered her first air hunger attack when she tried moving. Sakshi sat her up and put her on pure oxygen. Muktanand found the air hunger very frightening and complained that something needed to be done to manage it better. After the attack subsided she asked Sakshi to treat her with a second Hopi candle to reduce her ear blockage – but not before the oxygen cylinder had been disconnected and taken out of the room! She got a lot of relief from the Hopi candles.

At 2.30pm Muktanand's sister Trish phoned to say she and her mother had arrived in their Kangaroo Point apartment after flying up from Sydney. I told her Muktanand was sleeping and suggested they get a rest and come over in the morning, when Muktanand should be better. However, Eleanor (in the background) insisted they would come over as soon as they had rested and had some tea. It was Eleanor's wonderful gift as a mother that up until this time she had respected Muktanand's wishes not to visit, despite the urgings of her relatives and despite her own intuitions that Muktanand was extremely ill.

In the usual way when an alternative carer came (Sakshi), I went back to the computer. I was desperate to write an email bulletin to Muktanand's friends, so they could 'be with' Muktanand during this crisis. I had not managed to get out a bulletin since 30 November 2003. In a strange way I suspect Muktanand found my daily computer sessions during her illness reassuring; I wouldn't be doing them if I thought she was dying.

Sakshi called me from the computer when Muktanand's second attack of breathlessness

started just before 4pm. This attack was more severe and Muktanand was almost panicking as she gasped for air; she just didn't know what to do with herself. She didn't like the oxygen on her face and she wanted to keep moving – apparently a common response to air hunger. Clearly she was afraid her breathing was going to stop at any moment.

Sitting upright was the best position for breathing so Sakshi moved into an armchair position on the bed to support her from behind. Sakshi said she could feel how distressed Muktanand was as she tried to keep breathing. Sakshi told me later she understood at this point that Muktanand couldn't last the night, but I had yet to realize this.

I phoned Mt Olivet to ask for an emergency nurse but they said they couldn't send anyone until later. The duty nurse's advice was that morphine was the appropriate treatment. I told Muktanand this and commented the only other option was an ambulance, but of course ambulance officers would only want to take her to hospital. At Muktanand's request, I administered 1 ml of morphine solution at 4.30pm, 0.5ml at 4.50pm and another 0.5ml at 5.25pm, after which time she settled down. Muktanand had tried the oral morphine once before and hadn't liked it: this time she really needed it.

* * *

Pam Harris tells the story of a panic attack she had at this time:

At about 5.15pm on the afternoon of 13th February 2004 I was on my way from Annerley to the Relaxation Centre in the Valley, when I suddenly had an intense panic attack such as I have never experienced before. I was on the approach to the Story Bridge at the place where you have to merge with traffic coming on the right from Shafston Avenue (or maybe it was just after that) and at the point where I usually get right over into the very middle lane where you are immediately alongside and facing the oncoming traffic. The traffic was fairly heavy on either side of me.

Suddenly I just seized up totally. It is hard to describe the feeling. My body felt electric and unreal, my head a mixture of tight on the outside and light on the inside, and my hands hardly in contact with the steering wheel. I felt as though I was not in control of the car, or in danger of losing control, sort of like my body, the hands on the steering wheel especially were too light and unsubstantial to be effective in gripping the wheel and steering it. I glanced at the traffic on the left and the right and thought "You could die here." That's the exact words I remember passing through my head.

I told myself that I just had to keep my hands evenly on the wheel and drive straight ahead; it would not be good to tighten my grip on the wheel because that would cause tension and make it worse. I thought the Story Bridge is short, it won't take long. But it did, it took an age to get across the bridge. After I turned off the bridge the feeling of unreality subsided and the fear abated. I felt more or less normal for the rest of the evening.

Pam comment: My reasons for going to the Relaxation Centre (R/C) all had something to do with Muktanand. Firstly, I really, really wanted to get to a new yoga class there which I had seen advertised last year, and on two occasions, first back in January and again the previous Friday (6th February), I had planned to get to it but still had not succeeded. The reason I was interested, was because the teacher's name was given as 'Michael Dunn (Mantramurti)'. I

was sure that it was a Mantramurti with whom Muktanand had stayed for a night or two either side of the October 1997 retreat which she had led in Adelaide. I had accompanied her to that retreat and acted as her assistant, which was quite a significant experience for me in my time of working with Muktanand. I wanted to connect with this Mantramurti because of that.

Secondly, the evening event that night which I could easily stay on for after the yoga class was a movie of Petrea King speaking at the Relaxation Centre. I had first become acquainted with Petrea when she and Muktanand were on the same program at the World Yoga Convention in 1996. Both speakers were equally inspiring. Petrea King is well known for her book *Spirited Women: Journeys with Breast Cancer*, which I went to some trouble to obtain when I was staying with my sick sister (who also died of breast cancer) in Adelaide in 2002, shortly after I heard of Muktanand's diagnosis, and which Muktanand referred to quite a bit, I believe, during her journey with cancer.

So, directly and indirectly, my evening, which turned out to be in the last hours of Muktanand's life, was filled with thoughts of Muktanand, the Satyananda tradition and my (and her) relationship to it, and how people live, and die, with breast cancer.

After the yoga class was over, I was delighted to hear Mantramurti telling somebody about how Satyananda developed the practice of Yoga Nidra, and I knew I'd found the right person. I talked with him about Adelaide and Muktanand and I told him how gravely ill she was. He reflected that although their paths had crossed 'a few times', he had not known her well, as he had been sent to other places whilst Muktanand had stayed in India. Naturally, my thoughts were also of Muktanand a great deal while I was watching the Petrea King video.

Friday, Early Evening

Sharyn, the Mt Olivet nurse, came about 6pm and changed the syringe driver ampoule to a mixture of Morphine, Midazolam (Hypnovel) and Maxolon. Midazolam, a sedative, is always given with morphine. Muktanand could only communicate by shaking her head. Sharyn prepared extra syringes of morphine, medazalone and maxolon if needed. Sakshi told me later she mouthed the words 'how long?' to the nurse, but Sharyn just returned her look as if to say 'I don't know, but not long'.

Trish and Eleanor arrived between 6 and 6.30pm while the nurse was finishing up. By this time Muktanand was unable to speak, but she greeted them by waving and blowing kisses. Sakshi says this moment was so powerful she didn't think she could bear it. Muktanand started to write a note to Eleanor but couldn't finish it. Sakshi wrote the alphabet on a little white board and suggested Muktanand spell out words but that didn't work either. Sakshi and Trish tried to assist her by asking questions and getting her to nod or shake her head, but it was very difficult to communicate. Muktanand drifted slowly into unconsciousness and stayed there.

Sometime between 7pm and 8pm I gave Muktanand a booster shot of Morphine/Midazolam when we all agreed it was probably needful because Muktanand was clearly getting distressed again. I said to Sakshi and Trish we had to be extremely careful with this mixture because 'it could knock her over'. I knew from experience with my parents that the Morphine/Medazolam mixture is often given to cancer patients near the end of their illness, and can push them over the edge. Mike Percy, a friend of mine who is a psychiatric nurse, once described this mixture as a 'silver bullet', although in Muktanand's case the dosage was minimal. We didn't administer any more booster shots after this.

I also knew that patients could last for several days on this mixture, even though their

breathing sounds very laboured. My mother, for example, had come out of deep sedation with sufficient clarity to greet her family gathered around her bed. And of course one part of me was still hopeful that Muktanand would survive this crisis as she had survived the previous crises. I went back to the computer to finish writing and despatching an email bulletin, because I was desperate to bring her friends up to date. I was intending to come back afterwards and sit with Muktanand for the rest of the night. Despite all the dreams and signs during the week I had no conscious idea it was Muktanand's last night. If I had understood she was so close to dying I wouldn't have left her side for a minute.

Email#32

Here is part of the broadcast email I sent that night:

13 February 2004

Muktanand is desperately ill. Her major physical symptoms are severe malnutrition, severe muscle wasting, profound physical weakness, gross ascites and whole-body lymphoedema. She suffers from constant shortness of breath and recurrent nausea, although these have been generally well controlled with an oxygen mask and her two anti-nausea medications, Cannabis and Zofran.

All these symptoms are driven by advanced liver failure. In appearance she has obvious jaundice, her limbs and trunk are swollen with lymph fluid and her abdomen is extremely distended with ascites. She is groggy and tired and has difficulty talking because of breathlessness.

For some information about ascites see the attachment. As best as we can guess she is carrying perhaps 10-15 kg of ascites fluid on her beautiful small body. On Wednesday 4 February Queensland X-Ray drained three litres of ascites using ultrasound technology to locate the pools of fluid, but this procedure was quite weakening and the fluid had built up again by last Monday. She decided not to repeat the drainage. Because of advice of a similar temporary effect, she declined treatment of the ascites with diuretics.

She is not suffering from any "cancer pain". As far as we can tell she still has no bone or lung cancer, only liver cancer. Apart from nausea and breathlessness accompanied by a racing heart, her only source of pain is the discomfort associated with manoeuvring around her abdomen and getting into a comfortable position. A couple of panadol tablets are all she has needed to go to sleep. She has been repeatedly offered morphine and other opiates but has refused them because they cause her more nausea, as well as drowsiness.

She is at home and is staying at home through this phase of her illness. We have a small team of carers, including some strong women who can lift her, and we are getting excellent assistance from the local Blue Nurses and the Mount Olivet Hospice home care service. Muktanand is generally comfortable but is too ill to receive visitors. As always, she sends her love.

Muktanand's Death, 14 February, 2004

After despatching Bulletin #32, I took a shower and went to lie down for a few minutes. Just before 10pm Muktanand's breathing changed markedly for the worse (I didn't learn this until months later) and Sakshi asked Trish to fetch me. Eleanor also got up from her rest.

When I came into the bedroom and heard how laboured Muktanand's breathing was I said aloud "she can't last like this"; she sounded like my parents did in the last days before they died. However, I still was thinking she could last for a couple of days. With Sakshi's agreement I swapped into the armchair position behind Muktanand, and as I did so I had the feeling Muktanand was aware of the changeover and happy I was there at last, even though she was sedated and apparently unconscious. Muktanand was so relaxed she was completely floppy and her head had to be held like a baby's head, to stop it rolling onto her shoulder.

Sakshi had been supporting Muktanand for about 6 hours and went to phone Gaynor. After going to bed at home Kathy couldn't stop thinking and came back to tell us Muktanand's oxygen feed should be turned up as high as possible. Kathy also wanted to be instructed in the technique of Muktanand's booster shots. She met Trish and Sakshi having a cup of tea in the kitchen and then they and Eleanor joined me in the bedroom.

Muktanand was lying back between my legs with her head resting on my chest, and I was supported by a pile of cushions. She was taking pure oxygen through the mask. For the next two hours Eleanor, Trish, Sakshi and Kathy sat around the bed and the atmosphere was relaxed and peaceful. At some point I thought it was still Friday the 13th and I fervently hoped that she would last at least into the next day, St Valentine's Day. Sakshi told me later this thought had also crossed her mind.

A few minutes before midnight I noticed Muktanand was breathing froth into the mask and I took it away. I phoned the duty nurse at Mt Olivet (Sharyn) and she advised Muktanand would be able to breathe easier in the upright position. We agreed to move her. Kathy, Trish and Sakshi supported Muktanand and had to support her head as she was unconscious. I was still behind her, Sakshi, Kathy and Trish were facing her. Muktanand groaned when we started to move her.

Suddenly Muktanand came to full awareness. She sat in an upright position with a totally straight yogic spine and head. Her eyes opened very wide. There was incredulity and astonishment but no fear. Then she stopped breathing.

As Muktanand was lowered back into my arms I said "she's gone", and gave her a last kiss. She exhaled a couple of times as her lungs deflated. For a few moments Sakshi felt a lovely warm glow on the top of her head. It was five minutes past midnight.

When we started moving Muktanand, Eleanor had taken the opportunity to slip out to the toilet, returning to the bedroom just in time to hear me say 'she's gone', and to see Muktanand's last breaths.

Clearly Muktanand had just been hovering on the edge and the smallest disturbance was enough to tip her over. I paged the Mt Olivet duty nurse and she arranged for Muktanand's doctor to come and certify death.

* * *

Kathy's daughter Zalehah was at home at Hampstead Road. She had gone to bed at her usual time, about 9pm. This is her verbal account of what happened next:

When I went to lie down I was immediately aware of Muktanand. I heard her say 'This is Friday the 13th Zalehah'. I knew she meant she was going to die that night but she didn't want it to be on Friday 13th. She was very calm about it and not frightened. She wasn't being superstitious; she just knew I would understand although we had never talked about it. Before then I only knew Friday the 13th was the night Goths held parties.

From that time on I stayed with her. I knew it was right for her to die but I could help with the time, pushing it forward so she would die on Saturday. She knew she didn't have the energy to hold on without help. She recognised me and if she'd told me to stop I would have.

At the start I was with her and we were both drowning. In order to free her from that I had to take on her physical sensations. To do that I had to be as close to her as possible. I had to leave my body and move into the energy field, because my body was experiencing all these physical symptoms. I experienced this massive empowerment and my body expanded to take up the whole room. I put all my entire psychic, mental and emotional energy, all my intentions, into my efforts.

It was as if she was guiding me through it, just like the time she taught me meditation when I was 16. She was incredibly pale and dressed in white clothes made of loose natural fibres. Everything about her was very neat and clean including her nails.

I also had to listen to her voice. Every time she said my name it made the connection stronger. I also said her name so I could hold on.

At the start she kept pointing out the time. But the physical experiences got worse as we approached midnight and she became progressively weaker. She was saying then 'It's too much for you Zalehah'. I was saying but you've given me all that training on how to focus. There was only a tiny part of her that was still in her physical body. Her self was fighting to lose its body.

Near the end she was very fragile and her voice was shaky and distant. She said 'Its 11.58, I can't stay any longer, I just can't do it'. It was impossible for her to go on. I understood she meant it was OK for me to let go but she could feel I was going to keep on trying. At that point all the effort came onto me. I took her through from 11.58 till 12.02 and that was the hardest part. She knew it was 12.02 and I knew it too, even though nothing was said. I didn't doubt it but I wanted to push it well and truly into Saturday so I kept on going for 3 more minutes. I felt her relax and then there was this massive release when she left. She became very light, she became energy.

Then there was just me. I was so exhausted I couldn't think or move. I understood I had to complete the practice first. I felt incredibly huge and I had to re-shrink myself down, draw back into being Zalehah. Then I went to the toilet. I cried and cried. The next day was really weird; I totally knew she had died before mum told me. I didn't find out until October 2006 precisely when Muktanand died.

Sakshi had phoned Gaynor about 10pm. Gaynor had just been preparing to go to bed at her home in Fairfield, but she stayed up and commenced channelling prana to Muktanand. Here is her account of her experience:

I was really glad Sakshi phoned. Normally on Fridays I go to bed as early as possible, to rise early for the markets. I had arrived home at 8.30pm and I had left a message for Sakshi between 9.15 - 9.45pm. Unusually I was still awake at 10pm.

I had a very strong connection to Muktanand. When I am channelling the prana it flows through me and out of me and I can feel it and I know when it starts and I know that it will keep on flowing as long as the connection stays open.

Muktanand felt very light the moment I made contact with her. She was very receptive to my energy frequency and I think she could feel me. I thought she could hear me on some level. While I was connected I was mentally talking to her, saying to her 'don't be frightened'; 'you can do this'; 'it's going to be easy'; 'let go when you want to'. Just before the end of the session I heard a clear, very high pitched bell ring 3-4 times – like a Hindu temple bell – and a little while after that a whip cracked. I thought it was appropriate to stop at this point; I wondered what it meant. It felt alright, she was OK, she wasn't frightened. This was just after midnight.

Muktanand's students will know that when she was leading a meditation class, she would ring her little Tibetan bells a couple of minutes before the end. Sakshi summarises it thus:

As soon as she had a straight spine off she went. It all happened simultaneously: sitting up straight, eyes opening wide, looking astonished and stopping breathing. There was an incredible look of 'yes' on her face, a joyous look, I almost laughed. At the same time Gaynor heard a whip crack, as if to say 'get going!' It felt really right.

Awareness at Death

Kathy Turner has provided a further comment about Muktanand's dying moments, prompted by the following story from a book she found in mid 2005:

An honest appraisal of a dying person's mental condition should not rule out the possibility of sudden moments of clarity and insight. James was only sixteen years old when he was diagnosed with a fast-growing cancer that in just a few weeks left him in a coma. Just before he died, and with his family gathered around his bed crying and praying for him, James suddenly opened his eyes and, with a look of what everyone took to be rapture, he lifted his arms upward for an extended moment. Then he lay back down, and a few minutes later he was gone. This is not an uncommon experience.

[Dreaming Beyond Death. A Guide to Pre-Death Dreams and Visions by Kelly Bulkely and Reverend Patricia Bulkley. Beacon Press, Boston 2005, p.98.]

When I read the story of the boy in a coma, I thought of Muktanand. It seemed to me that she too become suddenly super aware just as she died.

What a most wonderful achievement of awareness and, imagine using that moment of super awareness to sit in her yoga pose. It is as if Muktanand not only became super aware like the boy, but she USED that awareness to place herself in the best position for her death.

I also think in that moment of super awareness she first had to deal with shock at what was happening and perhaps even anger, for shock and anger were the looks I saw in her eyes. And why not anger? Muktanand had hoped and expected to beat the cancer.

Despite this she was able to move from these normal and mighty reactions to finding out that she was indeed dying, and to focus on what needed to be done at death - all in a few seconds of amazing awareness. That rapid move through awareness is exactly what meditation teaches isn't it? The ability to let go of whatever is in the mind and FOCUS!

That is remarkable to me - to do ALL that at the moment of HER death. It seems to me Muktanand was able to bring her knowledge to bear in the most difficult circumstance

imaginable. That is what is remarkable.

Another story on the same page of Kathy's book reminded me of my father:

Similar moments of startling clarity also occur with some people who are suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. Just before death, when their psychological functioning seems almost entirely ruined, they may spontaneously experience a flashing moment of recognition, a brief but meaningful burst of awareness. It's as if the person's mind had managed to pull itself back together for just one final instant of integrated presence in the world, the soul gathering back to the body as the last step of this life and the first step of the journey ahead.

My father had been suffering from severe dementia for at least a year. Just before he died I said goodbye to him as I was leaving to get my dinner (my sister Judy was taking over). He was lying on his side but his eyes snapped open and I could see that he truly recognised me, even though he had been fairly deeply sedated (with *medazalone* and *morphine*) for most of that day, a Friday. The previous two days he had been completely incoherent and had not recognised either of us. He died about an hour after I left the hospital.

Saturday 14 February, Morning

Premshakti and Bhumiratna describe their experiences of this time as follows:

We had been remembering Muktanand in the Mahamrntunjaya Mantra ever since she was diagnosed with cancer. However as her condition became more critical it became more of an intense experience and not just when I was chanting for her she would often spring into my mind at other times, sometimes during my meditation, sometimes during karma yoga activities, often for no apparent reason.

Since my return from India I had an uneasy feeling about how her health was progressing. We heard about her death very early on the Saturday Morning. We were not surprised as I had an email from you the previous day and it was obvious that her time was running out.

Prior to Muktanand's death while chanting and keeping her in our mind and heart we both felt her presence. This continued into the Saturday when we spent hours chanting for her peaceful departure; we could visualize her face clearly and felt her presence in the sadhana room where we were chanting with deities of Durga, and yantras.

The intensity of our experience after she died on the Saturday was different. I can only really speak for myself as I had the same experience when another swami died a few years ago. I never needed a photo at any stage. When I closed my eyes I saw her face. I definitely felt a presence in the room. The prana and energy in the room was very thick (if you know what I mean). Maybe it was the vibration from hours of chanting - it is very hard to explain in words.

Alakh Analda is an old yoga friend of Muktanand who also spent many years in India. She sent this story:

I woke up in NSW at the time Muktananda left her body - the dog barked at something outside I think, in retrospect. I was wide-awake and went and worked in my office until 6am.

It was light and I went to the front sliding door at the front patio to let the cats out. Right on the mat, as if placed very carefully, was a beautiful pure white feather. It was so striking, and had so much energy, that I picked it up and brought it inside to keep. My first thought was that 'someone has put that there for me'.

There are no white birds in the area on a regular basis; I have not seen a white feather here in the two years I have lived in the Byron area, and the mat is quite a bit under the porch.

I had read John's email during that time in my office that started off 'Muktananda is desperately ill ...', but I did not connect anything.

At the time, I was in the most demanding phase of the journey of our eight moves in three years, and was just packing and moving all our goods and my huge office and records to the house we bought - the final move. The truck was booked for 16th February and the week before and after were flat out from the heat or packing etc.

Later in the day John rang with the news of Muktananda's passing. Later I connected the pure white feather and her passing. I had good contact with her in December and January, but felt disconnected from her and how she was going when the demand of packing and moving came as a high priority in February.

For me, receiving the feather was a sign that we were connected – a visitation of her spirit and it was very important to me indeed. Without it I would be devastated and I do not feel that way. I feel grateful for her love and great friendship through the years since 1976. Through the feather, I felt involved in the process of her passing, as involved as if I was there. It is almost as if she was saying to me that I was to do my work and do what I have to do and we can still be connected as spirit.

So no dreams that I can remember. But a sign for me anyway.

Saturday, Afternoon

Kathy Turner describes having the following experience at 1.30pm:

I am just sitting on a low garden wall at the Sleeman Swimming Centre waiting for my daughter Zalehah. Thinking of nothing in particular. I suddenly become aware of a great spaciousness which is also warm (akin to love but not quite). A beautiful space. I am aware of it as a kind of smoky, cloudy, misty space, yellow mainly (a colour akin to yellow but not a distinct yellow). It is not exactly a space either – more an experience – but it has some quality akin to space.

As soon as I become aware of this space, I know immediately without thinking that this is Muktanand's experience, not mine. I hold my mind steady, not thinking about it or about anything. I do not want to intrude on Muktanand's experience.

Later - perhaps a minute or two but I don't know when - I become aware of a stream of bubbling laughter, bubbling joy, running through the space – like a brook – and I 'hear' Muktanand laughing and saying 'I've found it' or 'I've made it'.

Sakshi says she had talked to Muktanand 'ages ago' about creating a beautiful environment to go to when you die. Sakshi was initiated into this practice, the Healing Buddha Bhasagya, by Zasep Tulku Rinpoche. Zasep Tulku said it was best to develop the practice beforehand. The practice involves finding or creating a personal paradise, for example a garden with a lake, lotuses in the lake and a temple. It is very individual and can be anything, so long as the practitioner thinks it is a beautiful place. The practice is normally performed with a rising 'hic' sound, with a 'ka' sound to exit.

Sakshi said that when she was sitting with Muktanand before she died, she had kept whispering in her ear: "look for your beautiful place; do you have a beautiful place; can you

find your beautiful place?” Nobody else knew this.

Kathy had always been a very good friend to Muktanand. At Christmas in December 2003, Kathy had given Muktanand a beautiful blue pure silk dress that she had hand sewn to accommodate Muktanand’s swollen abdomen. Muktanand was buried in this dress.

* * *

Visitors were coming and going through the day but I managed to sit several times in the bedroom where Muktanand was laid out on the bed. Other people were also sitting and there was a very positive energy. At one time I was sitting in *vajrasan* in the south western corner of the room and I had a sense of a youthful Muktanand in the top right hand corner of my head, beaming and laughing as she did somersaults, and zipping around as if she was skateboarding, like the advertisement they show in movie theatres, where a little sprite zips around a smiling sun.

At around 2.00pm Sakshi and Chandrabindhu sat with Muktanand’s body and chanted the Durga Path. They did eight rounds to honour previous occasions when Sakshi had practised with Muktanand. Muktanand was a long time practitioner of the Durga Path.

Kathy Turner reports another experience as follows, which happened between 3.30pm and 5.00pm:

I sit for a short while with Muktanand in her room (others are there). I am trying to thank Muktanand for her being herself but I have enormous resistance to summing up Muktanand’s life. I don’t want to judge her life in any way at all. I did not even want to thank her for being herself. I just said ‘All Glory to your life Muktanand’.

I realized that in saying that I was giving glory to LIFE. I realized that at this level Muktanand’s life was the same as a lizard’s life. I was glorifying the incredible wonder of that.

I remember the ‘all glory’ being really clear and sitting comfortably - the next part was sort of unclear - it may have been ‘to you’ but I KNOW the meaning was ‘to your LIFE’ where it is Muktanand’s LIVING that is glorious. It’s still hard to catch the meaning precisely (which means I don’t yet quite understand it) - so sorry, I can’t quite say it (yet!!).”

Sometime later I realized: Muktanand’s life was perfect just as it was. That was the meaning of it ‘all being perfect just as it is’ – it was the beginning of a long journey to see all life as perfect just as it is (ie to learn the ability to see without judgement and yet act wisely!!!).

Kathy doesn’t know any Sanskrit or any Durga mantras. Unbeknownst to her, Sakshi had already started to prepare a bookmark/keepsake with the Durga mantra ‘Om Shree Durga Namaha’, which means ‘All Glory to Durga’.

Email #33

Later in the afternoon I dispatched the last of the broadcast email bulletins:

14 February 2004

Dear Friends

Muktanand stopped breathing at five minutes past midnight this morning, at the start of St Valentine's day. With her were her mother Eleanor, sister Trish, Sakshi, Kathy and myself.

Muktanand had been deteriorating since Monday and this accelerated on Friday. She had been struggling for breath for several hours, and after suffering two extreme episodes of air hunger she had been sedated with a combination of morphine and midazolam, a serepax-like sedative. Palliative care nurses from the Mount Olivet Hospice attended twice, and instructed us in how to administer needles.

When she stopped breathing it surprised all of us, including apparently Muktanand. I was holding her from behind but Sakshi, Kathy and Trish, who were facing her, said just before Muktanand stopped breathing she displayed an expression of complete surprise, like "Oh my god, this is it!" As if she suddenly realised she'd died.

When we laid her down she looked wonderfully peaceful and extraordinarily youthful – Trish said she looked like she was 16 again.

Muktanand fought for her life almost right until the end. On her last day she managed to get down a couple of soups and most of her tablets. On Thursday night she told me that she still thought she could get through the disease process. Jerome Groopman in his book *The Anatomy of Hope: How People Prevail in the Face of Illness* says:

"to hope under the most extreme circumstances is an act of defiance that ... permits a person to live his life on his own terms".

We washed her and laid her out in one of her Xmas dresses on the gambolling elephant bedspread. When her doctor came and certified death at 1.30 am, he said she looked very peaceful. In the morning after a bit of sleep we added candles and big bunches of flowers and closed the curtains so that her room, with its puja area in the corner, looked absolutely gorgeous. Muktanand would have been proud of us.

Friends and yoga students came during the day to sit with Muktanand and bring gifts. White Lady Funerals collected her at 7.45pm. We will have a service later in the week and plan to bury her in the South Brisbane cemetery.

Of course, as always, she sends her love.

John

Sakshi commented:

Considering she fought tooth and nail against dying, she had a good death. Of course that's what you do! While you are alive you live it! I wouldn't have expected anything else from Muktanand. It makes perfect sense in many ways.

* * *

Darshan was one of Muktanand's senior yoga teachers and he had studied with her for a number of years. When she gave up teaching she negotiated the transfer of her yoga centre to him. Here is his description of that Saturday:

The day of Muktanand's death wasn't an easy day for me. My son, Sylvian was in an irritable mood; I was my usual moody, distant self and Karine and I were meant to be 'celebrating' St Valentine's day.

I managed to get through the mid morning by staying home alone. Sakshi phoned with the news, and I suppose I went into a state of shock (still to come out!). For a few hours the phone rang with concerns for my well being. I delayed coming to sit with Muktanand, I felt unstable and anxious.

When I did arrive at Rosary Crescent I regressed back to the first time I met Muktanand. As I sat with her memories came flooding back, I had an experience similar to the ones that arise in the Kriya practices, she was drawing me in, I resisted for quite a while but at some point I surrendered. I believe Muktanand finally (!) taught me what I'd always been avoiding, she blew my heart wide open, I can't think of another way of describing it.

Sunday 15 February

We started planning the funeral service. Muktanand had refused to contemplate her funeral so we had to make it up, a yoga service. Sakshi wanted the Gayatri Mantra and she had already decided to do a Durga mantra bookmark. Eoin and Kerstin Liebchen-Meades wanted to speak. Kathy wanted Darshan to speak. A representative from White Lady funerals came at 10am to discuss details.

Amongst the many phone calls I took a very emotional call from Krishnaswami and his wife Janak, from Coimbatore in South India. Krish was very glad he saw her while she was still in good health. He said it was a great loss for him and a great loss for me.

While I was doing a yoga nidra (yoga relaxation) on late Sunday the words '*Asato ma ... jyoti bavatu*' came to me. I understood this was part of a mantra that Muktanand would like to be used at her funeral service. I asked Sakshi about it the next day and she confirmed the words were from the Shanti Path, one of the Satyananda movement's favourite mantras. I had heard the Shanti Path recited quite a few times before, but I had never learned it. Sakshi commented the last verse – the Mahamitrunjaya mantra – was very appropriate for a death transition.

Monday 16 February

Planning for the funeral service continued. Sakshi and Kathy agreed to MC the funeral

service. Sakshi would ask Gaynor to give Muktanand's Essence of Breath meditation. I had a potted life history which Sakshi could read as an introduction, but I would have to write a eulogy; this turned out to be a big struggle. Sakshi and I agreed on the geru (orange robe) photo of Muktanand for the order of service and I asked Sakshi to choose the other photo. This turned out to be a photo from our "honeymoon" holiday at Brunswick Heads in February 1986. Sakshi chose this because 'Muktanand looked really free, happy and liberated – like she might look after death'.

The following text is an account of a conversation between Gaynor Long and me, between 11am – 12noon. Gaynor is speaking:

About two months ago I had a very clear vision of three coffins snaking – zigzagging – towards me. I felt at the time that the first coffin was Muktanand but there are two more to go, I think both female, with not a huge distance between them. At the time of the vision the first coffin had a bit of the way to go to get to me, but the other two following were closer spaced. So I presume that two more women I know will die soon.

Muktanand is still here at the moment, still in the house. If you can tune into someone's frequency you can find them anywhere in the world. Muktanand's particular frequency – the essence, the vibrational frequency of Muktanand – is still in the house. I imagine she'll come to the funeral, do the works. Eventually she will go, just a matter of when.

At the moment she feels happy, I can feel her smiling. I think she is extremely relieved to know it's OK after she died. It's a relief to be free of body pain and operations and the whole weight of it. And it's a relief to know there is more of it afterwards, there isn't just nothing at the end. She is here on the left of me, she's smiling, and she's fine.

Muktanand and I talked about what happens after death. I couldn't convince her there is more. I know there is, far beyond intellect. I know the physical body is the smallest part of a huge pranic field. The body is just like clothing on top of a pranic field. It's liberating to let it go and be who we actually are. But I never convinced her: she wanted to understand on an intellectual level, but the psychic/pranic level doesn't have an intellect. She's smiling now!

She was so very much Muktanand. To let go whilst believing there is absolutely nothing afterwards is a frightening thing. I really felt for her; if only she could have believed even a fraction of what I believe, it would have made it so much easier for her.

I like to think I could have given Muktanand some healing but I don't think it was my choice. I give pranic energy: some people heal, some don't. I was telling Muktanand at the end of one session that I could see white light up on the wall. I told her, I was trying to convince her, that when you see white light like that it is like seeing universal prana being manifested by what's happening in the room. It is like a form of blessing.

I can connect with Muktanand now. She's very happy, bubbly, and in good spirits. Her vibration is a flow of colour, rose quartz pink to a shade of violet with a reddish dimension in the purple. Psychic colours are not like physical colours, they are very vibrant, luminous, very, very beautiful. Muktanand is very relieved, very relieved.

On Monday I received this email from Vivian Jacquin:

I just got your email and will pass the message to Gabrielle who is working. I had another dream of Muktanand flying with a white gown, happy and laughing. I did not know the news yet. Please be sure that she is alive and living through us. She is a great lady and is always with us. With love and affection. Vivian and for Gabrielle.

* * *

Many months after it happened, my niece Shannon Hawkins sent me this account of an experience she had between Muktanand's death and the funeral. Shannon had only met and spoken to Muktanand a few times.

I just wanted to tell you something that I have remembered, but decided not to tell you at the time, because I guessed you thought I would be crazy and I didn't want to upset you. Do you remember I sent you an email just after Muktanand passed asking if she often wore sandals, thongs or shoes that slapped when she walked?

The same week Muktanand died I was alone in the house, in the bathroom, just out of the shower and getting ready. I heard, as clear as day, someone walking up the hall in something like sandals or thongs, the shoes making noises as they walked. It was so clear I thought someone had come home early or something, but I couldn't guess who it was as the footsteps were quite rapid and light (maybe a slight limp, one foot sounded slightly heavier than the other) and not familiar at all. So I went to check the hallway and there was no one there. I checked around the house and stuff but couldn't find anyone, everyone was still out. I wasn't frightened though, just thought I must've been hearing things.

The reason I thought of Muktanand was because an image of her jumped into my head. She was wearing a straw hat and a loose, blue, light and dark tie-dye sundress. She was sitting in the partial shade of a tree but enjoying the sun. She was in an Australian leafy garden, not jungle-like, but green and quite leafy. The feeling was peaceful and joyful. It wasn't long after that I heard that Muktanand had died.

* * *

Siddharatna introduces her own piece about how she experienced this time. She still lives in Tasmania:

I was one of the students in the Teacher Training course held in Hobart during 1995-96, and a couple of times Muktanand stayed with my family when she came to teach. Since that time I always felt very attached to her, as did anyone who ever met her. In October 2001 I was in Brisbane for work, and my daughter Celeste and I visited you both for lunch at your home. It was obvious then that Muktanand's health was seriously affecting her, and from that time all I did was pray for her, feeling that I needed and could expect nothing from her, but that she needed anything I could offer. It was Hari who kept me in touch with the development of Muktanand's illness with copies of some emails from you, and I deeply appreciated the information.

Around the time of Muktanand's death I noticed that she was present in my consciousness more than normal. As time went on I was experiencing my awareness of her as a very bright, sharp and almost jolting thought. This was a different experience - previously when I thought of Muktanand it was a very one-way and unremarkable kind of thought - from me to her. Previously, I had no sense that she was aware of me, my prayers or my good wishes, and that was as it should be. Now it was as if something was changing, and as I didn't understand it, all I could do was observe and wait. So when Hari phoned during the evening after Muktanand's death to say that she had died I was sad, but on reflection not really surprised because of the change in my awareness.

During the following 4-5 days I had more of this experience, and what I think is that Muktanand was doing the rounds, visiting me (and probably others), in a way that she could not do during the illness and her preparation for death. I experienced her many times as a bright presence, insistent on me paying a quiet sort of attention to her for a moment, which I did. There were no words, messages, or anything like that, it was just the intensity and clarity of my attention to her and my thoughts that were remarkable, and I was very happy to meet her on the level she presented. But that was one of her great strengths wasn't it - to inspire people to pay attention to whatever was truly worthwhile.

I am not sure if that means anything to you, John, but I am happy to pass it on as I still think of Muktanand every day, but with less of the initial bright and sharp intensity.

On the Wednesday before Muktanand's funeral I was fretting, with an inclination to jump on a plane to come to Brisbane, but didn't, and by Thursday afternoon I was violently ill and remained that way until Saturday, and took a full week to feel normally well again. Could be a coincidence, but it was a jolly good clean-out, and a barrage of medical tests has not been able to identify the cause. I have previously reacted to the presence of great teachers with a strong and disabling health crisis, and am prepared to accept that the experiences with Muktanand during that week may have precipitated this one.

Wednesday 18 February

Muktibodha is another Brisbane swami who studied with Swami Satyananda at BSY in the 1970's and knew Muktanand from there. She had this dream in the early hours of Wednesday:

In my dream on Wednesday Muktananda was dressed in flowing white, shirt, skirt/pants. We were standing in my old childhood kitchen and I said 'but you died' and Muktananda said 'yes, I did die' and then she proceeded to move around and have full control of her body saying 'and here I am'. She was very happy, vibrant and youthful.

Muktibodha comment: I thought about it when I woke and felt she was again in full control without her mortal coil.

Muktibodha didn't find out about Muktanand's death until Tuesday 17 February. She felt in her dream that Muktanand had got to the place she wanted to get to and she was happy.

* * *

Belinda Cox relates the following story about Darshan's regular Wednesday night class, scheduled for 7.30pm:

There was only Darshan and I. It was very strange, it had never happened before. It was especially weird because before the class Darshan said he had received a lot of emails from students saying they were coming and then they didn't turn up.

We agreed that Darshan would join me in doing a yoga practice and meditation together. Darshan came down off the platform and sat in the hall. At some point in the meditation I felt I was in an old class with Muktanand. Later, I also had a very strong feeling of a third person sitting on the platform - it felt like Muktanand. Darshan and I formed the base of a triangle with her at the apex. There was an insight/awareness at one point in the meditation of a Shiva-Shakti balance with Darshan and I - the triad was very balanced and in perfect equilibrium.

It was one of the most peaceful, centred classes I have ever had and felt very special.

Darshan phoned me on Sunday morning to discuss Muktanand's passing and we discussed the strange yoga class. Darshan said he had a similar feeling about the meditation being very balanced.

Thursday 19 February

Emilia Della Torre sent this email from Armidale:

Since I learnt of Muktanand's passing, I have practiced *phowa* - the Tibetan Buddhist practice for the dead and dying - to assist her passing through the bardo. Her photo is on the altar in my shrine room touching Swami Satyananda's photo. I have laced red flowers on the shrine's altar because they were her favourite garden flower colour as I recall (and also the most auspicious flower colour in Tibetan Buddhist symbology). I have chanted and sung kirtan for Muktanand. I have meditated and dedicated all the merit of my meagre practices for her passing. For the 49 days of her bardo at each midnight I will continue to do so.

Tomorrow I will chant aloud the Mahamrityunjaya Mantra and Muktanand's translation from 12.30 until 3.30pm in my shrine room.

If I had been able to attend the funeral, I would have recounted the story of my first ever meditation experience. Muktanand and I laughed about it long afterwards. She had come to conduct a three day silent meditation retreat in Canberra at the request of Anne Bourke and myself. I think it was about October 1996. I had never meditated before and - with some trepidation - seized the opportunity to learn. Of course, because of Muktanand's reputation everyone wanted to attend the retreat. The scout hall we were using was packed to the gills. So much so that Muktanand decided to move from the "front" of the hall and sit at the "side" of the hall: that way she could see everyone more closely and more clearly. The result was that she sat directly in front of me and that I sat with my toes practically up her nostrils the entire retreat (which is what we would both laugh about later: it was a rather intimate posture for us to adopt!). The beauty and the blessing - for me - was that I became progressively bathed in Muktanand's energy for the entire retreat. It was - in a word - blissful.

I will miss the stories of others tomorrow. I will miss Muktanand. It was such a privilege to have known her.

* * *

Kerstin Liebchin-Meades had this dream:

It was during the night before the funeral service. The dream felt like it was a very long one, one that lasted the whole night although that of course can't really be. Muktanand was entertaining her guests at the wake, there was a lot of fussing and making sure that everyone had enough to eat and drink. I helped out and we checked in with one another about what else needed doing. There was a feeling of joy, laughter and lightness. The setting reminded me also of the last gathering Muktanand organised for her women friends. It felt busy and happy, with lots of talking and chatting and Muktanand coming and going and checking in that all was well.

On Thursday night when I went to bed at 11.30pm I had still not written the eulogy. Sakshi and Kathy were getting quite concerned about this but I was somehow managing to remain cool. I knew I wanted to speak about her fear of dying, but otherwise had only a few musings about my fear of public speaking. I was thinking it was very unfair of her to die first because she was a much better speaker than I. Basically my speech draft amounted to the following words (I was trying to make a joke):

There were a couple of times in the last two years when I thought if Muktanand dies I will have to speak at her funeral. I felt like saying to her, 'you can't die and do this to me!'

At 12.30am I woke up and wrote out the whole eulogy, practically word for word apart from a few quotes I needed to look up. Sakshi assigned Kathy to check it out first thing in the morning, and when I had typed it up she listened to me read it and gave the okay!

Friday 20 February

Michele Boyle had this dream in Canberra, in the early hours:

We were in a room where one wall was half wood half glass. I was looking on at people who were lying down embracing Muktanand's body. They were crying. Then she sat up, smiled and thanked them for the triangular bunch of flowers they had woven into the top of her hair. She thought she was quite beautiful.

I can't remember if she said 'I'm only shamming' or I thought 'she was only shamming death'. I do recall that she was exuberant about being alive and letting them know that she was still alive and that she was grateful to them for making her beautiful by putting the flowers in her hair. It WAS her that said I'm only shamming but I can't be 100% certain it wasn't me who realised it with a surge of delight. More the former than the latter though.

Muktibodha came over to Rosary Crescent in the morning to help prepare for the funeral service. When she went into Muktanand's bedroom Muktibodha said she felt Muktanand's presence very strongly, very peaceful and happy. Later in the kitchen Muktibodha was preparing some flowers and it all got a bit messy. As she was looking around for something to clean up the mess, she felt Muktanand say 'don't worry'. Again, while cutting flower stems she felt Muktanand say 'don't hurt yourself'. At the wake in the afternoon Muktibodha felt Muktanand had gone.

* * *

Alison Lee (a long term yoga student):

On the day of Muktanand's funeral I arrived quite early and sat near the front of the church with Belinda. The church was still filling and I watched and waited silently as Muktanand's family concluded their modest religious ceremony. Just as the minister was saying his final words, suddenly a rather large butterfly burst up from behind him and flying straight above the altar fluttered gaily above the heads of growing congregation. I watched with amazement as she floated upwards spiralling towards the rear of the church and out the front door. I turned to Belinda and said "Did you see that?" "Yes" she grinned.

Later after the funeral at the graveside I noticed another butterfly. This one seemed to make her way above each person's head flitting from one crown to the next, like a bee, gathering pollen hovering from one flower to another. It reminded me of a meditation and awareness practice Muktanand taught us (I've forgotten the name of it). She would invite us to take our attention from sound to sound to sound. Moving our minds like a butterfly from one sound to the next without thinking, just noticing each sound. As I watched the butterfly flit so peculiarly down the long line of heads I wondered - Is this our Muktanand - coming to watch us say our goodbyes? And had it also been her in the church? I wondered what she would be thinking and imagined her saying "No need for all this fuss - look at me - I'm free!"

* * *

Michele Boyle describes visiting Muktanand where she was laid out in her bedroom:

Also, when on the day of the funeral I went inside her room for a meditation, I 'imagined' that she led me to a place and sat with me holding my hand. She said it was a good place and I felt that it was. It was enough to convince me that she is now reaping unmitigated contentment - which is the very least she deserves for her unfailing courage in everything she did.

Darshan (a senior yoga teacher who took over Authentic Yoga & Meditation):

The day of the funeral was more powerful than the 14th of February. When I arrived home Karine had arranged a small altar with Muktanand's photo. I have never been devotional before and Karine and I have very few photos of anyone in the house. The photo is now downstairs in the yoga room watching over us.

Since February 14 my personal practice has deepened considerably, I feel her inspiration, I feel like I'm sharing 'stuff' with her and more than ever she is my teacher. I feel I've developed more confidence with my inner life. It is only since Muktanand's passing that I've been using the tapes she gave me years ago. Once we started to work more professionally together I didn't really see her as a teacher.

I had enrolled in a Vipassana course that was due to start on Sunday 22nd February 2004, although I had doubts about the course and the teachers involved. On the evening of Saturday 21st February I listened to Muktanand's Essence of Breath tape for the first time. I then realised that all the instruction that I needed was on this tape, and there was no longer any need to continue searching. Since using these tapes I feel like I'm practising with a beginner's mind, as a student again.

* * *

On the evening of Friday 20 February, Sakshi, Gaynor and I were sitting chatting at an outside table at Ouzeri's restaurant in West End. It was after 8 pm, and I was watching people walking by. Every person appeared to be a very special and beautiful being of light, regardless their physical appearance or manner. In fact the variety of their physical appearances and clothing – fat, thin, old, young, male, female, plain, attractive, healthy, ill, self confident, self conscious, brightly coloured clothes, grubby clothes – was a source of delight. But though I was aware of physical appearances, this was secondary. Primarily people appeared to be mobile spheres of luminous energy.

The effect recurred several times over the next few weeks but it faded each time until it stopped altogether. For a month or so I thought this was due to a Muktanand Sangha (spiritual community) effect. Later – after hearing Kathy Turner's 14/2 story - I wondered whether it was a glimpse of how Muktanand saw people, but there was no conscious flavour of this at the time.

* * *

Natalie Fitzpatrick (massage therapist, acupuncturist, and friend):

I dream of Muktanand on the first night in the cemetery - her grave and body lie parallel to Max 'the wonder dog' and my bedroom window. In the dream I was taking care of her during her illness.

Natalie's 'wonder dog' Max died last year and is buried outside her bedroom window, opposite the cemetery.

* * *

In late December 1995 Muktanand dreamt about building a house in a community. At the end of her description of the dream she made a note of 'the Buddha's exclamation at the moment of his enlightenment (Tricycle, Spring 1995, p69)':

I wandered through the rounds of countless births
Seeking but not finding the builder of this house
Sorrowful indeed is birth again and again.
O housebuilder! You have now been seen.
You shall build the house no longer.
All your rafters have been broken.
Your ridgepole is shattered.
My mind has attained to unconditional freedom.
Achieved is the end of craving.

CHAPTER 8

FUNERAL SERVICE

20 February 2004
Uniting Church, Vulture St, West End

Order of Service

Introduction – Sakshi

“A Little Prayer” by Evelyn Glennie, played by Carmel McNeill

Sisters – Trish Stephens

Muktanand’s Way – Eoin Liebchin Meades

Gayatri Mantra – sung with accompaniment by Alissa Dobros

Message from Michele Burford read by Kerstin Leibchen Meades

The Garden – Belinda Cox

Darshan’s Thanks

J.S. Bach: Minuet 2 from “The Children’s Bach” played by Carmel McNeill

Muktanand’s Essence of Breath Meditation – Gaynor Long

Eulogy – John E Ransley

Shanti Path (Sanskrit and translation) – led by Sakshi

* * *

The funeral service is reproduced in the following pages, with a slight change to the order of speeches. The ‘Introduction’ is not included here as it is incorporated in the chapter ‘Introducing Muktanand’ at the beginning of the book. The ‘Message from Michele Burford’ can be found in the ‘Yoga Teacher’ chapter. Sakshi Winning was MC.

Sisters – Trish Stephens

Muktanand was born into a fairly conventional family. She was the eldest of three children, with myself and our brother Graham.

From an early age, she displayed a desire to lead people. We shared a bedroom for 16 years and she was quite happy to tell me what I should and shouldn't be doing and would go absolutely bananas if the room was in a mess. At one stage, things got so bad that we decided to divide the room up so she could have her half spotless. She ended up with more floor space than me, but luckily for me, the bedroom door was in my half, so she had to learn to negotiate fairly quickly.

She also displayed her desire to achieve and her disciplined personality whilst at school. She would go to bed at 7.00 p.m., sleep until midnight, study until 4 or 5 in the morning, then go back to bed for a few hours before going to school.

Muktanand and sport didn't mix. When she wasn't studying, you could usually find her on her bed, sucking her thumb and reading a book.

All the studying paid off. She came first in the class, Dux of the school and received a scholarship to go to Sydney University. At 17 she left home and entered the bohemian world of university students. From this point on, our lives were vastly different.

At 23 she went to India for 12 months to train to be a swami, but ended up staying for 12 years. Here her determination to succeed and her sheer stubbornness were valuable assets in dealing with the often harsh and difficult life she was living. Sometimes you received letters and sometimes you didn't. On at least two occasions, Mum had to contact Foreign Affairs to see if she was still alive. Mum gave up waiting to hear and went to India to see how she was going.

In India, her will to live was demonstrated when she managed to overcome a number of life threatening illnesses. But it wasn't all bad news. After a while she moved to Bangalore and to Coimbatore where she set up ashrams. Her clients were the rich and famous of India. She used to tell us that if people wanted to see her, they would send their drivers to pick her up. Life was good.

Fortunately for us, the Indian Government decided not to renew expatriate visas and she returned home.

When she first came home, things were difficult for her and it took a while to adjust back into the Australian way of life. She had never heard of an ATM and couldn't understand why we didn't need to go to the bank to withdraw money. Her Indian accent was so strong that many people found it difficult to believe that she was born in Australia. Three months after coming home, she went to Queensland to stay with John.

While she was away I married Vic. Two years after she returned we had Gareth and then we had Evan. When they were babies, she wasn't quite sure what to do with them. However, very soon she was more than happy to take on the role of Aunty. The boys thought it was cool that she was reading the same books as them and they could discuss the pros and cons of the latest Harry Potter book.

Most of you know the rest of the story from when she moved back to Queensland and opened her own Yoga School showing her determination to be the very best teacher she could.

I remember the day she phoned to tell me she had cancer and how scared she was. It was scary for us too, as you never knew when you saw her if it was going to be the last time.

From then on things turned full circle. In October, Mum and I came to visit Muktanand and John for three days. We had a great time doing sisterly things. I tinted her eyelashes, we looked at family photos of when we were young and chattered about the boys.

When I found out that Muktanand had cancer I was so angry. Why should this happen to someone so young? What were the doctors doing? But I don't feel that any more. I understand that her work on earth is done. I can see that she has achieved so much in her short life and that she had such a positive impact on people. To love and be loved by so many people is surely a magnificent achievement.

The family would like to thank all the people who helped look after Muktanand during her illness. I would especially like to thank Chandrabindu for preparing Muktanand's meals and to Sakshi and Kathy for their help, not only with Muktanand, but also for their support in this last week. Our hearts go out to John who gave Muktanand his love and constant support and for taking such good care of her.

Although she is no longer with us physically, I know each one of us will be touched by her spirit and remember her bright eyes and beautiful smile.

‘Muktanand’s Way’ – Eoin Liebchen-Meades

Firstly I would like to acknowledge the level of care given to Muktanand over the last few years. Sakshi, Kathy and many others had major & minor parts in that. Life called them and they answered - Life is happy. Mostly however, I wanted to acknowledge the meticulous care John gave to Muktanand, so her needs were well taken care of and she could totally give herself to the process.

When I said to John - "You have made a standard for the rest of us."

He answered - "Muktanand has really set the standard."

And though that may be true, it also shows the level of selflessness John had in the process.

"Behind every Great Woman is a good man".

Muktanand will be remembered for many things – her purity, exactness, pioneering spirit, and her need for cleanliness. But I think what will come through again and again was - she was a friend and a Spiritual Friend at that.

I remember well when my wife Kerstin first came to Australia: Muktanand took her under her wing. After the first time I drove her to Rosary Crescent she had to make it on her own and it was forever the standard for all her journeys around Brisbane. I would say – "You go Muktanand's way, then when you get there, turn left or right or whatever".

It was a standard - Muktanand's Way.

I think in so many ways she set a standard, her Yoga, her lifestyle, her way of life, were all something that we can measure up with 'Muktanand's Way'. It's a good way, a good standard for us all.

When Kerstin asked John if there were any requests for the funeral or arrangements made by Muktanand, John answered – “She didn't want to die. She wanted to live”. So in a way she never went up that street and yet here is her shell of a body that could no longer contact her Spirit. She has gone through a doorway that few of us can pierce. Although my wife Kerstin, in her dream, spent a busy night at the Wake with Muktanand talking to everyone.

But, has she died? For me, “Muktanand Lives”.

Those beautiful qualities, which she sent out into the world, live in us. As we treasure her and those qualities, they grow in these qualities, she and herself, us live in us. And when we leave our bodies (all of us someday will) it is those parts of us that have touched others that will carry us throughout time. This is our real inheritance to the world and others. It is this Love of how another has touched us that helps us grow and it is this Love that will, time and time again, draw us back together if we ever need to meet.

For me, “Muktanand Lives”.

I want to do a small reading. It's a Buddhist one as I have a Buddhist background. It's called: - Hakuin Zenji's Song of Zazen.

Now Zazen can be interpreted many ways but for me it's those moments when Mind, Body, Spirit, all fuse in Union of Being. It is moments of Enlightenment and whether you are with others or alone it is these moments that bless the earth, bless life. Muktanand's life was full of such moments of Enlightenment.

HAKUIN ZENJI'S "SONG of ZAZEN"

All beings by nature are Buddha,
as ice by nature is water.
Apart from water there is no ice;
apart from beings, no Buddha.

How sad that people ignore the near
and search for truth afar:
like someone in the midst of water
crying out in thirst;
like a child of a wealthy home
wandering among the poor.

Lost on dark paths of ignorance,
we wander through the Six Worlds;
from dark path to dark path-
when shall we be freed from birth and death?

Oh, the zazen of the Mahayana!
To this the highest praise!
Devotion, repentance, training,
the many paramitas-
all have their source in zazen.

Those who try zazen even once
wipe away beginningless crimes.
Where are all the dark paths then?
The Pure Land itself is near.

Those who hear this truth even once
and listen with a grateful heart,
treasuring it, revering it,
gain blessings without end.

Much more, those who turn about
and bear witness to self-nature,
self-nature that is no-nature,
go far beyond mere doctrine.

Here effect and cause are the same;
the Way is neither two nor three.
With form that is no-form,
going and coming, we are never astray;
with thought that is no-thought,
even singing and dancing are the voice of the Law.

How boundless and free is the sky of Samadhi!
How bright the full moon of wisdom!
Truly, is anything missing now?
Nirvana is right here, before our eyes;
this very place is the Lotus Land;
this very body, the Buddha.

Lastly, I just recalled that when Ramana Maharishi, a great Indian Sage, was dying of cancer, one of his disciples said – “Please Ramana don’t leave us”. Ramana looked up and smiled his radiant smile and said with total purity – “Where could I go?”

Gayatri Mantra - Sung by Alissa Dobros

Om bhu bhuvaah svaha
Tat savitur varenyam
Bhargo devasya ddheemahi
Dhiyo yo naha prachodayat

Om ... on the physical, subtle and causal planes
we meditate on the divine light of that
adorable sun of spiritual consciousness.
May it stimulate our power of spiritual perception.

The Garden – Belinda Cox

In my view a great teacher is someone who:

- Walks their talk
- Is passionate about their topic and implants that in their student's heart and ...
- Someone who has internalised their understanding of a subject to a level where they not only embody it, but can present the information in varied and meaningful ways that assist understanding.

To say Muktanand was a great teacher does not seem enough. She was all of this and more. Muktanand didn't just teach "yoga", she taught how to live with a yogic attitude and how to ground spiritual practice in daily life.

When Muktanand first became aware of her diagnosis, it seemed like eternity before we could talk about it or communicate with Muktanand. Initially Muktanand had told us that she felt her life had been a waste and she didn't feel that she had achieved very much. We were incredulous, but still unable to express our feelings.

When the news of her illness became more public, I wrote Muktanand a letter outlining just how much she meant to me and had contributed to us all. What I felt was Muktanand had been like a spiritual earth mother and the wise feminine role model that we seemed to have lost in society. I told Muktanand that I saw her as an intuitive gardener:

- Preparing our souls as the soil
- Tending to each student's individual needs
- Appreciating and supporting our different qualities
- Nurturing and encouraging our growth

I hoped, after ceasing teaching, that Muktanand now saw what she had created – A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN. After receiving the letter, Muktanand rang to say how much this meant to her, but I didn't fully appreciate its true significance at the time.

After Muktanand's passing, John sent through a dream that she had when leaving Monghyr for Bangalore, which supports this vision. The following is an excerpt of Muktanand's recollection of the dream:

"Just before I went to Bangalore, I had this dream. I don't think I even knew I was going to be sent. I thought I was only going for three weeks.

I dreamt I met Swami Satyananda. He took me outside and showed me a wide expanse of desert. It was all brown and quite barren, except for Spinifex-like bushes. It was very hot and dusty and dry, no trees. He said to me that I had to make this wasteland into a garden. He said, 'You know how to do that don't you?' I said no, I didn't. He said 'How could you not know when you've been here all this time?'

Anyway he whisked me into his laboratory inside. There were long benches with all kinds of laboratory equipment on them, such as Bunsen burners and titration pipettes. He started working very quickly with some flasks. He didn't explain what he was doing, but I was able to watch as he ran around the laboratory and made up what seemed like magic potions. I was amazed at all the things swamiji knew. I don't remember more than that. When I woke up I had the feeling I had been taught something important.

The full import of that dream didn't really come to me until much later ... that's when it hit me that this was a form of initiation in dream. Swamiji was trying to teach me something. He was implanting things in me that would come out. In fact, the knowledge was within and this was a way of transmitting the knowledge."

What is also special is that on the last retreat with Muktanand – Easter of the year she received her diagnosis - I had a series of meditations involving a sacred garden being created in my yard. Each time I sat down to meditate over the 4 days, another layer of my garden appeared along with other visions.

Almost 3 years later, my sacred garden was finally able to take shape and was scheduled for completion before Xmas last year. After considerable delay for various reasons, the plants only went in last Friday and Saturday. On Saturday morning the 14th of February, I awoke and suddenly needed to place my sculpture - a trio of peaceful Buddha's - under the feature tree in the garden's sacred centre ... they had been in storage for over a year ... I heard of Muktanand's passing soon after this.

Muktanand, I hope you can now view the extensive spiritual landscape that you have created. We are left living within and breathing your life's contribution. We appreciate the beauty of this garden and thank you for your vision, the knowledge you have implanted in all of us, your wizardry and your beautiful creation. Hari Om Tat Sat.

Darshan's Thanks

I had hoped that by listening to others today I might gain a better understanding of Muktanand's role in my own life. It was through friends and colleagues of Muktanand that I learnt of her experiences and how she had touched others with her knowledge and assistance.

When I observed her teaching what amazed me was how simply and practically she could explain the different ideas, systems and imagery of yoga. Whether we were physical, emotional, devotional, or spiritual in nature, all of us could have a very real experience of the

divine while in her presence.

My fondest memories of Muktanand are of when she was her most direct, blunt and maybe a little rude. I treasured knowing that she could again pierce my ego and bring me back to Mother Earth.

Teaching and working with her over the years never really brought me any closer to her. Many times I'd think of phoning or wanting to speak to her about different issues or questions that I had. These issues became trivial when in her presence and eventually the answers came from within.

I'd like to share some of my questions and Muktanand's replies:

- Once before going to Mangrove, I visited her hoping to gain an insight of what may lay ahead for me. She handed me the airbus timetable so that I could get from Sydney to Gosford without too much drama.
- Before beginning teaching at the Kurilpa Hall to larger numbers of people, I thought she might be able to offer some advice. When I approached her she proceeded to explain using words and diagrams how the room was to be set out and most importantly how the storage cupboard was to be packed.
- I asked her for her advice on teaching Tratak, candle meditation. She said to use a saucer so there wasn't any wax spilt on the floor or mats. If wax was spilt, she provided me with detailed notes on the materials and procedures that were to be followed to have it removed.

The teachings of yoga strongly influence my life and Muktanand enabled me to experience the teachings. She helped awaken many of us; she will remain within me. I'd like to finish with a verse from "High on Waves" (changed just a little):

My gracious sage has gifted me with her secrets
And now I know
There is no answer,
Only further questing towards
That which is wholly beyond
Both the anguish and joy of living.

Muktanand's Essence of Breath Meditation - Gaynor Long

Muktanand would not run a yoga workshop, lecture or talk without incorporating at least some aspect of yoga practice. It seems fitting to do the same today.

Muktanand was known for her wonderful approach to so many traditional practices. One of these is her Essence of Breath meditation. Gaynor Long, Muktanand's friend, student and Muktanand-trained Yoga teacher, will guide us through a short version of this meditation.

Before we begin, I would like to share some writing I discovered from Muktanand's notes,

regarding her attitude towards breath as a meditative tool:

“With our breath we incorporate something that exists outside our being and we give it back to the external realm after a short while. Thus, in the experience of breath, we become fully aware of life as never-ending change expressed in a continuous process of taking and giving.”

* * *

Before I pass you over to John, a few words relating to Muktanand’s teachings, with acknowledgement of Thich Nhat Hanh:

For transformation to take place we have to practice awareness all day long, not just on our meditation cushion.

Just as vegetation is sensitive to sunlight, mental formations are sensitive to awareness. Awareness is the energy that can embrace and transform all mental formation.

Awareness helps us to leave behind “upside-down” perceptions and wakes us up to what is happening. When we practice awareness we are in contact with life and we can offer our love and compassion to bring about joy and happiness.

Do not lose yourself in the past.

Do not lose yourself in the future.

Do not get caught up in your anger, worries or fear.

Come back to the present moment and touch life deeply.

Eulogy – John E Ransley

Muktanand had a rich and varied life and it is not possible to canvass more than a few aspects of that life as I knew it. Because of the pressure of time what follows is a kind of riff on her life; please excuse me if it seems disjointed.

It might help to explain that I knew her before she went to India. We met in Sydney in 1969, through our mutual friend Chris Powell, and became close about a year later. In 1971 I moved to Toowoomba to take up a lecturing job in geology, and in 1972 I managed to entice her to join me there.

We were interested in many of the same things, but for my part the key elements of her attraction were her bright intelligence, her strong personality and her sharp tongue – she could be bitingly funny. Plus all the attributes of a beautiful young woman, including especially her big blue eyes.

One of the particular interests that drew us together at that time was the anti-psychiatry movement, best represented in our minds by R D Laing. But there were also many shared interests unconventional, including the counter culture, the alternative substance culture, the hippy movement and fierce opposition to the Vietnam war.

Muktanand had commenced studies for a Bachelor of Arts degree at Sydney University when I met her, but although she had done brilliantly wherever she had tried, she was too young and too much in the turmoil of youth to make a go of it then.

I am not quite sure when she first developed her interest in yoga, but I think it was during her Sydney university days. I know that she sampled the Indonesian mystical group Subud, then, as well as Bob Gould's meetings above his bookshop, where he tried to interest innocent young first years in anarchism and socialism.

When I met Muktanand she was going with John Kearins, a very fine person who was her first serious boyfriend. So I think it is true to say that I was Muktanand's second boyfriend. We had many adventures at that time, together with our friends Chris Powell and Tony Harper, who are here today.

After she came to Toowoomba Muktanand developed her yoga practice much more intensively, helped and encouraged by June Henry and her then husband, Karl Jackson. Muktanand always said she loved the physical practices of yoga, despite being a determined anti-sport student when she was going to school.

Although she lived with me when she first came to Toowoomba, she moved out later so that she could have a flat of her own. Almost certainly my place wasn't clean enough, and she didn't want to be stuck cleaning up after me. But also it made it much easier for her to do her daily yoga practice.

We had drifted apart by the time she went to India in August 1974, but I kept in touch and tracked her down to the Monghyr ashram in early 1976 – what is now known as the “old” BSY. I stayed there for about three months, working first in the press under Hariprem, and then in the editing department under Nischalanand. While I was there I edited the first version of Swami Satyananda's Yoga Nidra book.

During that time I stayed at the Skye ashram some distance away, while Muktanand was accommodated in the main ashram. Relationships were actively discouraged so I didn't see too much of her, but I remember that on the second day that I was there Muktanand “stole” some things I'd left lying around and later returned them, just to disabuse me of any pre-conceptions I may have had about the nature of the ashram.

I had always intended to travel to England so when I finished the Yoga Nidra book I started to think about moving on again. What prompted me to leave was when Swami Satyadharma pointed out that I had started to speak to newcomers like I was an old ashram hand.

During the twelve or so years Muktanand was in India she didn't write very often because ashram policy discouraged correspondence. Nevertheless we maintained sufficient contact to enable me to follow her ashram career.

When she returned to Australia in late 1985 I was desperate and dateless and rushed to Sydney to meet her during the Christmas holidays. Once again I managed to entice her to Queensland. By this time she was a mature woman, still young, with a hoard of fascinating stories about India and an intellectual and credential hunger to finish her university studies. The photo on the order of service dates from this period. It was immediately apparent to my

untrained eye that she had developed extraordinary skills as a yoga teacher, and that she had acquired a great depth of knowledge of the yoga tradition, at every point through the filter of intensive personal practice.

Initially I invited her into a shared house in Miller Street, Hill End, but it was not long before she started agitating for cleaner premises. In August 1986 I purchased the house at 18 Rosary Crescent and we have lived there ever since.

* * *

Many people have said to me “what can you say” about Muktanand’s premature death. One thing I would like to say is that in Muktanand’s Master of Letters thesis on yoga psychology, she writes the following about “*abhinivesha*”, a Sanskrit term for one of the “*kleshas*” or obstructions that prevent the ultimate recognition of the self as pure awareness:

“*Abhinivesha* is clinging to life, or conversely, fear of death (Yogasutra 2:9). However it is extended to all forms of clinging and attachment, of which clinging to life is the strongest. Like the other *klesha* it has its origin in ignorance of the transcendent nature of the self, which prevent us from recognising death – not as an end – but as yet another transformation of consciousness. Even the wise – the seers of the self – are subject to clinging and fear of death, albeit in attenuated form, indicating just how strong this tendency is in human nature.” [p.61]

Muktanand would certainly scoff at the suggestion that she was one of “the wise”. She had the same measure of the fear of dying that most – but not all – of us have. This was certainly a major factor in her fierce struggle to live, although there were other strong factors as well – such as her desire to write the definitive book on yoga psychology, her two thirds completed translation of the Durga Path, her plans to retire to her country cottage, and her desire to simply have more fun and spend more time relaxing with friends.

In her fight against her illness, she drew strength and inspiration from whatever seemed to work, but she drew inspiration particularly from dreams and strength from the story of Durga’s battle with the demons. I should explain that Durga is an Indian deity, possibly the last thing you would think that Muktanand would be interested in, but you have to remember she was brought up a Catholic, and they have a very strong tradition of devotion to a powerful mother of god figure.

Two major dreams seemed to show how Muktanand’s illness would end. In the one given to her by a friend, she emerges into sunshine, surrounded by light and love. In the other there is similarly joy and light and an enthusiastic kiss for someone called Kundan.

Both major dreams were murky as to whether or not she actually would live through her illness, but she chose what she thought was the most optimistic ending. These and other dreams sustained her throughout the two years of her illness, and Durga’s successful battle with the demons inspired her to face the worst parts with great courage. Like Durga she was literally involved in a fight to the death.

This was not the first time in her life where the interpretation of her dreams was a life and death issue, but it was obviously the first time where the stakes were so high. Several times she said to me that if her interpretation turned out to be wrong, at least she would have

avoided a lot of mental suffering.

Muktanand's dilemma was encapsulated in the quote I have already read from her thesis. Muktanand never claimed to "know" that death was "yet another transformation of consciousness" although she had friends who did. Her integrity and intellectual honesty prevented her from clutching at this notion for reassurance, even though it is a core teaching of the yoga tradition.

As best as we can determine, avoiding hindsight and embellishment as much as humanly possible, the five of us privileged to be present when Muktanand died believe that at the moment of her death she received the transformation of consciousness that had eluded her all her life.

* * *

Muktanand was a senior teacher in the Sivananda – Satyananda lineage, formally recognised by her title of Yoga Acharya. In an opinion shared by many people she brought to her teachings an absolutely unique combination of heart, mind and physical skill. If she had had sufficient health and energy to run week-long silent retreats modelled on the retreats she did at the Mangrove Mountain ashram, serious students from all over Australia would have been breaking down the doors to get in.

In her last years Muktanand often expressed the wish that she could just go somewhere in Australia and do a silent retreat run by someone else in the yoga style that she loved.

She also would have loved to access for herself a more senior practitioner in the yoga tradition, but this wasn't available in Australia and she felt that she couldn't afford to stop work and go looking in India.

If Muktanand had any one regret, it would have been that she didn't stop work much sooner. In her collection of "inspiring quotations" in her Retreat folder, she has several quotes about work. One comes from Brother David Steindl-Rast who points out that the Chinese word for 'busy' is composed of two characters: 'heart' and 'killing'. The other quote comes from Bertrand Russell who says "One of the signs of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one's work is terribly important."

* * *

Although she only left a few scraps of writing - a tiny part of what she was capable of - we have at least plenty of photos!

I have a sense she will always be with us in spirit in whatever way we remember her: as lover; yoga friend; strict asana teacher; heart meditation teacher; skilful counsellor; bossy boots sister or loving daughter.

One of her favourite mantras was OM, which can also be used as a form of salutation: OM to you Muktanand!

I would like to finish with a simple poem I discovered in Muktanand's things written on the 18 January just past.

BEING HERE

my reward
for getting up early –
the first sunlight
gilding the gums
blue sky and fragrant air
washed clean by days of rain;
the quiet, the birds –
that spurt of joy!

Shanti Path

Muktanand was known for her wonderful approach to so many traditional practices. One of her best loved practices was her Essence of Breath meditation. The following quotation comes from Muktanand's notes, regarding her attitude towards breath as a meditative tool:

“With our breath we incorporate something that exists outside our being and we give it back to the external realm after a short while. Thus, in the experience of breath, we become fully aware of life as never-ending change expressed in a continuous process of taking and giving.”

Shanti Path

*Asato maa sud gumuya
Tumuso maa jyotir gumuya
Mrityor maa umritum gumuya*

*Saarveshum swustir bhuvutoo
Sarveshum shantir bhuvutoo
Sarveshum poornum bhuvatoos
Sarveshum mungulum bhuvutoo
Loka sumustaa sukhino bhuvuntoo*

*Om tryumbukum yujaama hai
Sughundhim pushti vaardhunum
Uwaar ukamiva bundhunaat
Mrityor mukshee umumritaata*

Muktanand's Translation of Shanti Path

From untruth lead me to truth
From darkness lead me to light
Lead me from death to immortal essence

To all beings, goodwill
To all beings, peace
To all beings, fulfillment
To all beings, favourable conditions
Happiness to all beings in all realms

Salutations to the one whose third eye is open
Whose very being is like a sweet fragrance
Preserve me from death until I attain spiritual maturity
So that I pass into eternal consciousness
As easily as the ripe fruit falling from the vine

PART THREE

AFTERWARDS

Buddhist Song for the Dying

This body is not me
I am not caught by this body
I am light without boundaries.
I have never been born,
I will never die.
Look at the stars, the moon, the sun, the trees, the oceans, the blue sky ...
Everything is a manifestation of consciousness.

Since time immemorial I have been free.
Birth and death are only doors through which I pass in and out.
Birth and death are only a hide and seek game;
So take my hand,
Smile to me, say goodbye,
For just as we have already met
We will meet again.

CHAPTER 9

DREAMING OF MUKTANAND

Sakshi describes this experience from Tuesday 24 February 2004:

After Muktanand's death I had been wondering if I was ever going to hear from Muktanand after hearing stories from other people. After all she was my good mate.

I was preparing my house for my first yoga classes after the funeral. It was then that I felt an overwhelming sense of Muktanand's presence. I hadn't been expecting it and it was very powerful and very 'Muktanand'. There was an amazingly warm glow and a real vibe in the house. As I was vacuuming, preparing the room for the class, I felt Muktanand say 'life goes on'. As I sat and awaited my students Muktanand was saying to me: 'this is what you do' (as in - you teach yoga - get on with it) and 'here are your classes'. I lit a candle and felt Muktanand supporting me. It was a very special and very beautiful feeling.

Butterflies

Sambuddhanand (Yeppoon), 27 February 2004.

I have a regular massage with a healer and psychic called Elaine. She is also a yoga teacher and had mantra diksha via letter from Swami Niranjan when I went down in 2000 to Sydney. Only on very odd occasions will she express something of a psychic nature.

I had already told Elaine that Muktanand had passed on. I was lying face down on the massage table and thought of Muktanand. I said something to Elaine about it – I can't remember my exact words at all.

Elaine said (approximately): 'There's a butterfly right here, you don't have to worry about her any more, she's free!' Or alternatively, 'I see a butterfly here. Don't worry about Muktanand. She is now free'. I then told Elaine Muktanand's name meant liberation or freedom. It did feel like an experience, not just words, so to me it doesn't matter how real or psychic it was.

* * *

Patricia Stephens (Muktanand's sister), 18 & 28 February 2004.

Mum and I were cleaning John's house on the Wednesday before Muktanand's funeral. Mum was dusting the book shelves in the area with all the books near the entrance to the house. Mum pointed out a large brown butterfly that was sitting on the bookshelf. It was a medium brown colour and had two shiny purple patches on the bottom of its wings. Mum dusted around the butterfly and it didn't seem too bothered as it stayed there and didn't fly away. I thought it was rather odd that the butterfly was in the house as all the doors and windows had been closed to keep the heat out as we had the air conditioner going day and night. The door to Muktanand's room was also closed with the air conditioner on to try to keep the flowers in her room fresh. I didn't see it the next day, but thought I could hear it fluttering around like it was flapping against some paper or something.

About a week or so after we came home from the funeral, I noticed a large butterfly in the

garage of our house as I was driving out of the garage. After I got home the butterfly had flown in to our bedroom and was flying around coming very close to me and landing on the mirror near my bed. I was very surprised to see that it was exactly the same coloured butterfly with the same purple patches as the one I had seen at Muktanand's home. It was most unusual to have a butterfly in the house at all, let alone one the same as the one I had seen at Muktanand's home.

It flew around the house for a number of days going from room to room. Eventually, the butterfly ended up in my son Evan's room. He was not very happy that it was flying around and had landed on his computer. It had been in the house for a while and I didn't want it dying and finding it on the floor, so I caught it and let it out the patio door. My sister-in-law, who was staying with us at the time, commented that it didn't want to leave, as it kept knocking up against the glass doors. I felt bad about putting it out, but in the end felt it was best set free and eventually it flew into the garden.

* * *

Kathy Turner dream, Sunday night 29 February 2004.

I come to this large house – the kitchen. John Ransley's mother has just died. I felt so sorry for John – Muktanand had just died and now his mother. They had already put her in her coffin. I see a little movement and then quite a lot – she coughs up water (crystal clear and green) – it pours out of her mouth and nose and runs down her face and chin. I say 'I think she is still alive'.

Then John's mother is now Muktanand but in the form of a white figure of a small girl of about 8–10. She has no features whatsoever, just a distinctly formed white shape, no clothes even, with the quality of being a young Muktanand. She actually slips (with some real agility and flexibility and speed!!) out the foot end of the coffin.

I am worried that John is not yet up to the shock of her still being alive. I feel something has to be done to prepare him for this. So I help pull Muktanand back in the coffin and say 'Go back to sleep for a while'. She does, snuggling under the coffin cloth as if it were a sheet. I am worried. She won't like waking up and finding herself in a coffin, I think. Ah well, I think, that is later. This gives us time to sort out something (prepare John for the news).

Kathy comment: That same night my daughter Zalehah had her dream with the statement that Muktanand was still alive. I felt we'd both shared a dream.

Later when I told Rosemary of my dream she said that her first dream also included an initial confusion as to whether it was somebody's mother who was dying. Later again when I told John of my dream he said Muktanand's doctor and he had both made a link between his mother's death and Muktanand's – and his father and himself.

I feel this is a dream of Muktanand (with elements of my psyche) because of the way both Zalehah and I had the same dream message (Muktanand is still alive, although she is dead) and the way my dream made links to Rosemary's dream and to John's own personal connections in terms of mother/Muktanand– and I had not been aware of any of this. Hence the dream seems to me to have considerable "power" in it, rather than being merely a dream about my own personal psyche.

* * *

Zalehah Turner dream, Sunday night 29 February 2004.

I come into an entrance. The kitchen. A threshold. Muktanand is bent over the sink, taken with the feeling of the importance of the moment. Preparing, but pressed by her lack of space/time. Her attention is focussed on the task at hand but pulled towards the wish to have everything as it should be. John was on her right. Drying, working attentively, responding to Muktanand's unspoken desires. But not as efficient or as fast as her.

Muktanand feels driven: there is so much to do, so little time. She keeps repeating 'I'm not alive, I'm not alive'. She glances in my direction but then back. 'I'm not alive'.

I respond: 'You're here now'. She repeats: 'I'm not alive,' emphasizing her loss of life and lack of time. I take a step towards her, stressing the importance of the moment. 'You're here now. You're dead, you're alive. You're both.'

Muktanand is very slight, neither thin nor sick; strikingly pale. Her head is shaven and she looks about the age she was when I did the cleaning for her at Rosary Crescent. She is wearing a white muslin gown, a flowing sacred white scarf (kata). Ethereal. A priestess. Her face featureless, an image of itself, a crescent moon. Her essence condensed, yet extremely light.

Zalehah comment: Usually I have lucid dreams: surreal more often than not, thick with the weight of images. This dream was striking in its simplicity.

Last Class

On Sunday 29 February I woke up briefly in the middle of the night and was aware of at least two dreams with the theme of preparation involving Muktanand before her death or departure. I was too tired to write anything down.

Then the next night, Monday 1 March, I had the following dream:

We are preparing for Muktanand to cease teaching. There is time for me to prepare, like cleaning up my email, and the thought I need to prepare a class, but then the thought that Muktanand is doing that. Muktanand will do one last sequence of a standard sort of class – she selects this and that.

In the dream we are at Carrington Road Hornsby and it is late. The lights are out but my mother is still awake, expecting dad. There is someone at the front door, she asks me to get it and I see a shadowy figure through the glass of the front door. It is dad and I lead him from the front door into the lounge room, and tell him that mum is awake. I also tell him something about Muktanand. Then the dream changes and it is Swamiji coming to see Muktanand, who has been expecting him, or not.

John comment: This dream is the source of the idea of Muktanand's 'Last Class' (a title suggested by Kathy Turner). I lived at the Hornsby address in Sydney until I was 16 years old. My mother Lucy also died from metastatic breast cancer. Swamiji is Swami Satyananda: two days after this dream I received a phone call from the Satyananda Ashram Mangrove

Mountain notifying me that Swami Niranjan was sending a letter of condolence.

* * *

On Tuesday 2 March I finally got around to a tree pruning task that Muktanand had wanted done before she passed away. Some branches overhanging the footpath at the front of 18 Rosary Crescent.

Anyway, I got out the big shears and went and chopped the offending branches down. As I was coming inside the front gate thinking I was finished, three birds – three Blue-faced Honeyeaters - set up a great racket on the low branch of a tree that grows in front of our front porch. Right beside them was a large dead branch that had fallen on the porch roof and was hanging over the edge. It had come off during the last storm I think, or maybe the one before. So I took it as a signal that the dead branch needed to be cut down as well, and dutifully did so.

I have seen a pair of Blue-faced Honeyeaters around in the back yard over the last couple of months, but they are usually very shy and fly away as soon as they see you. This was the first time I had seen three of them together, plus they were very bold until they got my attention. Although I have often seen the pair of honeyeaters since, I have not seen three together.

When he came at 1.30 am to certify death, Muktanand's doctor advised me to keep a sharp lookout for small signs, especially from nature, especially from birds.

* * *

John Ransley dreams, Wednesday 3 March 2004.

I am on the seashore and Kathy is holding a Muktanand coffin or construct in the water. Either I have been holding one too or there are other people holding similar constructs. Some sort of ceremony is being conducted or nearing completion. There is a voice-over which says 'Ask for a Dakini and you will get one', and Kathy hands me Muktanand in the form of a big white egg – elongated and elliptical rather than chook shaped – which requires two arms to hold it. I am now half awake and I wonder what to do with the egg, should it be kept warm at a constant temperature? Then I am dreaming again and there is an image of me holding an elaborate white ceramic pipe-like thing, a vertical cylinder, and the egg being inserted into the bottom end of the pipe.

An egg and a birth canal?

I am driving back from the island – like North Stradbroke Island – after going there to look for a place to buy or a place to build a house, close to a hamlet or perhaps close to the sea. I am driving up a hilly curve when I see a pram or bike or scooter coming in the opposite direction. It crashes on the other side of road. The person inside is a baby or child all wrapped up in white, like swaddling clothes. She is riding in her own little vehicle.

I stop and go to help and it is a beautiful baby or even a little girl, and I offer to take her home. She doesn't say where she lives but she takes me there anyway. She starts

out wrapped up like a baby but by the time we get to her house she is talking like a little girl. She talks and seems to become a beautiful little girl and is very friendly and interested in me.

At the house she says mum must be home because through the open front door we can see a backyard lawn where we can see a yoga instructor. We go in and I explain what's happened to the mother, who is gorgeous looking, albeit with a big nose. I am as friendly as possible to the mother because I would like to see the little girl again, and she would like to see me too. I tell the mother she has a beautiful child and she must have been beautiful too when she was a child.

Then I go to leave, but notice another daughter now, who is plainer looking than her sister (but in general appearance reminds me of a particular photo of Muktanand). I don't say anything to this sister, I ignore her a bit I suppose, and she looks as if she feels left out. I leave, but after driving away up the hill, I turn around and go back to check on the exact house number, on the right hand side of the road. But I get lost, and have to stop the car -- the Renault -- to get out and look at house numbers. The dream ends with me checking out a sporty new car, similar to mine, with the doors unlocked.

* * *

Kathy Turner dream, Sunday 7 March 2004 (probably the night of 6 March).

I am with John and another person going to show them Muktanand. I was worried for all the time I wasn't sure she actually was dead. I felt she was still alive. We came to an open hole on the edge of a giant mountain -- at its peak -- beautiful green grass all around -- that lovely thick springy mountain grass.

Yes, there was Muktanand, still sitting up (with her incredible straightness and ease). Yes she was alive but not able to speak (and it felt as though she couldn't see either -- certainly her eyes were shut but it seemed a deeper reason that she couldn't see). She was wearing a dress that appeared to be of a green and yellow brocade sort of material. Muktanand was facing towards the east, not over the edge of the mountain -- I had the feeling there was a vast vista of peaks in that direction. So from my point of view she seemed to be facing an odd direction because I would naturally have looked out over the edge!!! (I felt there was nothing in "front" of Muktanand).

I am to Muktanand's left and slightly lower down (and hence really behind her), John is to her right and in front and the other person, who could well have been Sakshi (she had that feel about her but she was not clear in any way to me in the dream) was slightly higher up although still a little to the right.

I felt Muktanand's hands -- they were still warm. She was moving her hands slowly in a sort of ritualistic manner, palms down and moving them in two different planes at elbow height -- it reminded me a bit of the small movements that synchronized swimmers use in water to keep themselves afloat and enable themselves to do amazing feats in a foreign medium!!

I felt we should definitely pull her out as she was not dead. But I noticed I was

standing right on the edge and I'd have to pull hard to get her out. I'd easily topple over the edge. I couldn't do that.

Kathy comment: I felt this dream was more a personal one – ie it seemed to me to not be so much about Muktanand but about what all the experiences after her death show: that consciousness lives on in some form after death. I'm sure the wish not to pull Muktanand out of the hole is my deep desire not to look clearly at that fact – I certainly feel that if I do my whole world will fall away – of course, I will look at it!!!!

* * *

On the evening of Sunday 7 March 2004 I wrote the following note in my journal about Muktanand:

Protocols: can't talk with her; can't see her; can't hear her; can't touch her; can't sense her materially. Communication only in terms of dreams or, exceptionally, by 'feeling' or sensing.

* * *

Gaynor Long, Monday lunchtime, 8 March 2004.

Sakshi and I were on a shopping expedition. I was looking at a yoga book display in a newsagent at Victoria Point and Sakshi was somewhere else in the shop. I started to feel Muktanand very strongly, feel her energy vibration.

But simultaneously I could see her out of the corner of my eye; she was standing facing me about a metre away from me on my right side. Just standing, not moving, with a little smile and a feeling of goodwill, an enjoyment of looking. She was dressed all in white, very loose flowing material, like one of her dresses. Muktanand and her dress were the same colour, an opaque white. She wasn't as transparent as I would have expected her to look. When I turned my head to look at her there was nothing there."

I had not been expecting to see her. It was nice to see her but nicer in many ways to feel her, very close. The feeling was very, very strong and that's what prompted me to look. I thought she must have come to go shopping with us, with the girls. I have not dreamed about her or been aware of her in my yoga classes since she passed away. The other outstanding time I felt her was at Rosary Crescent on Monday 16 February.

Gaynor's daylight experience seems to be a response to my journal entry the previous evening.

On this day I sent a broadcast email requesting accounts of dreams and stories about Muktanand before and after her death. Around this time I also commenced yoga classes with Gaynor, something apparently predicted by Muktanand's wave dream.

* * *

John Ransley, two dreams, 10 March 2004.

A Durga devotional costume or dress is discovered amongst Muktanand's things. Then I see Muktanand dressed in the costume. Although her body looks limp, she is being lifted somewhere, apparently being taken to a Durga temple in Bangalore.

I am coming from the bedroom and as I peek around the lounge wall, I see Muktanand laid out on a sloping bench or platform higher than a bed. She has her eye pillow on and is covered by the elephant pattern douna and her stomach is very large. She seems to be alive. Then there is a beautiful card from her with a graphic design - maybe a flower design - on the front. The inscription inside reads: 'Have you noticed that from here, the nature of love is ...' and some more words I can't decipher or remember'.

* * *

Gabrielle Huggett dream, 15 March 2004.

I dreamt last night I decided to do a beginners' yoga class again and Muktanand was my teacher and it was so nice to be in her presence again. The Rosary Crescent room was packed full of people. She was wearing these strangely matching clothes that were not her style at all! The clothes were T-shirt type material, blue flowery, daggy looking, short sleeved top and I think long pants. She had that bob hairstyle again.

* * *

Samadhi (Tasmania) emails, 10, 18 March 2004.

I have been feeling Muktanand very close. I was lying in bed the other night and worrying about money and getting my shed built before winter and I clearly heard Muktanand's voice saying 'Don't worry Samadhi, we are looking after you, everything will be alright'. Since then people have been loaning me money and my shed is progressing very quickly. It is a miracle for my car broke down and cost me \$1600, more than I had in the bank! Thank YOU, my dear little friend.

I have heard her voice saying 'Samadhi, teach bliss, that is what your name means so teach it!' So I am! I never had the nerve to do it before. The visualisations that I am doing with people are totally different. Full of surrounding the body with love and kindness, and breathing it into the whole body.

* * *

Karunamitra Dreams (India), 18 March 2004.

I have had dreams in which Muktanandaji figured, after her death. After all, her time of suffering and death affected me deeply. She was so much in my thoughts and I relived so many occasions, especially the retreats which she led. I usually have very vivid dreams and I accept that one's dreams put one in touch with one's inner self. The details of the dreams usually escape soon after I get on with my day, but a good feeling remains. In this case, there is always a feeling of sadness, but it is soon overtaken with a sense of peace and calm.

* * *

Subhana Barzaghi dream (Sydney), 21 March 2004.

A week or so ago you asked about whether anyone had a dream of Muktanand. I had a brief dream a couple of nights ago, I had a dream of hanging out with Muktanand,

we were chatting, immersed in conversation together, we were holding hands and it was like two sisters, only closer than sisters, dharma sisters, it was a sweet, light, joyful contact. I felt close to Muktanand and grateful for this dream. We all walk, hand in hand in the great dream of the dharma, the illuminating spiritual consciousness.

* * *

John Ransley dream, Monday 22 March 2004.

I come around a corner and start to come through a door and I see Muktanand standing side-on, as if she is standing in front of a mirror - for example her dressing table mirror - and maybe she has just put on some lipstick. She is dressed in black, a familiar old black T-shirt and black tracksuit pants and her lips are red. She looks like she did before she became sick. She turns around and gives me a big smile and we come together for a big hug and kiss. The feeling is very warm and friendly and loving.

John comment: Although it seemed to be very short this dream was quite unique, like no other dream of or about Muktanand that I have had this year. Sakshi wondered whether there was a connection between this dream and the finish of Muktanand's October Wave Dream where, after negotiating the artificial barrier (death?) she wrote 'I walk up to Kundan and give him an enthusiastic kiss'.

* * *

On 5 April June Henry, Muktanand's yoga teacher from Toowoomba, called to tell me she wants to include a Muktanand Memorial Prize in the May graduation ceremony for her first batch of teacher graduates from Yoga Queensland.

Tibetan Buddhist Meditation

Emilia Della Torre Meditation (Armidale), 6 April 2004.

Monday evening of the 29 March Muktanand came to me during my evening meditation. It was a meditation on joy. Muktanand was in her usual bodily form of golden light: a radiant deep-golden light - rich and translucent; shimmering and soft. She was smiling her gorgeous smile and her eyes were sparkling/alive/clever/warm/loving/larrikin-eyes. She completely radiated - purely and simply - golden joy. I breathed in that joy with my mind's eye. We connected. I breathed out my love and I delighted in this new connection that we made. I forever hold her in my heart.

The 49 days of Muktanand's Bardo ended Saturday 3 April just after midnight. She visited me the Monday just before this, indicating her radiant transition to a pure land. Just for the record, it was during an early evening meditation (rather than the during the phowa practice) that Muktanand and I caught up.

Emilia's response to my request for explication, 8 April 2004:

Funny. I hesitated to use the expression 'usual bodily form' when I wrote it because I knew it was imperfect. But it felt 'right'. I will try and tease out what lies behind this phrase.

Usual

What I meant was that Muktanand appeared to me recognisably as Muktanand - as she would be in a photograph or as I saw her while I lived in Brisbane. That is the 'usual' bit. The feeling I had was 'Hi Muktanand, great to see you.' Just like I could say 'Hi John' or 'Hi mum and dad.' I have to add that whenever I saw Muktanand or heard her voice over the phone while she was alive, I always experienced an initial joyous surge emotion: 'It is great to see you.' It was a real heart-thing for me. Monday of last week was no different in that regard: two friends catching up I guess.

Bodily

But it was not 'as if' Muktanand appeared to be in this form: She was this form. This was Muktanand in exactly the same way that this is an e-mail I am writing to you. That is the 'bodily' bit. Muktanand really was visiting me: just like she came to visit me at Gray Road when I lived in Brisbane, or Dunwich when I lived on the island. She was present to me and I was present to her.

Form

This is a recognition of the fact that - despite all of the above and as well as all the above - something was different. When she visited me Monday of last week, Muktanand clearly had a recognisable external presence or 'form'. And yet I added the word 'form' paradoxically because Muktanand was not just her recognisable self that moment. She had transcended or transformed her usual bodily self: she had become a golden-light-body. This is the 'form' bit. The 'form' is her 'golden-light-body'. And the energy this transcendent Muktanand generated was golden joy. This energy was every fibre of her being - especially her smile and her eyes. To me, this is the new Muktanand unless and until she tells me otherwise. Little wonder she remains in my heart!

John, I am comfortable with this explanation. But if it doesn't quite make sense let me know and I'll keep trying to make it clearer. Perhaps I am grasping for words because I now realise that no-one has ever visited me in the same way as Muktanand did on Monday of Last week. So the experience was new (as well as delightful)."

* * *

Two dreams, John Ransley, Wednesday 7 April 2004.

I come from kitchen into the lounge and Muktanand is there with her back to me. She is wearing the old white smock on top of something black, and moving towards the library. Nothing is said but there is the familiar and reassuring feeling of her particular presence.

I come into a largish room that is light and airy. Muktanand is there sitting on the back of a lounge chair chatting to my sister Judy. I sit beside her and then I notice she is quite slim, like her old self. I move closer to embrace her and she is very receptive. I wonder briefly about Judy being there but I don't care - apparently Judy leaves. Muktanand and I fall together back on the bed (as it is now) for a truly enthusiastic kiss.

John comment: In the first dream Muktanand is a definite "Muktanand presence". The second dream I interpret as an affirmation of the finish of Muktanand's October Wave Dream, with more emphasis this time on the 'enthusiastic kiss'!

Kim Zafir

Kim Zafir 15, 19 & 20 April 2004. Kim is an old Toowoomba friend of both Muktanand and I. She visited Muktanand at the BSY ashram in Monghyr in 1975. Kim has lived for a long time in Mooloolaba on the Sunshine Coast and Muktanand re-established the connection after she moved to Brisbane.

On March 11 2004 I had a lumbar spine operation to repair damage caused by multiple myeloma cancer. Radiotherapy commenced on Thursday 15 April and continued over a period of six weeks. During the first three radiation treatments on Thursday 15th and the following Monday and Tuesday, Muktanand came to me in a vision. She only came during the radiation, the first three times when I was really scared.

I was lying on my stomach and this huge machine was traversing over me. I'd close my eyes and she would come to me. It was almost as if she was surrounding me, her energy surrounding me, like someone big giving me a big hug, it really felt like a hug. There was an amazing feeling of incredible calmness and protection, comfort and strength. A feeling of incredible strength even though she was only tiny, like a reverse of our physical sizes. I could see her looking down at me and smiling even though I was lying on the table under the monster radiotherapy machine. She was sitting in something like a lotus pose, looking both regal and peaceful, radiating both calmness and quietness. She was wearing loose clothes, I can't remember any more than that. She didn't speak.

After those first three days I just meditated on her during my treatments. Things that Muktanand had said in the past came back to me and I thought I understood them better. It felt like and still feels like we are doing this together.

I have sometimes felt her protection coming around me when I am being PET scanned. The PET machine has a very narrow table which slides into a small tunnel. The scan just skims over you and it takes 40 minutes and if you open your eyes you panic. Whenever I started to panic I just closed my eyes and pictured her sitting.

She hasn't come during the chemotherapy but it has made it less scary and fearful. I still sense her all the time although I only 'saw' her those first few times. A couple of times I have also called on my friend Diane Foley, who died of cancer 14 years ago, but her presence is not as strong as Muktanand.

Deadman's Beach

On 15 April 2004 I was holidaying on North Stradbroke Island. My friend Cath and I were walking at the eastern end of Deadman's Beach around about midday. Cath said "It's just unbelievable to accept that Muktanand has died, given she had such a strong presence". The words immediately came "Still has", but I bit them off because I didn't think Cath would understand. Then I realised it was true – Muktanand did have a strong presence and was accompanying us as we walked through the beautiful scenery on that beautiful autumn day.

After a visit to a Point Lookout restaurant for a drink and a snack we started out on what's called the gorge walk. Just as we were coming out into the open grassed area on the headland, the view opened up (beautiful blue sea, sun shining), and I felt Muktanand's strong presence again, enjoying the scenery and the walk. I got a bit emotional at this point and was not conscious of her presence after this.

Muktanand met me on the beach (the beach!) and I experienced her as an unseen presence in broad daylight. The fact that the beach is called Deadman's Beach was a nice touch. In her

Wave Dream Muktanand walked across a beach where there were a lot of dead bodies, a 'dead men's beach'. This was the first time I had actually gone onto a beach since Muktanand's passing.

* * *

Samadhi (Tasmania) email, 17-18 April 2004.

When I sit down to teach a class, I invite her to come in now. It is more than obvious when she is present, as the blissful waves of energy flow through, and her voice becomes so clear.

She seems to particularly like the way that I do yoga nidra - I do not do it fast, straight through the body as I was taught; I do it slow with the breath, each time people breathe out, I tell them to let different parts of their body sink into the floor. It works, people can actually get it! Also I get them to tense up all of the muscles, say in the right hand, arm and shoulder and hold for a few moments and then release the fingers, palm of the hand, back of the hand etc. Let the right shoulder sink into the floor with each breath.

I am teaching Dru Yoga, beautiful soft flowing patterns that give great variety of movement, but are much easier than Surya Namaskar. I keep hearing her voice saying 'Write that book, Samadhi'.

Muktanand was my guru in many ways, not just through yoga, but through her openness, honesty and loving fairness. This was not mentioned in her praise from Satyananda Ashram, but she was a true open heartfelt person. That was what drew me to her in the first place, and we just clicked like we were sisters. I did a paper for her a long time ago on relaxation postures for back pain and injury. She liked it so much that when she was here for the yoga teacher training course, she told the class that it should be Samadhi teaching this section! In those days I found that embarrassing and did not have the confidence or experience, but it would be a different story now. I am sometimes appalled at the lack of wisdom that many yoga teachers show when dealing with people who are in any kind of pain in yoga classes; even teachers whose wisdom of yoga far exceeds mine, but obviously not in suffering pain and disability!

* * *

Victor Von Der Hyde dream, 26 April 2004.

There was a process of going to another planet (or realm) and you could do it if you were dead or alive. I was there when Muktanand did it while she was dead and I was about to do it while I was alive. It seemed like it didn't matter whether you were alive or not. I believed the process involved some physical pressure and I was concerned about my mix of current health problems. There was also a technology involved in going to this other planet but not a Western technology. It was not common that people went through the process but also not extremely rare. I remember going through an area with lots of people who seemed poor and disturbed/excited in a way. This was on the way to the quieter space where the process would take place.

Then I was talking with Muktanand. I think we were already in the other place, or at least not where we started. She was concerned about her legs and the amount of blood in them, particularly on the sides. As it turned out, the skin on her legs was transparent in a way and you could see all the blood there. My comment to her, or maybe it was a thought, was that where we were, being healthy didn't matter anymore.

Then when I'd rolled over again, Muktanand had an address for me to give to you. It was on some paper but facing away from me and I couldn't make it out. The first line, the street, looked quite short, but I just couldn't read it. Then the address: "15 Claremont Street" came clearly but not by reading. First I wasn't sure if this was correct because "Claremont" looked longer than the street name on the paper facing away from me. But I checked (somehow) and "15 Claremont St" came again. And I thought the suburb was Highgate Hill. Then, a couple of times there was like a warm prickly sensation all over my body. I got out of bed and turned the light on and wrote the address down. I have no idea if there is a Claremont Street in Highgate Hill or somewhere else in Brisbane. That's it. I really don't have much of an idea what to make of it. Love from Victor

John comment: My reply to Victor was that I didn't know what it meant either, but he should keep on dreaming! There are several Claremont streets in the 2001 directory but I didn't recognise any.

* * *

Thursday 29 April 2004, John Ransley dream.

Apparently Muktanand is saying 'I'll put up with anything except the paradise sarong (wrap)'. Then there is an image of her lying side on with her knees up, wearing a geru dhoti which covers her whole body, including her face. I go to take the dhoti off her face but am not allowed.

May Dreams

Sunday dreams 2 May 2004. In the first dream I am with Muktanand at a function and then I go home. When I return Muktanand is coming in a bus with Jackie Freeman. Muktanand seemed tired, busy and preoccupied when I talked to her again. This was followed by another dream involving Muktanand and Jackie:

We three are together again sort of letterboxing or doorknocking a street. I go one way and Jackie and Muktanand the other. When they come back Jackie gives me a rundown on what they are doing, teaching meditation. What she describes is a standard practice on meditation. The description continues below a graphic or illustration like a pen sketch in the Sydney Morning Herald. Muktanand doesn't say anything much, if at all.

John comment: Jackie lived with us at 18 Rosary Crescent for some years and did Muktanand's 1995 yoga teacher training course. She had been living in Japan for five years teaching ESL, and was coming to visit me on Tuesday night, 4 May. Shortly after Muktanand died Jackie found a lump in her breast that turned out to be cancer, leading to her death in 2006.

May Morning

7-9am Tuesday 4 May 2004. I wake up to a beautiful sunny autumn morning after a cold night. I am thinking Muktanand used to wake in the mornings and lie in bed in a half meditative state, gazing at the pattern in the curtain on the rising sun side of the room, or at the large Durga painting in the puja corner. This is the first time since her passing that I've thought this.

I get out of bed and open the street side curtains, but when I get back in I realise the morning light is too bright and I have to partially close them, as I often did for Muktanand. I snuggle under the bedclothes, wishing Muktanand were snuggled up with me, then I think, maybe she is.

When I go into the kitchen I gravitate to the spot in the orange juicer corner where Muktanand liked to soak up the sun on cold mornings.

I go up the street for ten minutes and as I am leaving I have a flash of Muktanand dressed in white standing on the kitchen landing, watching me go (as she had many times before). I seem to feel her presence, very sweet and pure. When I return I have a sense she is still around.

I feel, or I begin to feel, that I've come to the end of something, as if something is completed. I am beginning to be reconciled to the huge differences between this world and wherever Muktanand is now. As always, I feel quite euphoric after this 'visit'.

I was prompted to be alert for this sort of experience by the following story from Eoin Liebchen-Meades:

One day I started talking to my mother's photo, about one and a half to two years after her death. I hardly ever looked at the photo. This was within a few days of the news that my wife Kerstin was pregnant, with our first child Darius. Although I sometimes have psychic experiences, I had not had any contact with my mother beforehand. My brothers and sisters had felt her around but not me.

I had had some thoughts and feelings about my mother since the news of the pregnancy. I was talking to my mother's photo when I suddenly thought 'Why am I doing this?' And the answer came immediately 'Because mum is here!' Then the next thought was 'Why now?' when there had been lots of other important things that had happened to me since her death. Then I realised it was because Kerstin was pregnant, that's what grandmothers are interested in!

I feel she must have been making herself known – that she was present – for a few days. It just took talking to the photo for me to realise it. She was impressing herself on my thoughts for a few days. It's all a bit like when the phone rings and you absolutely know who it is.

* * *

This is from a card sent by Sophie Lim 10 May 2004.

Dear John, I'm sorry I couldn't make it to the funeral to honour Muktanand and to celebrate her life, but I would like to express my deep sympathy on your great loss. I was a student of Muktanand's for a few years in the mid-90's before I went overseas and again for a short while when I came back before she got ill. She made a huge impact on me and while I was

away I really missed her teaching. I couldn't wait to get back to her classes and workshops but then I got a bit waylaid with pregnancy, babies etc and so for the last couple of years I kept hoping and praying that she was recovering so I'd be able to sit at her feet again – but it was not to be. But be certain John, she shall live on in the hearts of many. She was a truly extraordinary woman but I know that's not telling you anything – and certainly wouldn't make your grief any easier to bear.

I was so pleased to receive a copy of the funeral order of service so that I have a photo of her (courtesy of Belinda Cox). It feels like one of the beloved "holy cards" I used to collect of saints as a Catholic primary school student in the sixties. To me, Muktanand really was a guiding light and will forever be an inspiration. With deepest sympathy. Hari Om Tat Sat.

Tarot Card Reading, May

I decided to consult a Tarot Card reader because I had always had an interest in Tarot cards and because I was open to information from any source. There was also the connection with Vivian's Tarot card dream. This was Sarina's first reading, on 24 May, and I was a complete stranger. Unlike the first Tarot card reader I ever consulted – when Muktanand was still alive – Sarina's readings scored very highly, I would guess around 80 percent.

I keep on seeing a woman who is very insightful and compassionate, very well read and intellectually on a similar level to you. You must have courage in taking on the responsibility in the work you have chosen. You should say what you need to say, even though it may not be something other people want to accept or believe. There is a strong influence in your life for a number of years from a Leo female that is very important karmically. Questions?

The 'insightful compassionate woman' describes Muktanand. I ask if there is anything more about the 'Leo female'. Sarina splays the cards and asks me to take seven cards with my left hand.

It's very interesting; it shows you've had a lifetime with this female in Greece with the moon goddess or something. There was a difficult ending but it looks as if it's now resolved. I don't think you need to re-establish that relationship. I seem to feel there is a need to work through hurt or loss. I don't know why the moon goddess is so strong. There are 2 cards of transformation linked to that karmic bond, triggering something (transformation) for you at that level. It's already been resolved, even though you can't see it. You've not let go completely emotionally, but spiritually it has been done. There is some confusion in you about what happened to you both in this lifetime, because of what was left over from the previous lifetime. Why the hell did that happen? What needed to occur to re-balance it was the right thing.

In Western astrological terms Muktanand was a Leo. Sarina had never met Muktanand or even heard of her. Nor did she know that Muktanand had died.

I told Sarina about Vivian's dream on 18 January 2002, in which his grandfather handed him a sequence of Tarot cards 'for Muktanand'. I described to her how the cards were arranged in the order Hanged Man, Tower of Babel, Death, The Lovers, Abbess, Hermit and Sun. Sarina commented:

It's about spiritual transformation. It's showing the idea of death, loss of the physical body and happiness at the end. Something that rips away normal life but is a spiritual opportunity. The outcome is extremely good, although it doesn't mean physical survival. It's very, very positive in the spiritual level, amazingly good. The sequence of individual cards is arranged like words forming a Tarot Card sentence, describing a progression from Hanged Man to Sun, a progression from confrontation through to the final outcome.

I did not tell Sarina this dream was about the 'Leo female' and neither did she make the connection. Sarina knew nothing about Muktanand's illness, either the severity or the duration of it. She did not know that Muktanand had died, yet her reading was clear that the sequence predicted death.

The Tarot Card dream was one of the two major dreams that inspired Muktanand during her illness (the other was her Wave dream). Muktanand often said she relied on the prediction of this dream that there would be 'light, love and joy at the end', no matter what the outcome. It seemed to us who were privileged to be present that she received this gift of light, love and joy at the moment of her death.

June Dreams

Kathy Turner dream, 19 June 2004.

Muktanand brings me the most delicate bone china - a bread and butter plate and on top of it a bowl - oval in shape (or more kidney shaped really) with delicate fluted edges. The china has wonderful red (true red) four petalled simple flowers here and there - joined by an almost invisible, as it is so fine, trailing vine of green.

I know Muktanand is dead. I wonder at Muktanand making a collection of fine bone china (I seem to know she has many more sets in her room). I wonder at her spending so much on such a thing. I wonder at her giving it to me - the chance of my breaking it is high as I'm going to use it (i.e. not keep it stored as a display). I wonder what it feels like to see life continuing and yet not be part of the continuation. I wonder at Muktanand's generosity in giving gifts to those who are continuing to live.

Kathy comment: I really felt as though Muktanand was there, although I didn't actually see her. I felt her ability to relate in some way to the living; I felt her bravery in continuing to relate in some way to the living even though that would (it seemed to me) be extremely difficult as it would make her aware that she was not part of the continuing life. I wondered if it made Muktanand sad to still be involved in our lives when she had died – but there was absolutely no feeling of sadness.

Sakshi comment: Muktanand was often looking at china before she died - she wanted a good set.

Around this time Zalehah (Kathy's daughter) said she sometimes felt Muktanand's presence in the house, encouraging her in quite a strict but kind way: 'now come on, you have to get through this, you have to do this'. Zalehah was still in the throes of recovering from a major iatrogenic illness.

* * *

Atmapuja dream June 2004. Atmapuja was one of Muktanand's support persons, for example taking her to hydrotherapy after her major operation in February 2002.

The dream began with Muktanand, an animated and robust presence. I remember reflecting that this was after her death and being pleased to see her so healthy and

full of life.

I needed something of importance, the nature of which I cannot now recall and Muktanand happily said that she had one in her wardrobe and would gladly give it to me. I felt it an invasion to look through her cupboards to find the right one, so I asked John to direct me - which he did.

As I looked through Muktanand's belongings, I felt so sad and a great sense of loss that all her things were there and so clearly hers. I found whatever it was I needed and returned to Muktanand, who was very happy that it was just the thing.

At that point, I remember noticing that Muktanand's hair was very short, almost closely shaved and that she was dressed poorly in pieces of cloth, beige in colour, like faded geru. I said to myself that Muktanand is poor and then an even stronger sense came, that she will always be poor. And then the dream ended.

Atmapuja comment: The dream woke me, and I reflected on what it meant. The idea of sannyas and being beyond the material came to mind at that time. Later I thought Muktanand was exhorting me to be strong and not to waver in the face of obstacles.

In late 2003 Muktanand made a list of personal items that she particularly treasured, and how she wanted these to be distributed in the event of her passing. For Atmapuja, she left a Durga Yantra hand painted by Sambuddhanand, an old ashram friend.

After Atmapuja told me about the dream, we both independently had the thought that the 'something of importance' in the dream may have been the Durga Yantra. Atmapuja also said a friend had commented the yantra had a strong presence and it was asking that its influence be accepted.

* * *

On Thursday morning 18 June I had a long dream which I mostly couldn't remember except a bit where I thought Muktanand was sleeping beside me. Then the following dream on Saturday morning, 20 June 2004:

Muktanand was back in the house preparing dinner or lunch, moving around and it felt really good. Then I got puzzled and thought 'but she died'. I went looking for photo albums with pictures of the funeral but I couldn't find the big album of coloured photos, just two albums with older photos, apparently in sepia or black and white. I wanted to show her the photos of the funeral.

I stopped her and asked her how she was. She looked healthy with no signs of illness and her energy was good. She had clear skin and she was wearing a slim white top. She hugged me and said she felt really good, apart from some possible recurrence of something. I thought 'there's one problem about that explanation, she is supposed to be dead'.

I was really pleased to have her back. I was thinking how we were going to tell people that she was back, Alakh, Michele, Kerstin and so. It was a miracle I thought, a miracle that Muktanand deserved. The house had a bit of the flavour of the Sydney house I lived in as a child, in Hornsby. An older different house.

John comment: The dream was very vivid with a strong feeling that Muktanand was here, present. It was a struggle adjusting as I woke up. Then I recalled that on the Saturday she died, I imagined her saying 'I will be with you always'. The night before this dream I wrote in my journal: 'the house feels empty, as if Muktanand has really gone'.

Alix Johnson

Alix sent me this email on the 26 June 2004.

I have always loved my dreams – usually vivid and lengthy, and I remember feeling encouraged when I first heard Muktanand talk about how her dreams import messages, how she has always been linked to her dream world. I can barely recall the details of the dream I had just after she died except the landscape – the ghostly gums of eucalypts set in the Australian countryside, that washed-out green and big boulder-size rocks here and there. There was also a gathering of her friends. I recall feeling on the 'outer', in the sense that I didn't know anyone else there. It was a celebration. That's all I can remember.

I wanted to tell you that the launch went very well. It was a magical night that began with a documentary about ashtanga in New York – all the celebrities and celebrity teachers talking about what they get from the practice and that seemed to excite a lot of people there! The documentary was made over three days finishing, by coincidence, on Sept 11. And so the mood of the room fell as we watched scenes, not of the World trade centre, but of the swamis reciting prayers and making ritual offerings. All the while my pulse was racing because I knew it was only a matter of minutes before I had to stand up and somehow turn the attention of the 120 people present to the book! (I kept willing all my attention back to what was before me, this film, and nothing else but that was a struggle, let me say!)

And so Eileen gracefully helped make my job easier by making everyone laugh and then passing the floor to me. There were candles lit, the room was very hot, and the gathering ranged from friends with no interest in yoga to long time senior teachers who I had not met before and everyone in between. It was so special!

I spoke mainly about Muktanand: relating her story of setting out for Europe: a brief stopover in India to deepen her meditation practice and to strengthen her character by surviving two weeks in an ashram (!), and staying twelve years. How she spent her final year in silence, in the cave previously used by Swami Satyananda himself, and how she recalled not knowing what a guru actually was but being certain that she didn't need one! I mentioned also that of the four women in the book two have had breast cancer. There were a few women present who were survivors/sufferers of the disease and also the breast cancer foundation was present. We sold sixty books, which according to my publisher is wonderful, and we raised \$600 on the night that went to an overall \$2000 that Eileen donated to breast cancer research. So it was a successful and magical night.

After I spoke there was a chance to buy the book and a surprising (to me, at least) number of people wanted me to write an inscription!! There was very sweet chai and then about 60 of us lingered and nestled in to listen to the sublime sounds of the tabla and sarod.

My little angel, who turned 1 two weeks ago and who is busy walking and loves mostly to dance, has now climbed into my lap and I must go.

With much love, Alix x

Alix is editor of *Yoga: The Essence of Life* (Allen & Unwin, June 2004).

John Ransley Dreams

Thursday dream, 1 July 2004.

Norma and Anne and some other friends are at my place when I come home, finishing off a meal of fish from the fridge. There is some talking during which I say I have brought a short photocopied article home. As they are about to leave Norma says to a child – a young girl like Meta or Bronnie when they were children – ‘tell him’. I come over and the child says ‘we think she’s still alive’. I say, immediately grasping they mean Muktanand – ‘yes, we do too’ - and I say she’s still very busy and if she had retired I would imagine she would just be lying down or resting or doing nothing; but that is not the case. The child describes seeing her.

John comment: In the context of an extremely unlikely story, this dream enlists my friends to pass on a familiar message.

* * *

Guru Poornima dream, Saturday 3 July 2004. Guru Poornima is an annual ceremony acknowledging and giving thanks to all gurus and teachers, living and dead. It is traditionally celebrated on the night of the full moon in July, in this case Friday-Saturday night.

I come into Rosary Crescent and go to park my car, big and black, in the parking slot in Tina and Angela’s carport. Then I back out and park in a parallel slot and then out again to park further up the street on the left. There is a house, driveway and big hedge approximately where the number 28 house is. Over the hedge I glimpse an elephant and then, poking its head up, a large snake. I go to get a better look. When I can see into the yard, it’s a really big snake, a cobra I say. There are people behind it presumably trying to chase it away, in the yard down the slope. Nearer the front there are chooks and eggs. Then I look down the crescent and see a party of three men coming, carrying guns, at least one looks like Andrew Flanders. I say to them don’t shoot it! They reply we have to. I look back at the cobra – it’s really big - there are little fluffy yellow chicks and the creamy coloured cobra is wolfing them down. The cobra dashes away down the side of the house and around the back, coming up towards the crescent on the other side. I see it again; it is brown on top, cream underneath. There are lots of people running but I don’t know what happens next as the dream ends.

John comment: This dream displays a number of symbols closely associated with Kundalini Tantra. An energetic cobra or serpent (Kundalini rising), a crescent, a mala (rosary), and an elephant. But don’t ask me to explain what it all means, except to say its interesting that it occurred on a full moon Guru Poornima night, and Muktanand’s guru, Swami Satyananda, is a tantric guru.

* * *

Thursday dream, 15 July 2004 :

Muktanand is with a group of us and we have been to a service in a Methodist church. She is chatting to us perfectly normally. Then someone says ‘but you used to be a Catholic, why don’t you go to the Catholic service?’ She says sure, and does so.

Then I think I want to write this up in my journal and I go to get it. I think the journal is in the Church of England on the pews but when I go there – dressed only in undershorts – the service has started and I am reluctant to go in. I keep going and Muktanand is there. I want to ask her if she remembers the times between these appearances. I also had the thought – as we are crossing the street in a group – of taking her to the cemetery to see her grave, but I don't say anything and anyway I wonder whether this would be possible. I check that she is fully physical in the dream and I am satisfied that she is, although I'm still aware that she has a grave in the cemetery. Then she is gone. I arrive at another Church of England, and go down some steps to where we had originally sat around and there are a couple of Anglican priests there; it seems to be a popular spot. I see my journal there and I pick it up, also my other things, and clothes. Muktanand is there again, chatting to people. Once again there is this feeling of delight that she is back with us again.

* * *

Friday dream, 23 September 2004.

Muktanand is sick. I have to go away for a while but I'm worried that she'll still be here when I come back. I return and she is still here in the lounge room, looking distracted, looking like her normal self, dressed in black. I put my arms around her with the intention of never letting her go, that is, never letting her succumb to the illness. I intend to protect her from the illness by holding onto her physically.

* * *

Sunday dream 14 November 2004.

There is some contact with Muktanand at the beginning of the dream. Then I comprehensively and thoroughly miss catching my overseas plane flight with her. The flight was due to depart at 8.30am but at 8.15am I am still at home with no passport or ticket. Muktanand and another person have gone on ahead.

John comment: Missing overseas plane flights is a recurring feature in my dreams. Muktanand has gone on ahead.

Tarot Card Reading, November

Another reading with Sarina on 25 November 2004.

There is a fire sign – Leo, Aries or Sagittarius – looks like in spirit. Trying to let you know they feel like they made a few mistakes but they're okay now. Almost like she feels a bit embarrassed she didn't understand something she understands now. She is definitely okay now. She shows up as your best friend, trying to bring peace and balance into your life. She has a strong soul connection, like a soulmate. Sometimes when you are sitting cross legged – in meditation – she is sitting with you. She is saying she is thankful for all her friends. It seems like upstairs in the house where you are living needs cleaning up. Was she a cleaning freak, this person?

Muktanand was a Leo. Muktanand certainly loved cleaning, something she absorbed from

ashram life. But she always resisted comment to the effect that her cleaning focus was extreme. It made it very difficult for her to live in a shared house, even with other women who had been socialised by their mothers about the importance of cleaning!

Later Sarina came up with this statement about our cat, which she could not possibly have known about:

The fire sign woman in spirit is looking after the white cat and not worrying about hairs anymore.

Our cat was a lovely white Persian who adopted me in 1985 and died 4 June 1998. She regularly shed hair everywhere and when I first acquired her, her coat would knit itself into a thick mat. She loved Muktanand and spent a lot of time with her on her lap and in her bed. We buried her curled up in our backyard, facing the house.

I asked about the Franciscan monk reference in the first reading.

The Franciscan monk is very strong. Franciscans were very connected to all nature. It was a very fulfilling lifetime, the wife you had this lifetime was a Franciscan nun, just friends, probably why you felt a great bond with her from the beginning. There is also a lifetime in which there lots of candles and books, probably fourteenth or fifteenth century. Very quiet, alone, you didn't marry, you were totally dedicated to your work but enjoyed it.

December Dreams, John Ransley

On Sunday 5 December 2004 I had two dreams about Muktanand. In the first I manage to persuade Muktanand to go to a movie with me. She is slim, dressed in white and seemingly recovering from an illness. Then I had this dream:

Muktanand is back in our house. She is quite weak and slim. I pick her up (my back!) and carry her to where she can rest. I tell her I want her to last as long as possible, meaning as long as possible this time, before she dies. Then I am across the road tearing down the tree vines and vegetation so that the view will be better and we will get more sunshine. I have to organise food for Muktanand as there is none there.

* * *

A dream involving Swami Satyananda, Thursday 16 December 2004.

Muktanand and I are sitting in meditation in front of Swamiji, silently. I get up and walk around to the front and give Swamiji two large well-formed quartz crystals, whitish coloured, not clear. Then there is a space where Swamiji is sitting alone and I go out and around and up to him and touch or grab his foot in my confused sense of protocols and ask him something. No idea what he says, if anything. There is a question about an empty glass jar; we are all trying to work it out and I offer a suggestion.

Before going to sleep I asked for a dream about Muktanand. This dream came at 3am on the morning of 29 December 2004.

Di Fingleton is in custody, being taken to the final court hearing. I attend at the last moment, and I see lots of her friends are there. In my usual way I started taking notes on what was said at the hearing. The magistrate or judge pronounces the death sentence. Then a close male friend (John McGrath?) stands up and makes a speech incorporating nonsense phrases. When the magistrate tells him to shut up, the two coppers guarding the court are surrounded by Di's friends and Di is snatched away free – she isn't going to die!

I go off to another place where there are several women who know Di and I give them news of her escape. Then hordes of police arrive and say they're going to search us for evidence. I'm afraid they'll confiscate my notes on the judge's speech and the friend's speech at the aborted trial and sentencing hearing. Then I come up on some friends using a mobile phone and they say Di is hiding in the hills. Again, later I hear she is hiding in the hill tops above the sea and making her way to friend's places, always on the move, sleeping under bridges etc. There is a huge police and customs alert. It is now three days since Di's escape. Getting out of the country must be her goal but it is difficult, maybe she will try and disguise herself as a man. But hopefully she will be successful.

I posted a copy of this dream with the following covering letter on 31 January 2005:

Dear Di

I forgot to say when I saw you in West End recently that I had a dream about you on 29 December, partly because I thought it was mainly about Muktanand. I think the dream is quite positive so here it is. It is reproduced verbatim as recorded at the time.

I don't know if you were told but when Tim Quinn was running for preselection Kathy Turner had a dream in which the thought came 'what a pity for Tim if he wins preselection, he would have retained the South Brisbane ward if he stayed there, but will lose the election for Lord Mayor.' When I tried to take a photo of Tim at his campaign launch my Nikon camera broke.

Before going back to sleep after the dream I wrote: 'Muktanand was condemned to death but she escaped with her life and still lives.' I had after all asked for a dream about Muktanand and the theme that Muktanand died but still lives has been a very common one, both in my dreams and the dreams I have collected from Muktanand's friends.

But later I thought there was a message about you as well. All the other Muktanand dreams with this theme have only featured Muktanand, so it was strange to have Di Fingleton making an appearance! Now I think one of its messages is that your conviction will be overturned and you will 'escape free'.

Lots of love and best wishes, John

Tim Quinn was voted out of the Lord Mayoralty in the March 2004 Brisbane City Council election, after a long and determined campaign by the Courier Mail.

The High Court heard Di's appeal on 1 and 2 February 2005. On Thursday 23 June 2005 the High Court quashed her conviction for retaliating against a witness. I was greatly relieved that my punt on the interpretation of the dream turned out well. On 13 September 2005 Di was sworn in as the Caloundra magistrate.

Pussycat

In December I had a dream in which our cat was curled up purring in my lap. On 28 January 2005 I dreamed of her again:

Our kitten – belonging to Muktanand and I - has had a bad accident. It has broken its hip and has internal damage and is very likely to die. It has been wandering around the house leaving white faeces and vomit, it is very thin. After looking everywhere I find it in the last place I look, it is lying flat on the floor, it looks dead. I take it to the vet who says it looks hopeless, it will never survive. Then there is a picture of our cat in a hospital bed, with me in the next bed. The cat is all bandaged up. Apparently I insisted we try and save it. There is a chance

John comment: Most of the dream is a pretty good description of the last day in the life of our white Persian cat, previously referred to. She was very thin, she could not walk and she could only lay flat on the floor. We took her to the vet to put her out of her deep misery. The last part of the dream changes this story. The dream is interesting because of the cat references in Sarina's readings, and references to Muktanand's illness.

Initiation Dream

Radhika Randall had the following dream on the night of Mon-Tues, 31 January – 1 February 2005:

To my surprise Muktanand invited me to one of her yoga classes. I was quite happy to go and excited about the opportunity. I gave myself plenty of time, and went in a relaxed state of mind.

The class was in a huge hall. At the door one of her 'acolytes' stopped me in rather a stern manner, and told me I couldn't come in until I had washed up. I tried to say I had a personal invitation, but I had to go and at least wash my hands. I went off and then chose to have a full shower, and got dressed in a room next to the main hall. I dressed in a cotton sari, although I had not worn saris for such occasions for 15 years.

As I was dressing, I could hear the class starting next door, the whole room or hall were doing some sort of chanting. I thought, Oh No, I'm late, the class has already started! I felt disappointed. I went back to the same door I had been refused entrance but this time there was nobody there guarding it. I snuck inside and sat virtually at the back of the hall, hidden amongst the throngs of people. I noted that the people were segregated by sex and luckily I had snuck in amongst the women's section, with which I felt comfortable and relieved.

There were hundreds of people in the hall, perhaps up to a thousand people. I felt very different from them as I had never been a student of Muktanand or studied with her.

To my surprise Muktanand came to me personally and drew me out, she took me to the front and gave me special attention. She seemed extremely happy with me; when I wanted to sit on the ground she lifted me up as they do in India.

During her talk Muktanand walked slowly around the hall, and asked me to walk with her. The walking around was very Indian, at a very slow pace, with Muktanand turning occasionally to say something to me, to reassure me. When we were walking I could hardly see the throngs of people, because it seemed like there was a magic light around us, the two of us. Occasionally when we came close to the acolytes I could see them in a faint light. I did see at the beginning that lots of people there were wearing saris; even the woman who stopped me at the door was wearing one.

I cannot remember anything Muktanand said during the actual talk, but the image of her was very vivid and clear, her face was very, very pale with deep marks, and she was dressed in a creamy, off-white sari with a very fine and pale print pattern, perhaps flowers. She seemed very natural wearing the sari, which was worn in the traditional way with the end, pallav, pulled over her head. I could not see her hair or her footwear, if any. The sari was made of khadi, very fine, hand-woven raw cotton, of the homespun type that Ghandiji promoted. She was not carrying anything. All during this time I kept thinking 'she's dead, she's dead'.

At the end of her talk when most of the hundreds of people had gone, she led me back to the front, sitting down where there was a small group of acolytes. She spoke directly to me, at times glancing at the acolytes or disciples. Up until this time I had not said anything but finally I could stand it no longer. I said to her 'But you're dead, aren't you?' As I said this I knew with great certainty that I had asked the right question, perhaps the question that no one else dared to ask.

She looked at me both sharply and lovingly, as if I were her brightest student or disciple, although I was neither of these. She looked a bit sad. She said 'Yes. I'm only allowed here this first time for 3 days'. Then she looked around at all the others and said 'But don't worry I'll be back again, but each time I can only come for 2 days'.

Radhika comment: The dream was very, very vivid and I remember it clearly. It was incredibly vivid and clear, an unusually prescient dream. I had only met Muktanand six times – at meetings and workshops - and I had never attended yoga classes with her. Usually I have these special dreams when I am very tired, as I was on this occasion. My wavelength was open.

At first I thought, 'I don't know why this dream is being given to me now'. However, I was going through a period of introspection at the time and actually contemplating giving up teaching. I was asking myself 'Why teach?' and, 'Am I on the right path?' Also, 'How can I teach students the correct disciplines in a Western-friendly way?'

Personally the dream gave me encouragement and support, and I felt that my own yoga teaching was being encouraged and reassured by Muktanand. As a result I was emboldened to change my yoga teaching style in the direction of the classical Indian tradition, although retaining the safer Western techniques. According to what I hear from Pam Harris, this is very much in tune with Muktanand's style.

I also felt the dream was both for me and someone else. (It seems from your letter, John, it carried a message for you.)

There seem to be some Christ-like references in the idea that she returned from the dead, and also in the words 'for 3 days', although I am not a Christian. I am puzzled about her returning thereafter for 2 days at a time. I think perhaps this is a specific message that she is

communicating with somebody.

On 9 March 2005 I wrote to Radhika as follows. Radhika means ‘Supreme Goddess’.

I am very grateful that you were able to share your dream with me, as it has been quite helpful. I think I was still going along as if Muktanand was still alive – everything in the house reminds me of her – but your dream once again reminded me she “is dead”. Although I now believe her spirit continues on, there is a big difference between being dead and being alive! That may seem obvious but the realisation was a small breakthrough for me.

Leaving myself aside, the dream is obviously your dream and has most meaning for you. Muktanand always said that when other people appear in your dreams they are usually representative of something, whether it be something about yourself or what those people signify. That is, they are not usually themselves, although this does happen. She also said that a very good way to understand a dream is to ask how it feels. If it feels positive for example, then everything in the dream should be interpreted in that light.

Often dreams don’t yield their meaning easily – or don’t mean anything logical - but I wanted to pass on a few thoughts that may interest you. To begin with you are quite surprised that Muktanand invited you to her class. Pam Harris tells me you had a high regard for Muktanand as a yoga teacher, so perhaps this suggests that you are not quite certain of your own worth as a yoga teacher. This theme continues when you are refused entry, and are told to go and wash your hands. It seems the ‘acolyte’ at the door doesn’t think you are acceptable either. Because of your own doubts, you don’t just wash your hands but you have a full shower. It is as if you have to go through some yogic cleansing practices before you can enter the hall.

You also change into a sari, Indian dress, which turns out to be the same kind of clothing that Muktanand is wearing. Thus bathing and then dressing in a simple Indian robe: it all looks like preparation for an initiation. When Muktanand was initiated by Swami Satyananda she also had to wash and then get dressed in a simple robe, albeit a geru/orange robe. There is no geru here, but I see similarities.

Then you are late, because of the bathing issue. You sneak inside the hall hoping it will not be noticed that you are late. You are still not sure your presence is acceptable. But Muktanand comes and finds you and takes you to the front of the hall. She lifts you up off the floor where you want to sit and blend in. She literally elevates you above the crowd. She is extremely happy to see you and she in effect parades you around the hall. Then at the end she speaks to you directly, and you voice the thought “but you’re dead”, which is almost like the punchline of the dream.

To me it seems pretty obvious she is affirming you as a yoga practitioner and teacher, perhaps even affirming you as “her brightest student or disciple”.

I don’t know what the references to 3 days and 2 days mean, apart perhaps from saying she is with us from time to time. “Three days” is not necessarily Christian as there were other traditions of crucifixion and resurrection before Christ. Her appearance suggests she is ageing, wherever she is, because she only had a few tiny

wrinkles when she left us. Maybe it again emphasises ageing and dying, she “is dead”.

Whether or not you believe Muktanand was an agent in your dream, it seems pretty clearly to be a yogic initiation dream, a dream as you say of reassurance and support.

Kind regards, John Ransley

Anniversary Gathering

On the occasion of the first anniversary of Muktanand’s death, Darshan held a gathering in his Samadhi Studio at Cracknell Road, Sunday 13 February 2005. The group sat with Muktanand’s Essence of Breath tape and then Christina Burford led a Loving Kindness meditation, followed by a hundred and eight rounds of the Shanti Path. A number of people spoke and Mokshadharma read aloud the following poem as a tribute to Muktanand. It was a beautiful afternoon, very moving, twenty two people attended. Mokshadharma subsequently requested the poem be included in this book.

I HONOUR YOU

In circle gathered
In circle blessed
In circle joined
In circle One

She who weaves and writes and dances and draws
CREATIVE WOMAN I HONOUR YOU

She who looks herself in the mirror of her soul
HONEST WOMAN I HONOUR YOU

She who looks fear in the face, embraces it and laughs
BRAVE WOMAN I HONOUR YOU

She who stands at the gateway of the worlds and holds the key for those who would explore
HOLY WOMAN I HONOUR YOU

She who soothes the salt of tears with the sweat of her brow
COMPASSIONATE WOMAN I HONOUR YOU

She who sees the pot of gold in the rainbow’s brilliant arc
VISIONARY WOMAN I HONOUR YOU

She whose hands labour to prepare the fertile ground, to plant, water, weed and gather the fruit
ABUNDANT WOMAN I HONOUR YOU

She who listens and looks and learns

THINKING WOMAN I HONOUR YOU

She who greets the dawn of the day in all her beauty unclothed
FREE WOMAN I HONOUR YOU

She who births and bleeds,
Nurtures and knows,
Loves and laughs,
Dances and dreams,
Sobs and smiles,
Stumbles and stands,
Gives and is grateful
and follows her path through life with heart

SISTER I HONOUR YOU

This poem was shared by the International Women's Conference organisers with the following message: "This poem is a gift to all women. You are welcome to copy it and pass it on to other women – let it be given freely as a gift. Blessings. Helen Ramoutsaki. Down to Birth Spring 2001.

Looking for Muktanand

Alison Lee sent me the following description of a dream she remembered from the morning of 13th February, 2005. She shared this dream at Darshan's gathering.

I was walking with a group of friends in what seemed like a large shopping complex - looking for Muktanand. I searched the corridors in anticipation that she would be around the next corner. I then became aware of being in a car with a friend and being taken to see her. My daughter and others were coming out with tears in their eyes, having seen her. So I was expecting the worst, knowing that she had been unwell. When I entered the place I realized I was in a bed shop (like Captain Snooze) and was greeted by a woman who was very friendly and had a beautiful smile, she welcomed me and showed me to where Muktanand was sitting.

As I neared the rear of the shop Muktanand came into full view, sitting back comfortably in a Jason Recliner Rocker. She was reading and looked quite composed. As I approached her she looked up, her expression seemed to intimate she was pleased to see me. I was surprised to see her looking so well. She was dressed in a richly coloured Punjabi suit with swirls of regal ruby, purple, gold and green. She placed the book she was reading on her lap and sat forward embracing me warmly. This embrace seemed to go on for some time as I felt the tenderness and fullness of her body and her love permeating mine. I did not want it to end. I don't remember much of what we said to one another, as I was so stunned by how well she looked and the lingering feeling of the physical contact I had experienced with her. I think I may have asked her if her feet needed massaging.

Alison comment: After that I woke feeling so excited that she was still alive! Then as the morning bird sounds and sunlight began to filter through my semi conscious bliss, the gradual

realization that she was no longer here with us began to surface and I felt my heart sink. As I lay there feeling the weight of my body against the mattress and the growing ache in my heart I began to try to piece together these two separate realities. Gradually the date of Muktanand's passing from one world to another, that I had managed to so carefully conceal from myself (12 months earlier), began to take on new relevance.

The 14th February, a day established by a commercial gift card company to celebrate the heart connections of lovers had become the day on which our dear teacher, friend, sister and lover had departed, giving us the greatest heart lesson of all and an even greater reason to reflect on this day. It is said that in loving the greatest act of devotion one can give is that of letting go. And every moment of parting and being apart from those we love is the opportunity to practice and acknowledge their importance in our lives and the pain and suffering we might experience in letting go, through loss or death.

For me there is much music in my memory of Muktanand. The sound of her ringing the bell so clearly, the sound of her voice as she poetically guided us through pranayama, meditation and relaxation each week, and the sound of her laughter or irritation as she shared with us the many stories of her life and times in India. Muktanand may have moved from this world to that, but she will remain as music in my heart and mind and the hearts and minds of many who have had the privilege to share in her journey on earth. She will never leave me and I know I will never have to look very far if I have a need to find her. Behind my eyes, in the sky of mind (*Chidakash*), she is there - reclining in her comfortable chair, reading and waiting for me to call in and sit with her for a while.

Alison said this was the first occasion she had dreamed of Muktanand since her death.

Tarot Card Reading, March

Another reading from Sarina on 4 March 2005.

There is a strong bond of affection between you and a fire sign woman. When that person is in your life she'll never leave you, there will always be a connection. She'll always be around you, watching over you but not criticising. Shows happiness and a sense of joy around her, a sense of feeling free – she's passed on. She is very, very happy, except for the fact she can't connect with you. There was a feeling of a sense of loss before she passed away, but now she feels more alive, now she is in spirit. The bond was never broken, the bond of love. She feels you should forgive yourself; are you feeling guilty about something? [Yes] She feels there is no blame.

I ask Sarina was yoga helpful for my Leo partner.

She is more happy where she is. Before she passed over she was very good at what she did. But she wasn't sure she believed in certain aspects. She helped other people more than she helped herself. She is happy now, there is a sense of relief. She was feeling very bereft towards the end, lost. She didn't want to let go of this incarnation. She was confused before she passed over. To be honest, she was scared she was going into a void. But that all changed when she went into spirit. It sounds odd but she's happy she passed away when she did. She also feels blessed by all her friends. She is really at peace, joyful and happy, and she wants you to be the same; you've been a bit hard on yourself. I keep seeing strings of white daisies, symbolising purity and simplicity. She is letting you know she has been healed.

I ask if there is any sense of my hanging onto her, and how best to honour her:

I feel you are not hanging onto her spirit, you are not holding her back. But hanging onto memories for you is the normal grieving process.

You have always honoured her life, holding her in your heart. She felt honoured. Its okay to honour her life, but you should also honour your life and your incarnation.

You should be writing a book. The cards show healing and the possibility the book could end up getting published or self published. People will want to buy it because it's a healing book. This may be the cover of the book: a mandala (circle) with sunburnt orange, black and white colours, with a bit of red. Like a little story, indicating transformation.

[Angel cards] This shows she really enjoyed the recent celebration, she was very happy about it. She was definitely there.

The mandala image sounds like a description of the etching Megan Mitchell gave to Muktanand at the end of her last yoga class. The angel card reading seems to be a reference to the 13 February gathering honouring the anniversary of Muktanand's death.

Tarot Card Reading, July

Back with Sarina again on 15 July 2005.

Leo woman shows here, strong love and help around you. Trying to help from the other side. She is disappointed there was something she didn't believe in. Now she is fine. She is so happy to tell you that she is around; she is happy now she knows. She also feels the two of you can spend more time together, now when she is in spirit!

Most of the time you are very serious but there's a fun, light-hearted side you don't allow out enough. Otherwise you feel sometimes you carry too much of the world's burdens. This person around you in spirit feels she did things that way and you're doing it too. She wants you to feel more joy and laughter. [Star sign?] Leo. She had a vision of how the world should be. This can cause pressure. Just try and do the best you can. There is a lovely healing spirit around her. She is showing a Lotus flower, a dream of peace.

* * *

John Ransley dream, Tuesday 27 September 2005.

Muktanand has come back to attend her own commemorative service. I want to ask her how she feels about that. The program has carefully omitted that she died. At the end of the service she goes back to get her own car, the Mitsubishi Magna. She is dressed in white. I want to know if she thinks we were doing the service right. When the service finishes she is keen to get back her yoga decorations, the wind chimes, from the yoga hall. We are all relaxed and friendly, a nice feeling.

Tarot Card Reading, October

I consult Sarina again on 13 October 2005. The reading is very consistent with previous readings, with references to the book (this book), the fire sign spirit, fun, diet and Franciscans, not all of which are included.

I'm seeing a woman around in spirit, fire sign, Leo etc, on the other side. She's going to another level spiritually, another level of understanding. She's healed from what she was fearful of. She also feels you have healed a lot too. She is very, very happy, and there is

also a sense of peace she hasn't had for a long time. She also wants to come back to the physical level, to finish the work she felt she didn't complete. With a different emphasis, do it in a different way.

She is dissatisfied with one thing, your relationship: you both didn't spend enough time together. [I say, my fault.] She feels she contributed too. She feels she suffered from pride, she's learned that, not that people would have known. She feels spiritually that would have blocked her. Like a famous person can be, she was very kind and caring but she felt separated from other people: she doesn't have that now. She has a very compassionate and caring soul. Also she took herself too seriously. I know its funny, but I see a white pussycat living with you in spirit, well rounded, living with you. I don't think it knows it's in spirit; I keep seeing it jumping up on your lap and laying on the bed!

* * *

John Ransley dream, Friday 14 October 2005:

I'm invited into a building of some kind. I follow Muktanand in although there is no image of her. I sit down on an old backless chair while she goes somewhere. Muktanand is passing by when I make a noise, a cough. She stops and looks but doesn't say anything. She is wearing a bright red long-sleeved top and dark blue jeans. She is taller than before, more womanly, slim with a fine bearing, confident in herself. Quite different to the terminally ill Muktanand. Maybe she seems taller because I'm sitting but I don't think so. She is a very fine person, much more mature but not old-looking, a Woman! Not so young and unsure of herself as before. (She always seemed young to me.) Commanding respect without demanding it. Definitely not girlish.

John comment: Muktanand always said that if she came back she was determined to be taller.

Tarot Card Reading, February

I attend another session with Sarina on 1 February 2006.

Really weird, see a lifetime in India. You are holding a white lotus flower in water and putting it in front of a Hindu statue. You've had a few lifetimes in Asia connected to Buddhism, at least 600 years ago; at least three lifetimes as a Buddhist. You follow a very similar path in Hinduism. In your Hindu life you maintain yourself purely dedicated to the spiritual path, with a close connection to a woman who was also very dedicated to the spiritual path; both of you dedicated to learning and understanding on a platonic level. You married her in this lifetime and reverted to the same energy; a wonderful energy but different to married life. They say you need a lot of blue around you, the energy of healing and protection.

This is weird. A woman with long hair that is always put up is holding a long stick with a ball on the end, oil or water on the end, and flicking the oil/water around like a blessing. Do you know someone like this? [No] She is around you at the moment, protecting and helping you. She used to wear a sari, a long dress with a piece of material across the front. Long fairish hair, not Indian. I keep seeing her with her hair up. It shows her look from her last life. Fairly pale skin, blue eyes. Around you a lot at the moment. She wore a lot of orange. [Orange robes?] Yes. [It could be someone I know except for hair colour.] Maybe she's changed her hair; sometimes they like to do that to relate differently.

The description of the woman best fits Muktanand.

Queens Birthday

Margie Barram sent me the following account of a dream she had on the Queens Birthday weekend, June 2006:

Margie introduction: On the 2006 Queen's Birthday week-end, I attended two three hour yoga workshops, one held on Saturday and the other on Sunday at Core Yoga Studios, West End. The yoga teacher was a woman named Rachel Zinman, an Australian who had returned to Byron Bay after living and teaching in New York City for the previous 10 years. I attend a weekly day time yoga class at Core Yoga Studios because this suits my family responsibilities and working life, and this brought Rachel's workshop to my attention.

It is very special for me to attend any yoga in addition to this weekly class. Muktanand's dream workshop, retreats and yoga days were very special events in my life. So attending these workshops, and bringing my teachers to mind as part of my practice there, gave me an opportunity to remember and later dream about Muktanand, who first showed me the psychological and spiritual side of yoga.

I dream I am walking down a busy street, on a footpath busy with people and business. It is very like Boundary Street, West End on the city side of the Vulture Street intersection. It is also very pedestrian – I am passing everyday shops, set in two-story buildings. There is a cigarette butt on the footpath and the dark stain from some spill. I look back and notice a narrow door flush in the row of shops, which I hadn't spotted before. I go over to the door and it opens inwards at my approach. I look in. The door opens onto a steep, narrow flight of stairs that rises in one continuous flight to the next floor. Rachel is standing about three steps up and is beckoning me to come in. I look at the hall and the stairs – they are very narrow - I won't fit in. The way is too narrow for me. Rachel beckons to me again, then turns and starts to climb the stairs. I turn side on to go in, but once inside find that I can fit. There is really plenty of room for me. I shut the door behind me and climb the now spacious stairs.

I climb the stairs and step into a room at the top. This upper room is full of women, all looking very relaxed and happy. I am struck by their diversity – “big ones, little ones, fat ones, thin ones, long ones, short ones” - but all very comfortable together. The room is very light and airy. I look over and I see Muktanand. I am delighted. She is smiling, looking happy and relaxed. I feel welcome at this gathering.

Margie comment: I see this as an invitational dream to climb above the pedestrian matters of busy everyday life to a more spiritual place. Yoga is the stairs to this upper room, and I am invited to climb those stairs. Although I initially judge the way as too narrow for me, once without room for me, I find I am wrong about this. When I reach the upper room I find there is every kind of woman there – I can “fit in”. I see my friend Muktanand there, whose good counsel and teaching I trusted – this is a good place to aspire to, and yoga can take me there.

Dead Can Dance

I would like to introduce this last piece with a dream I had during Easter 1995, at a holiday cottage near Federal, behind Byron Bay:

My friends take me to sit around a coffin or box inside a house. The dead man was

inside the box, but the top surface of the box was made of dirt. We waited for a while, and then we started to brush sand and dirt away from the top of the box. I expected to see a skull emerge as we did this and I was a bit fearful. But the first thing that emerged were eyes, bright, hard, shining eyes, and then the head, and then the full body of a clothed man, who sat up and got out of the box/coffin. He was quite friendly and a bit later he danced with someone, a woman I think, and he was talking and socialising; no one seemed to think this was very remarkable.

In the morning I thought the dream was a sly reference to the Dead Can Dance, a German band that Muktanand was quite keen on at the time. A few days later my mother told me my uncle Don had died the day before the dream, so maybe it was a reference to that. I include it here because of its echoes with the following story by Karen Gilbert, dated July 2006:

Many years ago our family went to a cremation service for my mother's uncle who had suddenly died when he was knocked over by a tram. I was 22 years old at the time and my brother was 15.

My brother and I sat together a couple of rows from the front of the chapel. I noticed that there were shadows of people standing behind the casket along the front wall. I turned around to see if shadows were being cast by people standing at the back of the chapel, from where the sun was shining in. Everyone was seated. I continued to be puzzled by the shadows when suddenly I saw the shadow of our relative sit up in his casket, get out of the casket and then move towards the other shadows. I was amazed and speechless throughout the rest of the ceremony.

At the end of the service my brother and I walked outside. He turned to me and said 'did you see what I saw?' I said 'what did you see?' He said 'I saw Uncle Arthur sit up in his casket'. He related to me the same details I had seen. Since that time I have continued to believe in life after death.

Jackie and her partner Rieko had been staying with me for 11 months while Jackie fought breast cancer. Jackie had decided to fight the disease with natural means, under the direction of a Japanese doctor. Unfortunately by the time she was diagnosed the cancer had spread. Although we tried many different types of natural therapies she passed away on Friday 23 June 2006, 18 months after she was diagnosed.

Jackie was a close friend and we had talked about reincarnation and an after life. We agreed that on the day of her funeral she would come up and tap me on the shoulder. The funeral service was on the following Wednesday. On the Friday night I quickly returned to my home to pick up some material we needed, as a couple of friends of mine and me had built her casket and now we wanted to put the lining in. I opened the front door and was greeted by a powerful energy that filled the whole house, very strong, thick. I had not been expecting anything and unfortunately I became alarmed. I quickly picked up the material and left.

That night in bed I pulled up the bed clothes and was determined not to 'see' anything, even though I felt a strong presence. I felt the energy strongly throughout the house every day and night and one night I saw what looked like a fire fly moving around the room while I was in bed.

The day of the ceremony arrived and Rieko and I had worked solidly for four days organizing the ceremony, the way we knew Jackie would have liked it, with the music and photos she had chosen. I was not aware of any particular sensations at the service, but when we went to a friend's house for the wake, a friend who is psychic ("Joan") took me aside and said she had a message for me from Jackie. Jackie was over in the corner of the room looking very happy and taking her time to look at each person in the room. Then Joan said Jackie just tapped you on the shoulder three times and bent backwards with a big laugh. I had not told Joan about the agreement I had with Jackie.

Joan said Jackie was saying 'thank you, thank you, thank you' to me and Rieko and 'the service was just as I wanted it to be'. Through Joan Jackie said the body was just a vessel and she had died at the right time. She said her life was meant to be like this and she knew how it would be before she came down here. Jackie said she would not hang around harassing us, as she had very important work to do. She was very excited about the work she was about to do.

Before she went to Japan to teach English, Jackie had studied Tibetan Buddhism at the Chenrezig Institute on the Sunshine Coast. I said to Joan the Tibetan Buddhists say that after death you must wait in the Bardo for 49 days, but Jackie will likely want to be going right away, to get involved in more projects. Joan said Jackie's response was 'I'd like to go but I can't, I will stay the allocated time'. Then she was gone.

Since that time I have not felt Jackie's presence to the same extent in the house. I feel sorry that my irrational fear stopped me from experiencing more with her, but she still found a way to fulfill our promise.

Rieko and I went out to the land that Jackie and I own and there were hundreds and hundreds of small birds flying backwards and forwards really close to the ground. Which was an amazing sight. I said 'if you are here Jackie, can you have one of the birds land on a fence post close to me'. Less than twenty seconds later a small bird landed on the fence post next to me. No other birds had come anywhere near the fence before that. Jackie's favourite bird was the kookaburra, and I said to Rieko there are no kookaburras here, and just then off in a distant tree three kookaburras began laughing loudly.

Karen's story is included because Jackie shared our house at Rosary Crescent for a number of years, and completed one of Muktanand's yoga teacher training courses.

The other reason is the sequel to Karen's account of the funeral service. Two days after the funeral she told me a psychic friend of hers, 'Joan' (not her real name), had a message for me. I took this seriously because it was so unexpected, coming from a perfect stranger. I thought it would be something concerning Jackie but it was nothing like that.

I phoned Joan early on Sunday morning and I took detailed notes of the conversation. Joan said 'she was seeing two ladies, a natural blonde with straight hair cut short, and another with dark hair. The latter was saying you feel very sad. She was trying to explain you should not feel sad, and kept insisting that. The lady with blonde hair in the background kept on smiling'. Joan said 'it pulled at her heartstrings'.

'The dark haired lady was saying please don't be sad because life is there to enjoy. Try to look for things that help you enjoy your life. The blonde lady kept smiling, almost as if she was backing up the enjoyment part of life'.

Joan said the lady with the dark hair was really concerned and was showing a lot of worry on her face. She was fine but she was worried that I wasn't. Joan asked me if I knew her and I replied that it might be my deceased partner. Joan said it was time for me to thank her for being my partner, and to release her so she could go to the next stage. She was scared to go until she knew everything was fine with me. Joan said while she was telling me that a look of relief came over the dark haired lady's face.

Joan said the blonde lady was definitely not Jackie, she had big blue eyes. I told Joan my partner had big blue eyes and she responded the blonde might be another side to my partner, showing how good it would make her feel if I were happier. Joan said in my heart I should silently thank her for the time we had together. As soon as I was able to do that it would

make me feel happier. Sometime soon would be better.

I had been getting into a fairly negative space mulling over my relationship with Muktanand and the numerous deficiencies on my side of it. So I took Joan's advice seriously. That evening during my meditation practice I silently declared that my life with Muktanand was whole and complete. I thanked her for everything and asked her to feel free to move on. I gave it my best shot.

In the days that followed my declaration I seemed to feel a space opening, a greater clarity. I had suspected for some time that some of the things I had been doing - such as reading books about reincarnation and life after death – had been a way of continuing my relationship with Muktanand, as if she was “not dead”. This was easy to do, living as I do in our Rosary Crescent house with all its personal reminders of her. Of course if she was not dead then I didn't really have to confront my grief and let her go permanently.

Declaring our relationship whole and complete was very helpful, and continues to be so whenever I start thinking in that direction.

I phoned Joan again a week later and told her my declaration had opened up a space. Joan said she could see the dark haired lady and she was smiling a lot, she was very happy. It had released me and her. It didn't mean we would forget each other and we would meet again. As time went by I would feel more like myself and I would be able to relate to people better, I would be a freer person. Joan said I had done the right thing.

I am not seeking to make any claims about this proving anything one way or the other. All I can report is that my conversation with Joan and my subsequent actions lightened up my life.

Addendum: Quantum Consciousness

On 1 May 2004 I wrote the following ‘protocols’ in my notebook:

- There is no way of contacting Muktanand. And her ‘presence’ is not discernable with my conscious mind. That is, I can't conjure her presence up, and I can't consciously tell whether she is present or not. It has to be a kind of intuitive feeling.
- The memories of the ‘physical’ Muktanand are emotional. The new Muktanand is much harder to relate to, although it is wonderful to know that she continues to have a presence, in spirit, or in essence; or rather *not* essence, a very Muktanand presence.
- I yearn to talk to her but I know that's not possible – except maybe in dreams. I understand a bit better how bereft Eleanor must be.
- Muktanand is no longer physically constrained but she apparently is limited to particular times and places, spreading herself around. For example, present at North Stradbroke but at that time not anywhere else.
- Before her death, Muktanand was ‘present’ in places away from her physical body, eg with Christina and with Belinda.
- Of course if she is not physically constrained that means she is not constrained by Newtonian physics. If not, then she is probably not constrained by Newtonian time either. Different dimensions and therefore the difficulties communicating from one dimension to the other.

- Muktanand can initiate contact via dreams or presence, but perhaps she is constrained in how much contact she can have.

In March 2006 I came across a book titled *Will Storr vs. The Supernatural* (Ebury Press, 2006). The following passage on page 234 reminded me of my ‘protocols’.

Physician Stuart Hameroff and his partner Dr Roger Penrose are world experts in the study of consciousness ... Their research has led them to believe that our souls exist on the tiniest, most fundamental level of the universe – the quantum level. The one that doesn’t like being watched by humans.

There are things, I learned, called ‘microtubules’. These minute contraptions live in the base of our brains and act as on-board computers, containing the information and processes that are the very essence of ourselves – our soul, in other words. But that’s not the really incredible thing. The truly tectonic-rocking breakthrough that Hameroff and Penrose have made is this: when our systems shut down – when we pass away – the information that’s held in our microtubules doesn’t die. It can’t, you see, because it’s part of the quantum level, which is the most basic level in existence. It’s the level on which the very fabric of the universe – matter, energy, space and time – exists. And, what’s more, when they drift free of our microtubules these little specks of soul don’t separate and float apart: a process called quantum entanglement keeps them bunched together. So, if it’s correct, this elegant nugget of extreme science does appear to show that the mind and the body are separate things – and that they can exist independently. Our brains, these men claim, do not create consciousness. They just channel it, like a television picking up a station.

All this might explain why people who have Near Death Experiences describe suddenly feeling ‘at one with the universe’ and having a radiant revelation that ‘everything in existence is interconnected’. Because a soul that’s been released from its body does suddenly become absorbed into the universe. And in quantum science everything is interconnected – that’s what makes it work.

Stuart Hameroff appears as one of the talking heads in *What the Bleep? (Is Going On)* the documentary about quantum mechanics and consciousness (the three disc version, *Down the Rabbit Hole* is better if you can get hold of it). The physicist Russell Targ is another person who is well worth a look if you are interested in this area.

Of course the Penrose/Hameroff hypothesis is fiercely contested – try Googling ‘Rich Grush’ and ‘quantum consciousness’ for example – but it’s amazing that a quantum physics argument of this kind can even be made.

* * *

There is a woman in spirit holding a cat. They’re both sitting in a relaxed way on the floor, and the cat is curled up in her lap, a round well-fed cat. They both look very happy and contented. They’ve got no more work to do; they’re just sitting around, like a spiritual holiday. The woman is happy and relaxed and at peace with herself and she wants everyone to be the same. She could be content like this forever.
Sarina 25 October 2006

PART FOUR

REMEMBERING MUKTANAND

What are we really teaching in a Yoga class?

Essentially when we are teaching yoga, what we are trying to convey is to teach people to be aware. One of the key things about developing awareness is that we must be relaxed. So that's the other thing that we are primarily teaching. When we are teaching people to be aware of their bodies, to be aware of their breath, we're usually doing it in the context of being spontaneously relaxed, being natural and relaxed about it. So it's the relaxation that allows for the expansion of awareness.

What happens when we get tense? We become smaller, defensive, wound up, closed and self centred. This can be summarised as a form of contraction. Our awareness contracts to whatever it is that's the focus of our preoccupation at the time; or the main source of our suffering or distress. And that's actually what causes our distress. And we feel it in the body, we feel it in our emotions, we feel it in the mind. We contract on all those levels. And so yoga is the opposite of that. In order to counteract contraction we have to relax. When we think about relaxing we automatically have the sense of "opening out", of expansion. We talk about people being in an expansive mood, when they're feeling more relaxed.

This is essentially what we are teaching in yoga practice. We're teaching people how to relax enough to expand their awareness. And everything else that we are doing is only about expanding awareness, and deepening relaxation. We tend to have an idea that relaxation has a limit, that there is a kind of floor or a ceiling, but part of what we're really exploring in yoga is how far, how deeply can we relax.

Now when you're doing yoga for a longer period of time and on a regular basis, when you have a commitment to it as a way of growing, we're pushing back the boundaries of how deeply we can relax. But there are boundaries. And we're also exploring how much we can sustain that expanded awareness, what it takes to contract us.

Like for me for instance, during this illness, at first it was all the physical stuff, I was just physically incredibly sick, but what really got to me was that I couldn't think straight, I couldn't concentrate, and I began to feel really irritable and vulnerable and vulnerable to other people's feelings and easily freaked out because of the illness. So that's all it took, just getting sick, for me to contract down in some areas of my life, in a way that I don't normally do. For some people it takes a major life upheaval, like a death or a divorce, but for most of us actually it only requires that the boss walks in with a bad look on her face. Whatever it is, it's a question of how we sustain that, and it's not that we don't react, but how quickly do we bounce back.

Muktanand Meannjin, Yoga Teacher Training Course, 1995

CHAPTER 10

YOGA TEACHER

High Standards

John Ransley

Muktanand loved yoga from the first time she came in contact with it and lived yoga for the rest of her life. She was always humble about her accomplishments, at the same time pursuing perfection in her preparation and teaching. Despite being a gifted writer who combined crystal clarity with a wonderful turn of phrase, she left only a few scraps of writing: her life's work was her teaching.

In India sannyasins are treated with a great amount of respect. Her mother describes Muktanand sitting cross legged at the door of the Coimbatore ashram to greet her students. As the students entered they would touch their forehead, lips and then Muktanand's feet, to receive her blessing. When Muktanand returned to Australia she deliberately eschewed this kind of role, and actively discouraged anyone who sought to treat her as a 'guru'.

Muktanand sought to make yoga accessible to as many people as possible and to this end she presented herself as just another suburban teacher. However, while students were quick to understand that her teachings came from the heart, they also soon discovered she insisted on high standards, both from herself and from those she taught. Many of those who came in contact with her say her teachings changed their lives.

New and experienced yoga students attended her classes because she was an excellent teacher of asanas, pranayama and meditation. Not only that, her short talks on yoga philosophy and psychology were famously clear and highly relevant to the accompanying practices. Yoga means union or joining, and Muktanand uniquely managed in her teaching to give her students the experience of union in body, mind and spirit.

Muktanand never taught a yoga practice that she wasn't personally and thoroughly familiar with. She was also an enthusiastic adherent of the maxim that in any teaching situation it is the teacher who usually learns the most. Before returning to Australia she had taught thousands of students in South India. Through her interactions with them she developed a large repertoire of solutions to the problems students have with practice.

It is noticeable that the following collection of stories from Muktanand's students only includes two contributions from men. Men are under-represented in yoga generally so this is not unexpected. Also a female teacher will usually attract more female than male students. But in Muktanand's view the particular life experiences of women made them much more receptive than men to the benefits that yoga has to offer. She thought perhaps it even made women better yogis than men. This may explain why there so many female yoga teachers. It may help explain why Muktanand was such an extraordinary yogi!

Muktanand was a yoga national treasure. She lived and breathed yoga and her teachings came from the heart. With better health and a longer life she would have introduced many more students to those endless realms of yoga and human consciousness.

Muktanand loved the following poem and often read it for students at her retreats.

God Be With The Mother

*As she carried her child, may she carry her soul.
As her child was born, may she give birth to her own higher truth.
As she nourished and protected her child, may she nourish and protect her inner life
and her independence.
For her soul shall be her most painful birth, her most difficult child, and the dearest
sister to her other children.
Amen*

Michael Leunig

Essence of Breath ***Alison Lee***

One night after Muktanand had stopped teaching I went and sat in the room where I had been so many times before. At first I wandered around lost not really knowing what why I was there. I sat still yet restless remembering her presence, feeling the tightness in my chest - the realization dawning that there would be no more classes in this humble space. Finally I lay down on the carpeted floor, as I had done so many times before and allowed myself to feel: her presence, her absence. Then slowly I allowed myself to unravel coming back to the taste of my breath and the gentle sound of my tears.

As one of the students who participated in Muktanand's last class I have been reflecting lately on the subtle ways in which Muktanand's personal style of teaching so powerfully influenced my life. As one of her most rebellious and undisciplined students I often resisted the path of enlightenment, finding my own treacherous passage somewhere between the wrath of Kali Durga and the mists of Highgate Hill.

Growing up in Brisbane I experienced a serious accident at the age of thirteen which led to many physical and mental health problems. As I struggled to regain my sense of confidence in the world I battled drug addiction, sexual exploitation and chronic episodes of self harming and suicide. When I was around 15 I found myself an in-patient in a mental hospital – it was during this time that one of the female staff introduced me to yoga. It wasn't until much later that I discovered Muktanand through Isabelle Rodgers, who I met during a course I attended at Chenrezig, whilst studying and working as a counsellor in 1995.

As a budding feminist I found Muktanand's radical integrative style appealed to me immensely. But it was her passion for language that fired my insatiable appetite for her teaching and learning and kept me going back for more:

*Allow your body to be supported by the earth beneath you, let your body be soft and
open ... Gently breathe in and out ... as you breathe out relax and let go of any*

remaining tightness ... feel for the softness allowing your body to come to rest ... feel for your heartbeat and notice any sensation at the heart centre ... allow the chest rise and fall ... without altering it notice the natural rhythm of your breath ... the quality of the breath ... taste the breath ... savour the breath...

My ears blossomed as words poured into my body like a warm summer spring nourishing my parched soul. After a trip to India I returned to Brisbane and completed my teacher training with Muktanand (1998), a privilege I will always treasure. I continued to seek a way to satisfy both my heart and my mind as my interest in counselling grew alongside my love of yoga. I became more and more interested in Muktanand's orientation to therapy through yoga and how yoga could be used to assist people's mental health. This interest led to my exploration of different therapeutic orientations that heighten awareness and explore body process, such as Gestalt and Process Oriented Psychology.

More recently I have undertaken Narrative Therapy training and have been experimenting with ways in which these therapies can be combined to enhance awareness and assist women with body, sexuality and eating issues to nurture and nourish their experience of life. As I allow this curiosity and love of language to lead my work I am discovering that the essence of breath as taught by Muktanand is unfolding a rich recipe that can provide great insight into how to foster intimate relationships with the self and others - unlocking secret appetites that breathe life into barren flesh and bones. I believe beyond this awareness lie infinite possibilities for enriching appreciation for the intimate experiences of life and I continue to be energized by this work and those I work with. It gives me great joy to consider that essence of Muktanand's teaching lives on in some creative way through the exquisitely rich conversations I and others savour each and every day.

OMMMuktanand Alix Johnson

When I think of Muktanand I think of her skin. She had a complexion that was impossibly pale, luminous and really quite lovely. It is with a smile and a sense of the ironic then that when I contemplate the person whose teachings of yoga and meditation took me deeper into myself than I had been before, my mind goes straight to the superficial, to her skin.

I met Muktanand in 2001 as part of a yoga teacher traineeship in Byron Bay. She was to be my philosophy teacher. Our group of thirty-odd students didn't meet this former swami until we were halfway into the course, which until that point had been dominated by the practice of asana. The consistent, rigorous practice of the physical poses meant that there was also an importance building surrounding the physical body, its prowess and the sense of accomplishment that yoga can bestow. By the time we met Muktanand this must have become quite apparent and we were ready for some ego whittling, a job she undertook straight away.

On the day of our first philosophy class we were seated haphazardly on the floor, some in padmasana, virasana or siddhasana, others slouching against the white walls, or lying back over bolsters covered in blankets and even eye bags. Muktanand's entrance at the back of the class went nearly unnoticed – she was so tiny! – save for her radiance and that skin that positively glowed.

She was holding a cup of herbal tea and was followed by a taller, seemingly older man, whom I now know to be Kundan. She wove through the debris of bodies and assumed her position at the front of the class. In a few deft moves she took control of the group as if she has stunned us with some special power. I couldn't tell you how she did this, only that she did. There was something fearsome about her presence, as much as there was something compassionate and endearing.

She had never met any of us before but that didn't prevent her from looking at us in the eye and calling upon us by name to answer questions. (She had studied our photos, we later learned). She posed a curveball to the group: "Who here meditates?" Every hand went up. "Who here meditated before starting this course?" Half the hands stayed up. "How many of you practised a form of Buddhist meditation?" Most hands stayed up. "And how many of you had previously done a yogic form of meditation?" One or two hands remained up in the air.

Our naivety was exposed and from that moment we were all gripped, held fast in the knowledge that this person had much to teach us, and she did. From that moment, no-one questioned Muktanand's authority or her authenticity, that is what struck me. She knew what she knew from her own experience. Everyone held her in a sort of reverence, which may go some way to explaining why when I think of her what I remember is the devi-like glow of that skin!

When our days with her were over, by request she held one more class. Out of schedule and in the backyard of a student's home, we sat in the grass, under a tree, in a big open circle. We meditated, asked more questions, listened to her answers, and then as we prepared to disband something magical happened.

We chanted OM and after we had finished, long after we had stopped, the vibration continued to resound, and resound, and resound. One by one our eyes peeped open and then the mystery was revealed. We turned our faces skyward to see that a jet aeroplane had flown overhead and its deep hum had merged with ours. And we all laughed, including Muktanand.

I am deeply grateful for having met Muktanand, she has been in inspiring and life-affirming force in my life. May her light continue to shine!

In her words, Hari Om Tat Sat

Yoga with Muktanand Carmel McNeill

I came to yoga initially in 1989 to help me deal with stress, at the suggestion of an oral surgeon. Luckily for me, when I called a phone number for yoga classes in the Dutton Park/Highgate Hill area, Muktanand answered the phone. Thus began an education which continues to this day.

Apart from learning asanas, breathing practices, and meditation, I also attended a number of workshops which Muktanand conducted on such topics as cleansing practices, diet and

nutrition, yoga and spirituality, and dreams and dream analysis. I particularly benefited from the dream workshop as I have always had a very vivid dream life, and had not felt at ease to discuss this up until this point. However, I was aware of my dreams being part of my inner guidance and intuition, and found this discussion very validating.

One of my dreams which was quite distressing was one in which I was thwarted in my attempts to attend my Grandfather's funeral. In real life I missed my Grandfather's funeral in North Queensland by about an hour, and felt such enormous guilt that I had nightmares about it for the next year. Finally I had the opportunity to visit the area again, and went and visited his grave, talked to him, and sang him a goodbye song. I have never had the dream since. I mentioned this in class once, and at Muktanand's request I wrote about the experience for her Master of Letters.

Another aspect of life that I learned about from Muktanand was that of drawing on the strength and guidance of those who have gone before us. When my marriage ended I spoke to Muktanand about my uncertainty and grief, and she suggested that I talk to Pop and ask him for support and guidance. I found this a little unusual at first, but tried it and found it very comforting. I continue to do this to this day, and Muktanand is now guiding me along with Pop.

Some general principles which I learnt from Muktanand about asana practice were: to be gentle with yourself, to synchronise the breath with the posture, and to continue with the posture if you were feeling a dull ache, but stop it immediately if experiencing any sharp pain. A complete breath involves not only breathing in completely, but breathing out completely as well. As a person who had experienced a number of challenges with my breathing, I learned to allow myself to feel fear when holding my breath out. The strength of this fear faded over time.

At my final class with Muktanand's purple group in December 2001, I noticed that the class before had left the room looking shocked. Muktanand asked if I would stay behind after class. She told me she'd found out that week that she had breast cancer, but she wasn't going to tell many people as she was worried about how they might react, and that they might judge or blame her. That they might say, 'you're a yoga teacher, how come you got cancer?' She asked me to keep the information confidential, and I said I would keep her in my thoughts and prayers.

She was also wondering what she'd accomplished in her life, which made me speechless: she'd just given so much.

I kept in some touch over the next 2 years, but could see that even though her spirit was brighter than ever, her body was struggling. The day before she died (Friday February 13, 2004) I had a strong feeling of something being not quite right. I found it very hard to concentrate, and only narrowly missed causing a traffic accident. When I was informed about Muktanand's death that weekend, it all made sense.

Four to six weeks after the funeral I had my only dream so far about Muktanand. I dreamt that John drove up the long driveway into Dutton Park State School, where I had taught for many years. In the car he had Muktanand's possessions, and said that he had brought them to the school to give away. I felt angry and distressed, and told John that it was too soon. Upon reflection, I think my dream outlined the fact that I felt Muktanand died too soon, and that my

grief was still very raw.

Finally, Muktanand had her feet firmly planted on the ground and could laugh with the best of us, as well as at herself. She had a great love of reading, and of children's literature. She was also quite passionate about social justice issues, and it was not unknown for her to put a petition on the table next to the class notes. She loved life and lived it fully, and for that I am very thankful.

Profound Impact **Carolyn Fitzgibbon**

Muktanand has had a profound impact on my life in so many ways – the way I breathe, meditate, and experience my body, dreams, emotions, thoughts and pain.

I first met Muktanand in 1990 for private sessions in her sunny little room with the crystal sending rainbows around it. Muktanand taught me to meditate through the chronic pain I was experiencing by focusing my attention into the pain: its colour, edges, centre, type and images that arose. And to breathe into the pain. I became less fearful and avoidant of the pain and it dissolved. I thought that yoga was fantastic!

As I stretched into my body I actually became taller and I felt that I learnt how to be in my body.

Since childhood, my asthma had made it difficult for me to breathe and exercise. Muktanand taught me pranayama practices and to have an equal in and out breath when exercising. This enabled me to exercise without getting asthma. Suddenly I could go on long backpacking adventures through the bush and overseas, even coping with high altitudes in Bolivia.

I have made many great friends through people that have also been drawn to Muktanand and I hope to continue to discuss what Muktanand taught us and how she touched our lives. Recently I met a yoga teacher who had met Muktanand and this connection probably saved my uterus. I had given birth to our son Ivah, but my placenta was retained. Theatre was being prepared to surgically remove it, an operation that often ended in hysterectomy. An experienced midwife came into the room to try to assist with birthing the placenta. When I saw her I asked her if I had met her previously, and if she knew Muktanand. She replied that she had met Muktanand once in Toowoomba and that she was an amazing person. (Later I couldn't recall meeting her at all or any "logical" reason for mentioning Muktanand). This connection enabled us to discuss yoga and opening my chakra's to move the placenta. This worked and soon I had birthed the placenta.

I also learnt to interpret and love my dreams through Muktanand. I remember one of the first dreams I told Muktanand was with her floating in the air on a giant lotus dressed in white. Muktanand responded by explaining the *kosha*'s role in yoga -no guru trip there!

I have been so grateful to Muktanand that I have experienced her lineage of yoga without it being dependent on faith or a guru. I don't know that I would have continued my yoga journey if it wasn't for this crucial orientation. Muktanand encouraged us to experience rather than believe. Her clarity and integrity were so evident in her teaching and it made it so

much easier to put the yoga into practice. Thanks to Muktanand, yoga is an essential part of my life.

Poem, August 2006
Darshan

Hridayakash

Years spent watching over me.
With eyes that see
and a smile that knew.
The silence called one last time
Everything, but nothing, was lost
for the Heart to be blown wide open

Special Aura
David Toyer

In early 1995 I was trying to find a weekend retreat/temple or similar to go to and just be at peace. In the previous 4-5 years I had been developing a very strong attraction to Thai Buddhism and had been overwhelmed by the feelings of peace I had experienced inside a number of Thai Buddhist temples. I had also completed a training, some 18 months before, that offered me the opportunity to experience how available inner peace and 'knowing' was – being at peace with one's self.

A number of contacts were suggested to me, one of which was a woman by the name of Muktanand, and hence I phoned her to enquire about her retreat. We talked on the phone for what must have been a good half hour or more. Muktanand was very interested in my journey through a long period of chronic fatigue and told a little of her own experience. She listened to me telling my story of more recent experience with a frozen shoulder.

Muktanand informed me that her retreat was a Yoga retreat and asked if I had done any yoga, to which I replied 'no', acknowledging however that I was still interested in her retreat. She then said 'well I am half-way through a term with my beginner group but if you wish to come along for the 3 weekly session between now and the weekend of the retreat you are most welcome – you can then see if it is for you and make up your mind from there'.

I remember waiting in the schoolyard the night of the first lesson. The silhouettes of my presumed fellow students outlined in the dim lighting of the schoolyard. At lesson starting time the door opened and a woman stood, bathed in light, in the doorway as the students walked in. As I approached the door the woman said 'Hi you must be David', then welcomed me and introduced herself as Muktanand. I was a bit taken aback that Muktanand should instantly know who I was, however in hindsight that of course makes more sense to me now than it did back then.

The lesson commenced and as we progressed Muktanand would commence the various asanas with comments like; ‘Anne just be careful with this one and support that lower back of yours by doing such and such’; ‘Jennifer, now you place your leg to the right rather than the left and use it to brace that knee of yours’. (Not the real names or exact words but examples of the type of comments Muktanand was making) She continued around the room making personal adjustment to a number of the students. I was quite surprised at Muktanand’s level of personal connection to everyone, but thought well ‘then again these fellow students may have known Muktanand for some time’. Nevertheless I could not help but be impressed after a relatively short time into this first lesson.

Then, low and behold, ‘now David you need to modify this by doing such and such to take the pressure off the front part of your left-hand shoulder’ (or some such wording). I guess it is fair to say I was somewhat dumbfounded. Here was this person who could remember **every detail** of a telephone conversation, a week ago, with a complete stranger!!

I have to admit that the world of yoga was totally strange to me at that point in time. I felt quite ‘OK’ being there but I really had had no past experience of this. At the same time I was in the presence of a very special kind of person and this whole experience was, even at this very early stage, feeling very compelling. If one night of yoga was like this I could only but imagine what a 3-day retreat was going to be like!

I clearly remember feeling on that initial night that I could see a vivid halo of radiance around Muktanand’s head as she sat in lotus pose up the front of the room. For want of better words, here was this ‘miniature-like enlightened being’ that seemed to teach by some profound method of very subtle absorption. As the years went by I often sensed a special aura around Muktanand during lessons.

Muktanand taught me that it is possible for human beings to achieve a stillness of mind that enables one to absorb and retain, if need be, virtually every sensory signal that is received. For me there are many lessons to go but it is very comforting to know the goal is attainable. Muktanand had VERY special ‘presence’ about her – intuitively knowing, non-judgmental, all compassionate, totally engaged and at peace. We may have had our last class but for me the lessons and the learning just seem to keep coming in subtle, gentle waves as my journey continues.

Biggest Thrill of My Life Eleanor Matthews, Mother

When Muktanand was born it was the biggest thrill of my life to hold her in my arms. I had tried for five years and thought it might never happen. Then with Patricia and Graham I had three lovely children in three and a half years.

Muktanand could read her Golden book before she started school. She was always a bookworm, and appeared strong and confident on the outside. I’m eternally grateful that we had her back in Australia for twenty years, and that despite all the health problems she did not die in India. I cannot thank Kundan – John Ransley – enough for all the care and love and support he gave her always.

She could read my mind and I could not fool her. She supported me in many ways and not a day goes by I don't miss her. The early pre-dawn mornings always remind me of her, and also when I hear the surf, which I can hear from my front porch. I can often feel her presence watching over and helping me.

My First Yoga Teacher Frances D'Souza

The first time I met Muktanand was through our friend Michele Burford. Muktanand was hosting a Wholistic Breath workshop at Rosary Crescent run by her friend Alakh, which Michele was also attending and had recommended to us. I remember Muktanand looking at me (obviously of Indian descent) and wondering aloud if I had a yoga background. However, I was a good Catholic girl from a conservative family and I knew nothing about yoga which quickly became apparent as I was unable to sit or lie still for any length of time. The workshop blew me away, it was very confronting, and enlightening to realise how our earliest memories - from birth, are held on to subconsciously and that they affect us in our daily lives.

At that time I had just started my PhD and I was getting a lot of neck and shoulder tension from prolonged computer use. Michele suggested I practice yoga as a means of relaxation. Afterwards I started attending Muktanand's classes regularly; she was my first teacher, and it was fantastic for me.

I attended Muktanand's classes for 10 years. My family could see the difference it had made in me and even my parents asked to practice yoga with me on one of their trips to Brisbane. Whenever I get tense these days I just remember Muktanand and adopt her breathing and posture practices. She took the time to set a really solid practice. It is something I will always have with me. I now teach our little daughter those things when she is tense or worried.

In her last class in November 2001, I remember her being very, very sad. She didn't tell us exactly why she was leaving yoga teaching; she only talked about spending time with her sister and her mum but it was all a bit mysterious. A couple of months later at Michele's Hens night (January 2002), shortly before her wedding, I realised Muktanand's spark wasn't there. We all went to a Japanese restaurant in West End and then to a movie. It was obviously very difficult for her to get through the night.

I loved Muktanand's poem, the one that was read out at the funeral service. As part of my (Department of Water) job in WA I spend a lot of time by the ocean, often in stormy weather. Her image of the blue sky washed clean by days of rain being a reward for waking each day is very powerful for me.

Muktanand's Inspiration Francie Oppel

In 1992, my GP advised me to try yoga as a way to manage a small but persistent physical problem. He recommended Muktanand's Brisbane Yoga Therapy Centre, and so, somewhat amused at the suggestion but ready to try anything, and in the spirit of adventure, I made an

appointment and sought the house on Rosary Crescent.

Muktanand took hold of my imagination from the very first moment I met her. It was her voice, I think, and her bearing – her diminutive size but her completely authoritative manner, somewhat cool, somewhat austere – that got me in. I realise that this is not the way to think about a swami, but I didn't know she was a swami. In fact as I looked and listened I realized that I didn't know what she was; that here was someone the likes of whom I hadn't encountered before. Needless to say I knew nothing whatever about the spiritual practice of yoga.

Muktanand treated me for the medical condition by giving me a few yogic practices, starting me right off with a full standing *bandha*. After a few weeks, she suggested that I might like to join her classes. I agreed that I would. I suppose it was really yoga that began to change my life, and not Muktanand, but I can't separate the two. For me, yoga was Muktanand.

I have many, many wonderful memories of classes with Muktanand, but one in particular stands out. It was a beginner's class, probably in third term, and we were sitting on our mats on the wooden floor of the hall in Musgrave Park. It must have been summer, for the light was still shining in the windows at 7 pm and birds were singing. Muktanand had introduced the concept of *sankalpa* a week before, and this week after we had finished our asanas but before we began to lie quietly, she again told us about finding our *sankalpa* – not to rush it and not to worry over it; the phrase that would be our *sankalpa* would come to us. "It may surprise you, but you will know it when it comes," she said.

We then lay in shavasana, and began to still our thoughts, lengthen our breathing and sink into the floor. Before I disappeared into my breathing and the floor, however, I became extra-aware of the lovely light and the birdsong and then, hey presto! A phrase came into my head that I recognised as my *sankalpa*, as Muktanand had said it would. I was very moved – by the rightness of the phrase, and the power of the moment. The phrase will stay with me while I live, and help me on my way when I die.

Muktanand's great strength, her focus in the moment directing our attention outward and inward, was a gift of inspiration – that intake of breath that makes life a possibility to begin with, and beyond that, exploration, discovery, joy.

Dream Workshops

Gabrielle Huggett

I started doing yoga with Muktanand in 1989 when I was a student at UQ. I fell in love with it and also the down to earth and real teacher I had found. She offered a mix of spirituality and knowing about the struggles in daily life. Muktanand's groundedness and commitment to yoga got me hooked so that I studied teacher training with her.

I also did Muktanand's dream workshops, which opened up a whole new means of analysis of my life. I was just amazed at our interconnectedness via this sub conscious realm. This has impacted my life immensely and helps give meaning to my understanding of life. This understanding has helped me through my life events, processing the loss of a child and the spiritual meaning and purpose of that. My dreams and premonitions prior to the event helped

me through a major life crisis.

Muktanand featured in my dreams frequently and once I dreamt of her being in a room of clutter and she was clearing out. I told her about it and she said she had just been doing that. I laughed and said to her that I didn't need to talk to her, as dreams were enough!

I felt so grateful to have the dream about her being close to death only weeks before she died. It gave me the opportunity to act upon it. My other dream about her being at her funeral only builds my faith in our souls continuing on. When I was teaching at Kurilpa last year I frequently felt her presence and guidance in times of need.

My husband always reminds me "energy cannot be created or destroyed". I found this on the internet which makes this real for me.

Everything is Energy

Everything in this Universe, in this world, and within each and every living and non living thing is energy in some form or another. This includes people, plants, rocks, dirt, water, soil and sand. It also includes our emotions, our feelings, thoughts, dreams, desires and fear.

Science has shown that everything we can examine contains an energy of vibration. All these vibrations co-exist at the same time. It is to this vibration that everything and every person is linked, whether we (species 'Homo Sapiens') like it or not, whether we are aware of it or not.

Energy can neither be created nor destroyed.

This statement is Universal Law and is recognised as one of the first principles of Science. Some people are conscious of the life energies that exist, some are not.

Energy can be transformed from one form to another, but it cannot be created or destroyed. It follows a simple harmony, a cycle. It follows the laws of attraction and repulsion.

<http://www.anunda.com/paradigm/energy.htm>

(Christopher Wynter and Fiona Tulk)

I once spoke to Muktanand about the loss of a friend and her advice was to take the qualities of that person and nurture them in my own life. I think that is good advice from Muktanand for us now.

Around Muktanand's life, and death, there have been so many coincidences, connections and telepathy through dreams. I was delighted therefore when my son was born on the anniversary of her death this year.

Muktanand, this is for you;

“May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields and,
Until we meet again,

May God hold you in the palm of His hand”

Irish blessing

Love from Gabrielle.

Swami-She: Memories of a Feminist Yogini

Isabelle Rogers

I do not have to work to keep her alive in my memory. Her voice caresses me whenever I practice or arrange my body for comfortable cross-legged sitting on someone's floor. As I teach others to become aware of their breathing, her phrases spill out of my mouth easily, naturally.

She is ingrained in my psyche. As I look at her funeral photograph on my wall I am shocked again and again that there is an end date on her life because she still feels so much part of my living consciousness, my daily life, my showing my almost four year old son how to slow his breath and calm his mind.

This gift of calm she gave me was there from my first laying eyes on her in that tiny room under the house in the inner city 'burbs. Walking in to her class, I took one look at her sitting serenely at the top of the room and could feel myself let go. So much pain and so many traumas she helped me through with her quiet precise instructions for arranging my body and listening to my mind.

Despite the precious friendships I had, leaving Muktanand and her teaching became the hardest part of leaving Brisbane for me. Yet I still felt anchored by the awareness she taught me, and held on to this through chaos and illness.

They kept me sane though my years of chronic fatigue. Some days I was only able to lie on a mattress and do a yoga nidra. Even without a tape, the echo of her voice sequencing the process kept me connected to my tired body and sad heart. On easier days a gentle beginner's/intermediate practice helped to release the stiffness of so much enforced bodily stillness. Weird how she'd already modelled to me a way to manage this illness!

Later, it mattered not that I could not afford pregnancy yoga classes. Thanks to my training from Muktanand (and a Janet Balaskis book) I had my own daily class in our beautiful cabin in the Rosebank hills.

Her breast cancer became known at the beginning of my pregnancy, and I dedicated my practice daily to her freedom from suffering. It seemed so natural to want to give back to the woman whose distilled wisdom had held me so gently for so long.

She was again with me in essence during my son's birthing. I knew how to breathe and relax, and dropped into a deep meditation during transition. It was like looking into a very deep indigo black well, knowing that it was The Mystery, knowing that it was/is bottomless, and that I must dive willingly into it. I felt ready and unafraid.

Throughout the birthing I felt fully present to my body's needs in every moment. I later reflected on this capacity to observe that was gifted me with so much subtlety and so much depth.

It has supported me through my years of parenting, with all its sleep deprivation and lack of practice! It seems now that my son is my main practice - reminding me to be present, to stay centred, to attend carefully to the body's needs.

Like my son, Muktanand was known as a talker! This seemed contrary to her capacity for deep silence. I remember my initial surprise as she held the floor over the dinner table. She did so again later on our occasional cake-eating dates, as she chewed her food loudly and well. She contrasted the austere yogic two meals a day with this love of a good sweet treat!

The cakes didn't affect her size - she remained slender - and short! Her physical height was inversely proportional to the size of her spirit. I saw her first in a seated meditation posture, and felt her presence fill the room and envelop us all with her wish to pass on the wisdom of her yogic ancestors. I was startled to then stand next to her and find she barely reached my shoulders!

Like many shorter women I know, she took no nonsense. Her strong feminist take of life was clear from the beginning. It seemed in stark contrast to her choice to 'follow the guru's orders' for so many years. (Though I am aware of her determined rebellion against his attempts to stop her practicing when she worked in the printing press!) It seemed that the many years of karma yoga was not merely being an 'obedient student', but an independent choice about her spiritual practice. Interesting how she attracted so many independent spirits to her on her return from India!)

So fare thee well my tart-tongued non-guru. For your legacy to me, my family and my students, my gratitude is big. May we meet again.

Om Shanti.

Practical Yoga
June Henry
Swami Nitya Abhedananda Saraswati

I recall with pleasure the privilege of being able to introduce Muktananda Meannjin, Kundan (John Ransley), Swamis Alakhmurti and Tapasmurti Saraswati, their parents Mrs and Mrs Mavis Foote, Ananda Kamala Saraswati (Kamala Jackson), Yoga Atma Saraswati (Dhyan Whitaker), and Narda Salms (later graduate of Muktananda's teacher training course), to Yoga in the Satyananda tradition. They were all students together in yoga classes I held at Toowoomba School of Yoga, Towoomba, Queensland, in the 1970's.

At this time, mid 1970's, I had been studying Yoga in the Satyananda tradition from 1969, when I first met Paramhansa Satyananda. From my first experience of Yoga Nidra delivered by Satyananda Saraswati in 1969 I found his teaching methodologies were something I valued most strongly and wanted to learn as much about as I could. My yoga classes in Toowoomba, Queensland, started after I returned from India where I had accessed further study with Paramhansa Satyananda Saraswati in the traditional manner, ie by living as a

sannyas in his ashram in Monghyr, Bihar.

Muktananda came to live with my family in the period before she went to study with Paramhansa Satyananda in Monghyr, Bihar. I recall watching with growing interest as Muktananda's searching mind examined the possibilities and potential for personal development in yoga in the Satyananda tradition, and hearing her decision to go to India to meet Paramhansa Satyananda, and to experience his yoga methodologies for herself.

I have an image I carry in my mind of Muktananda on the day of her departure to India. My image is of a petite person, dressed in her own particular dress style of that time, ie white blouse and sarong, and with an enormous travel pack on her back that was so big it towered up above her head..

This tiny frame and form, laden down by a huge travel pack, encompassed a searching mind with an outstanding ability to analyse, formulate, and teach concepts of yoga, from both the Satyananda Saraswati and the Buddhist Mindfulness traditions, in a practical way, a way such as to encourage their use in daily modern lifestyles toward health and wellness, and to contribute to an emerging field of Western study in the Ancient Healing Traditions, ie, application of yoga in a therapeutic context.

How privileged I feel to have had the opportunity and pleasure of introducing Yoga in the Satyananda tradition to Muktananda and to her fellow yoga class mates, and to watch and observe how she and indeed all her classmates, have integrated, and are still integrating, this very practical system of Yoga in the Satyananda tradition, in their day to day lives, and in their yoga teaching.

I recall most strongly from my own training in the Bihar School of Yoga, Monghyr, India, with Paramhansa Satyananda Saraswati, that he would turn to look at me and repeat on many occasions "Practical Yoga" ... and "Yoga from Shore to Shore and from Door to Door" ... an emphasis to remind one to have focus on the practical everyday application of yoga in our daily lives life, and on yoga for everyone wherever they are in life.

Very Distinctive Voice Kerstin Liebchen-Meades

My meeting with Muktanand has impacted on my life to this date. I arrived in Australia from Germany in October 1989, initially for six months, hoping to be able to work out whether I should pursue my relationship with my partner Eoin and whether I wanted to live in Australia.

With Eoin being my only contact in this strange, wonderful country, I still couldn't help soon feeling homesick and somewhat lonely. Eoin's answer to this malaise was to join Muktanand's yoga class.

Having had very little experience driving on the left side and driving around Brisbane, Eoin had to trial run my first trip to Highgate Hill. This initial trip from Morningside to Muktanand's place would always in future reference be called "Muktanand's way". It was a certain indication as to which direction I had to take to get to various destinations.

With very little exposure to yoga in Germany I still soon realised that I was “onto something good” and therefore very keen and inspired to immerse myself in the Authentic Yoga style Muktanand offered. During my first year of officially moving to Australia I took private lessons with Muktanand to further my studies. The intensity of these sessions and the knowledge gained stayed with me from that time onwards.

Eoin’s longstanding and my newly formed friendship with John and Muktanand led to their attendance at our wedding at the Chenrezig Tibetan Buddhist Centre. I remember feeling very privileged to have both join our special day. The dichotomy of me attributing a certain belief of Muktanand as an incredibly knowledgeable and insightful as well as pure being with that of natural, fun loving person became very evident standing on top of the mountain at Chenrezig.

My initial circle of friends who I met at the early yoga classes at Rosary Crescent still form my close network of very dear friends. These friendships were part and parcel of the special nature of Muktanand’s yoga classes. Very personal and personable in nature, her classes never just centred on asanas. The discussions and exploration of the numerous teachings were helped in particular through the friendly and amiable atmosphere given in her classes.

During my training as high school teacher I also attended Muktanand’s first teachers’ training class. I had by this time attended just about all the many workshops she offered throughout the years and my enthusiasm for yoga was unstoppable. However, as a first year out teacher in Maryborough my thirst for teaching evening yoga classes was somehow diminished as I felt I was just about doing enough teaching during the day. The following year I was transferred back to Brisbane and Muktanand encouraged me to do a little teaching in our private Yoga and Meditation room called The Cloudroom in Morningside. With teaching full time during the day, I felt however, that I couldn’t dedicate enough energy to teaching at night time.

Muktanand’s break from teaching coincided with me giving birth to our first child. By the time I could spare a few hours at night Muktanand had invited a select group of long time yoga students back to her Rosary Crescent Yoga room for wonderfully, inspirational yoga lessons. I remember fondly the time spent exploring both theoretical as well as practical issues of yoga instruction, which was intensified, by the trust and depth of study by those attending the classes.

Her depth of knowledge transpired also during a couple of retreats she co-taught with Subhana who runs Buddhist Insight Meditation Retreats. Muktanand ran the hatha yoga classes early in the morning, adding a profundity to the meditation retreat which many participants commented on admiringly at the end of the retreat. For me those retreats were pure bliss.

The sense of community, which was one of the many beneficial outcomes of Muktanand’s teaching, was exemplified further by the last get together of Yoga students and friends a year before her passing. I remember fondly the joy and happiness of people and Muktanand on that day and a real sense of being cared for when Muktanand handed out little gifts of handmade soap to everyone at the end of the day.

On occasion I now run yoga classes for students at the school in Corinda I’ve been teaching at for the past eleven years. Before I start I always pay my respect to Muktanand’s wisdom

and end the session by acknowledging her. I often hear her words in my ears while teaching and use the same phrases that she used for her yoga instruction. Her very distinctive voice is something that has stayed with me and makes this transmission of instruction somewhat easier and magical.

John has given me a beautiful photograph in a gorgeous frame, which hangs high in our room, and I feel that Muktanand oversees in the most positive way what occurs in our household. Another picture stands next to our computer and our children often comment on the picture. We explored issues of dying and death with them and Lena, our four year old daughter then proceeded to draw a picture of Muktanand in the rainbow, which she wanted to place on her grave.

Muktanand is still very much present in many ways in our daily proceedings and life. Together with a few yoga friends I sometimes listen to her relaxation tapes and her exquisite presence shines through. Muktanand has benefited my life immensely and I am very grateful to her. May peace and light prevail.

Trust & Surrender
Liz Rickman
Savitamurti

Muktanand, because of her integrity and understanding of the world, as well as her experience and knowledge of yoga, allowed me to trust and surrender in meditation.

Before I met Muktanand, I was concerned that meditation removed people from acting in the world. Her commitment to equal valuing of all people, and more broadly of all creation, was always apparent in her teaching. She consistently used inclusive language for women and men, even when it was easier not to. She taught practices that encouraged awareness and respect for the environment.

When I was concerned about some aspects of my spiritual path, I felt heard and understood by her. This allowed me to work with my path and its imperfections, without rejecting it.

However, it was her political awareness and consistency, her integration of that into her teaching that was most crucial for me. I was attending one of her silent retreats, and I wrote a question anonymously for her to answer that evening. It was about my fear that meditation would remove me from my concern for the world. I didn't want it to put me to sleep to what I could see was hurting people and the planet. Above all, I didn't want meditation to stop me being politically active.

Her answer was a turning point for me. She said that the aim of meditation was to make people more aware, not less aware. And if they chose to act on what they became aware of, that they would feel more empowered, more able to carry through in a clear way and sustain the action because they meditated. She then spoke of her respect for her partner, John Ransley, and his friends, who were committed to environmental issues. She saw their political actions as karma yoga.

Years later, on my release from solitary confinement after a Greenpeace action in Sweden, Muktanand was one of the first people I rang along with family. I had remembered her year-

long solitary retreat in a cave, and my small cell became my cave. Each time the steel door shut, I turned it into my meditation retreat space. I practiced almost constantly, and it became a very special time for me. Muktanand's discipline, commitment and faith were part of what sustained me during that time.

I rang to tell her how much she meant to me, as inspiration, as strength, as goodness.

I was devastated to hear her news of cancer. However, all that she was, all that she taught me, and all of us, is still with me, deeply, in a daily way. She is still very much alive for me.

The Last Class, Tuesday 29 November 2001

Megan Mitchell

Muktanand's Dream Workshop reconnected me to my lifetime of dream recording, which had lapsed, and her Neti Workshop refined a process I had been using that continues, thanks to her, to keep my body in good health. But best of all her yoga classes gave flexibility to the body and a steadiness of mind.

It was always difficult to get into her classes, so at times I had gone elsewhere. I was meditating at home some time I think in 2001 when a mantra of "Muktananda" came into my consciousness. Later, I contacted a friend who was a longtime student of Muktanand's, explaining what had happened. Carmel had just heard that one of the students was going overseas and another was leaving to have a baby and that I might be able to attend Muktanand's Rosary Crescent class. It was good to get back!

In the fourth term the class was at Kurilpa Hall. Before one November class, I had a very strong intuitive instruction to get an etching for Muktanand and bring it to class. She had been such a powerful guide and teacher, so I chose "From the Tree of Wisdom", which came from a series of three, made to express strong feminine wisdom and its place in metamorphosing our Self to bring about Change.

At that class Muktanand announced it would be her "Last Class". I was blown away. I had no idea then she had been diagnosed with cancer and that she would not be back. It confirmed in me the importance of listening to that inner wisdom that speaks so clearly, but that many times, we ignore.

Last Yoga Class

Michele Burford

I was curious about the gift of flowers she had floating in little containers of water with candlelight dancing on the classroom walls. I knew there was some significance, but waited to be told. It was, as it turned out, Muktanand's last yoga class. We practised asanas, as always precisely, exactly. As always she taught the theory of yoga, drawing on her great depths of knowledge, we meditated together and finally she told us it was over. I heard her say that her mother was unwell and needed her help, but my sense was of something more, something unspoken.

I only saw her a few times after that day, but it was the last visit which lingers so clearly in my mind. We sat in her lounge room; she seemed consumed, a small, delicate woman, by a large couch. Yet her face, her face, radiated such love and peace. She smiled her gracious, warm smile. I remember her words – life had revealed so much to her during her months of illness that she wanted to share and explore. Yet willing to accept whatever path lay before her. Her strength of spirit overwhelmed me, reflecting back at my own fears and weaknesses. It seemed to me that with such grace she could overcome all.

The message came while I was out at sea, in the warm, tropical waters off Darwin. It was news I had dreaded for so long - there was a strange relief that the pain, the worry, the tension was gone. I stood on the deck of the ship enveloped in grief, feeling so far, too far away. Yet I looked up to see a sky of golden burning sunset, dark looming clouds and distant flashes of lightning, all endured, and endured and endured, and I felt that she was saying goodbye, in the most glorious way. So I said goodbye to her:

Muktanand

Released from the burdens of the flesh
Your spirit unshackled from earthly needs
Seen in the first rays of the sunrise
Dancing in the light across the water
Listening in the stillness of calm evenings
Brushing gently on the hearts of those that grieve
Evoking memories of your teachings,
your knowledge, insights and wisdom
And the boundless love you gave as teacher,
friend and guide

Time has passed, the pain is eased, but the memories of precious times remain. And in that memory, Muktanand lives on –dreams, tapes, photos, written words, mindful reflections capture elements of her essence. Her love continues to embrace.

“It was my pleasure” Michele Boyle (Mantrika)

“It was my pleasure.” It’s something I occasionally say when someone expresses gratitude for a small kindness on my part. And every time I say it I hear Muktanand’s voice.

She would say it simply with feeling and grace. It was typical of her eloquence. She had a gift for language – both spoken and written. It was always a pleasure to hear her speak because the words she chose reflected the authority of her learning and her discernment – another word that Muktanand taught me the meaning of by example.

Muktanand drank deeply from a river of perception, intuition, scholarship and awareness to articulate concepts for her students with beautiful language laden with metaphor.

“This is Manipura” she would say in an octave lower than normal. It was authoritative and

supportive and sustained my effort to hold the asana.

And she didn't just sustain my effort in class. Her compassion for others and tireless spirit to give of herself remains an inspiration to me. She also modelled qualities like endurance, self acceptance and tolerance.

Thanks to Muktanand I learned how to interpret my dreams and I discovered the rich treasures of mouna. I experienced the physical pleasure and mental peace of the body/mind connection – I learned yoga.

Muktanand opened the door to the world of meditation for me. I learned authentic teachings from a woman who strived for accuracy whether it be yogic teachings based on source material or a physical posture.

I'm still learning the lessons of Muktanand. I'm grateful for the firm foundation that she gave me. It was very much my pleasure to have been a student of Muktanand, my first and best, yoga teacher.

Last Meditation, 29 November 2001 **Copied by Narelle Thomas**

“Following Ujjayi breath, use the awareness of the breath to follow a circuit throughout the body and the sa hum mantra. Leave these and focus at the top of the head. Imagine a thousand petal lotus, all aspects of consciousness, a hand placed on your head, offering blessings. Receive, be open to receive. Know that the ongoing effect of yoga in your lives is up to you. It doesn't depend on the teacher but on your willingness to respond to your inner truth.”

Wonderful Presence **Neil Loneragan**

Muktanand had such a wonderful presence; her physical body radiated wonderful energy and karma, that, combined with the excellence of her teaching, had an effect on the whole room. Her gentleness and peacefulness have had a lasting effect. For a while I was in awe of her as a dedicated yoga master, teacher and person. After she took a year's break from teaching in 1999, there was a special class by invitation. It had a very lovely atmosphere; everyone in the class had been with her for at least 10 years, and we all enjoyed each other's presence. She would tailor each class for us, respond to our moods. If we all felt like lying down, she would instruct us lying down.

I particularly enjoyed her Salute to the Sun and variations on this practise. I did her Salute to the Sun workshop and her Neti workshop. I was having breathing difficulties at the time and facing surgery for a deviated nasal septum. The Neti proved very effective and I have never had any problems since. I know from this and conversations I've had with other friends that Muktanand was very skilful and creative when it came to using yoga therapy for medical

problems.

I loved her meditations and her emphasis on meditation practice; she always dedicated at least half an hour in each class to a meditation practice. No other teacher I've known since has done that! But most yoga students wouldn't be able to sit for that long unless trained by Muktanand, or a teacher like Muktanand. Actually the whole class was spiritual and meditative, not just the meditation practice.

She was really interested in the whole person. Her teaching was not something she just did in isolation. You established a connection with her. I will always remember her with great affection, respect and gratitude.

Reuniting Two Great Traditions **Subhana Barzaghi**

At 6.00am the early morning bell sounds out across the misty valley, down the mountain slopes. Yogi's yawn, stretch and silently rise. Every day begins with yoga on a week-long silent Insight Vipassana and Yoga retreat. The bell, like a call to prayer, acts like a magnet to pull each person out of their dormitories and huts, yoga mat in hand, to walk mindfully up the slope to the meditation hall. Sandalwood incense floats on the morning mist and greets you as you enter the hall. Muktanand, poised and relaxed, waits to begin the class.

I first met Muktanand in 1990 on an Insight Vipassana Meditation retreat I was teaching. A small-to-medium build, dark haired woman doing salute to the sun poses caught my eye. I was mesmerized by her presence and precision of movement, it was like grace in motion. Who is this woman, I thought? Occasionally I was struck by a clear intuition. Even on our very first meeting, I sensed a deep resonance and recognition, like two old souls meeting. I knew we would one day work together.

That resonance lead us many years later to teach yoga and meditation together to eighty students in the country region of Kyogle in the Northern Rivers, at the Tibetan Gomba retreat centre. The retreat facilities hug the slopes of the mountain, and in traditional Tibetan style the Gomba (meditation hall) is perched at the top with an impressive view of the Border Ranges.

This retreat was unique in bringing together for the first time in Australia, the Buddhist Insight meditation tradition and the Yoga spiritual discipline of Hinduism. Yoga and meditation have a long history as an integral spiritual practice in the Ashrams of India. Approximately 2,500 years ago Buddhism emerged as a radical break-away movement from the Hindu/ Yoga schools. Down through the generations, each tradition forged and cultivated its own separate, specialized pathways to spiritual awakening.

Bringing these two great traditions back together felt like an ancient reunion, in contemporary garb. While yoga had previously been included on Vipassana retreats it had been optional, tacked onto the schedule and not given much significance. In this landmark retreat, both yoga and insight meditation were honoured equally and celebrated as a complimentary seamless practice. Muktanand was very uncomfortable with the notion that "yoga" just

meant the physical postures, breathing and related cleansing practices. For Muktanand meditation was an essential part of all her yoga classes. It is probably fair to say, that she saw the whole point of yoga as preparation for meditation.

Yoga was conducted for two, one-hour sessions a day. Muktanand started the first class with instructions called 'Meditators First Aid'. This was a series of stretches and a yoga routine she had specially designed to alleviate pain for those enduring long sitting meditation periods. It was a joy for me to lie on my mat ... to bend, breathe, stretch and relax, noticing the stiffness in my body start to soften. Muktanand encouraged us to breathe into the stretch and release into the pose. Her words caressed my mind and my body naturally bowed under her clear direct gentle instructions.

I was a little apprehensive at first, wondering how these two traditions would meld together. My concerns turned to delight as the days grew on. Each day's yoga instructions segued so harmoniously with the meditation instructions. This natural attunement could only occur because of Muktanand's depth of experience and familiarity with both meditation and the Insight Vipassana tradition.

The first three day's meditation instructions focused on mindfulness of breathing and the sensations rising and falling in the body, while the yoga emphasized the breath and sensations in the postures. Day four's meditation instructions focused on mindfulness of feelings, and the yoga period invited students to notice the felt experience that the postures evoked. Day five focused on mindfulness of thought and mind states. Muktanand invited students to notice their moods and any disturbances in the mind and how they took us away from connecting and inhabiting our bodies more fully. Each posture had its own healing potential. It felt like knots of tension unravelling and my body felt lighter and freer as the days grew on.

We both gave dharma talks in the evening and Muktanand spoke clearly and skillfully about the art of working with pain. She said to breathe into the pain, to become open to it, and to direct compassion into the very place that is tender and hurting. There was not such a thing as just a physical pain, the emotional and psychological layers interwove and wrapped around the physical sensations of pain; these were called *sankaras* in the Hindu tradition. She said in a similar vein, somatic psychotherapists would say 'the issues are held in the tissues'. Each pain had a story and reason why and how it was there.

Muktanand advised that when compassion was breathed into the centre of your pain, it often brought relief, although there was no absolute guarantee. One highlight of her talk I particularly remember. She said when you were working with old, familiar and deep seated re-appearing aches and pains you should ask, "what is it, what needs my forgiveness"? Her question was potent and relevant for many of the students there, and it still resonates for me today.

At the end of the retreat, we asked each person to fill out an evaluation form. Almost unanimously everyone declared that they had received enormous benefit from the retreat, especially greater ease in sitting from having two yoga classes a day. For most meditation practitioners, it was a revelation that they could sit without so much pain. The yoga classes had a direct effect on reducing their discomfort in sitting meditation. Generally the retreat inspired students to take up a yoga practice, particularly those who were not accustomed to yoga. It provided greater joy in sitting and deeper samadhi (concentration) that flowed into insight and compassion.

Although Muktanand set a bench mark and standard that is hard to match, her legacy lives on. It convinced me that not only is a harmonious relationship between Insight meditation and yoga possible, but it is most conducive and highly desirable. I have continued to include yoga sessions into meditation retreats whenever possible, particularly if I am blessed with a retreatant who is also a skilled yoga teacher.

Subhana Barzaghi
Insight Meditation teacher
Zen Buddhist Roshi in the Diamond Sangha
July, 2006

Poem for Muktanand
[Sent - independently - by Narelle Thomas & Zalehah Turner]

Beannacht (for Josie)

On the day when
the weight deadens
on your shoulders
and you stumble,
may the clay dance
to balance you

And when your eyes
freeze behind
the grey window
and the ghost of loss
gets in to you,
may a flock of colours,
indigo, red, green,
and azure blue
come to awaken in you
a meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays
in the *curach* of thought
and a stain of ocean,
blackens beneath you,
may there come across the waters
a path of yellow moonlight
to bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
may the clarity of light be yours,
may the fluency of the ocean be yours,
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow
wind work these words
of love around you,
an invisible cloak
to mind your life.

John O'Donohue (*Anam Cara*: Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World)

[*Anam Cara* is Gaelic for 'soul friend' – Narelle]

CHAPTER 11

MUKTANAND & DURGA

Adapted from a Speech by John E Ransley
On the Occasion of the Third Muktanand Meannjin Memorial Award
Saturday 11 June 2005 2pm
At June Henry's Yoga Queensland Studio, 8b Herries Street, Toowoomba 4350
(June Henry was initiated by Swami Satyananda as Nitya Abhedananda)

The Monghyr ashram that Muktanand joined was a Tantric yoga ashram. I doubt she understood that at the beginning, but nowadays you need only consult Swami Satyananda's books to see this. This is not to say that his teachings do not place heavy emphasis on classical or Raja Yoga: the main focus of the ashram's teachings are on the cleansing practices, bodily postures, breathing, and meditation exercises that constitute Raja yoga and are common to other forms of yoga. The APMB (Asana, Pranayama, Mudra and Bandha) is probably Satyananda's best-known text.

Satyananda yoga is Tantric in all the following ways:

- emphasis on personal experimentation and practice;
- recognition that there are multiple paths in yoga dependent on the spiritual character of the student;
- emphasis on guru;
- the active avoidance of discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, race, sex, or country of origin. Foreigners and women are welcome, which was not the case in orthodox Vedantic yoga;
- emphasis on meditation practices;
- Bhakti yoga including kirtan, ie singing devotional songs;
- mantra and yantra yoga;
- yoga ideal is rajasic (active, passionate) rather than sattvic (passive, saintly), Swami Satyananda being the prime exemplar;
- yoga therapy, yoga practices for common illnesses and disabilities;
- use of ritual, for example fire ceremonies;
- Kriya, Laya (Kundalini) and Swara yoga are all taught alongside Raja Yoga;
- the teaching that all things in the cosmos are pure and holy. This means, for example, no strict adherence to dietary or other rules;
- acceptance that the cosmos is made up of dualities, eg body/soul, matter/spirit, shiva/shakti, female/male; and a willingness to work with these;
- the teaching that every person contains the whole cosmos;
- deity practices, chiefly involving goddesses;
- shared tradition with Tantric Buddhism (Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism);
- ashram sited in Bihar State, one of the original centres of Tantra.

To all this was added the active use of work as spiritual practice, ie Karma Yoga. The main day-to-day activity of the ashram was as a publishing house.

The Durga Path is a tantric deity practice that was one of Muktanand's favourite practices. It involves reciting in Sanskrit the "Rosary of the 32 Names" of the goddess Durga. It is found near the end of the *Durga Saptasati*, subtitled "The Seven Hundred Verses In Praise of She Who Removes All Difficulties", a text that first appeared in writing in the fourth century AD, about the same time that modern Tantrism developed.

The *Durga Saptasati* is also known as the *Chandi Path*, which translates as "She Who Tears Apart Thought". A large part of the *Chandi Path* is devoted to a description of the great mythic battle between Durga, the "Empress or Mother of the Universe", and "the army of thoughts", which are typically represented in Indian iconography as demons, an excellent example of which is reproduced on the front cover of this book. Muktanand ordered a hand made copy of this painting from the *Exotic India* website just before she died.

Images of Durga slaying a buffalo began to become common in the fourth century AD. The Aryans are said to have invaded India between 2000 and 1000 BC. Their religion was Brahmanism, their literature the Vedas, and their social organisation was based on caste, with priests at the top. Their religious practices emphasised ritual, law and animal sacrifice. Their theology was very male-oriented; the few goddesses that appear are basically appendages of their husbands. In short, they were patriarchal.

It appears to have taken Hinduism 2000 or more years to evolve to a situation where goddesses became equal to or more important than gods. The Catholic Church seems to be working on a similar time scale in relation to the ordination of women.

* * *

Muktanand's first encounter with the Durga Path was in the Monghyr Ashram. The ashram has a cave where Swami Satyananda often meditated in the early years. Under his direction Muktanand spent about 8-10 months in silent retreat in the cave, working on a Samadhi book. Swami Satyananda gave the Durga Path to Muktanand as her personal practice. I believe she started practicing it in the cave.

What would have attracted Muktanand to a goddess, and in particular Durga?

Muktanand was brought up as a Roman Catholic and up until her teens she was very devout. She sometimes joked she became a yogic nun. The Catholic Church is famously patriarchal, but unlike the Protestant denominations they do have a couple of goddess-like figures, in the form of Mary, Jesus' mother, and Mary Magdalene, his disciple. So Muktanand was at least comfortable with the idea of a woman as a major religious figure and object of devotion.

The mythical story of Durga's creation gives more clues. The following account comes from the book *Hindu Goddesses*, by David Kinsley (1987):

"After performing heroic austerities, the buffalo demon Mahisa was granted the boon that he would be invincible to all opponents except a woman. He subsequently defeated the gods in battle and usurped their positions. The gods then assembled and, angry at the thought of Mahisa's triumph and their apparent inability to do anything about it, emitted their fiery

energies. This great mass of light and strength congealed into the body of a beautiful woman, whose splendour spread through the universe. The parts of her body were formed from the male gods. Her face was formed from Siva, her hair from Yama, her arms from Visnu, and so on. Similarly, each of the male deities from whom she had been created gave her a weapon. Siva gave her his trident; Visnu gave her his cakra (a discus-like weapon), Vayu his bow and arrows, and so on. Equipped by the gods and supplied by the god Himalaya with a lion as her vehicle, Durga, the embodied strength of the gods, then roared mightily, causing the earth to shake.”

Some women might say that this is a familiar story: the men make a mess of things and a woman has to be called in to clean it up. It's also interesting to see the parallel with the Christian Adam and Eve story where a woman is created out of the body of a man. But Durga is nothing like Eve. Nor is she like the Catholic Mary: as far as I know no Indian goddesses are described as virgins! The story continues:

“Durga then confronts Mahisa, the buffalo demon. Because Durga is unprotected by a male deity, Mahisa assumes that she is helpless, which is the way that women are portrayed in traditional Hindu law books. A long dialogue takes place between Durga and the demon in which Mahisa insists that as a woman the goddess is too delicate to fight, too beautiful for anything but love, and must come under the protection and guidance of a man in order to fulfil her proper proclivities.”

If this sounds a bit familiar, it is worth noting that for many Indians their deities are role models, and the stories that are told about the deities act out relationships between Indian men and women. Kinsley goes on:

“Durga fights Mahisa and defeats him. Typically in Indian art she is shown bringing a blizzard of weapons to bear on the hapless demon, who is half-emerging in his human form from the carcass of his former buffalo form. Durga's many arms are all in motion, and she is a perfect vision of power in action. Her face, however, is calm and shows no sign of strain. For her this is mere sport and requires no undue exertion. It is a game for her, it is lila,” play.

“The creation of the goddess Durga thus takes place in the context of a cosmic upheaval precipitated by a demon whom the male gods are unable to subdue. She is created because the situation calls for a woman and a superior warrior. In battle after battle she fights against male demons and invariably wins.”

Who are these “demons”? In the Westernised translation of the Chandi Path that I have, the demons are translated as “thoughts”. Some of the thoughts are what you would expect: ‘Hypocrisy’; ‘Fickleness’; ‘Self Conceit’; and the ‘Great Ego’. But others are quite delightful: ‘Want of Resolution’; ‘Wandering To and Fro’, and ‘Devoid of Clear Understanding’.

Durga defeats these thoughts or demons, and in doing so she acts to maintain or restore cosmic harmony and balance. Thus she is a great yogi. This cosmic battle works on a personal level, because in Tantra each person is said to carry the cosmos within themselves. Each person must battle with their internal demons that stand in the way of samadhi, nirvana or enlightenment – or just day-to-day calm and tranquillity. Kinsley continues:

“On the battlefield Durga often creates female helpers from herself. The most famous of these are the goddess Kali and a group of ferocious deities known as the Matrkas (mothers), who usually number seven. These goddesses are wild, bloodthirsty, and particularly fierce. Durga does not create male helpers, and she does not fight with male allies.

“In many respects Durga violates the model of a traditional Hindu woman. In that model women are said to be incapable of handling their own affairs and to be socially inconsequential without relationships with men. They are significant primarily as sisters, daughters, the mother of sons and as wives.”

“But Durga is not submissive, she is not subordinated to a male deity, she does not fulfil household duties, and she excels at what is traditionally a male function, fighting in battle. She reverses the normal role for females, and therefore stands outside normal society.”

Durga is different. Most of the other popular Hindu goddesses are closely associated with a male god: Sri Lakshmi with Vishnu; Parvati with Shiva; Sita with Rama; and Radha with Krishna. In her later history Durga is also associated with Shiva and in her big annual festival she comes complete with children, also deities. But in her warrior role Kinsley writes: “Durga exists independent from male protection or guidance, and yet is irresistibly powerful.”

* * *

Muktanand was a very capable and academically gifted person who underwent a tough yoga training in the Monghyr ashram for 4 years. After writing a yoga book for women she then established an ashram in Bangalore, South India, the Indian “Silicon Valley”, that continues today. In India she survived encounters with cholera, typhoid fever and a mysterious gut infection that nearly killed her. When she was thrown out of India in 1985 along with every other Commonwealth passport holder, she returned to Australia and completed her Bachelor and Master’s degrees in psychology. She then set up her own yoga school and conducted several yoga teacher-training courses, in Queensland, interstate and overseas. She was an expert communicator and teacher who loved all aspects of yoga and taught from the heart.

She was a great yogi and like many yogis something of an outsider. Her outsider status was made clear to her when she undertook a Certificate 4 Course in Workplace Assessment & Training a few years ago. The people on the course were a mixture of Human Resources public service and corporate types, and small business people. Despite the fact that Muktanand was well-dressed and perfectly groomed, and made incisive and sensible contributions to workshops, they all thought she was very weird!

* * *

Swami Satyananda once told Muktanand that the Durga Path was a very good practice for a person experiencing great difficulties. During her final illness she incorporated it as part of her daily practice, along with the Medicine Buddha practice.

Muktanand was particularly inspired by Durga’s battle with the demon Raktabija as a metaphor for her battle with cancer. Kinsley describes it as follows:

“In this story Kali is summoned by Durga to help defeat the demon Raktabija. This demon has the ability to reproduce himself instantly whenever a drop of his blood falls to the

ground. Having wounded Raktabija with a variety of weapons, Durga and her Matrkas find they have worsened their situation. As Raktabija bleeds more and more profusely from his wounds, the battlefield increasingly becomes filled with Raktabija duplicates. Kali succeeds in defeating the demon by sucking the blood from his body and throwing the countless duplicate Raktabijas into her gaping mouth."

* * *

The Muktanand Memorial Prize is a prize for the graduating yoga teacher who exemplifies some of Muktanand's qualities – persistence through difficulties, dedication to yoga, and a high standard of yoga teaching.

Before Muktanand went to India she was known as a women's liberationist. The Sanskrit "Mukta" means liberation and when Muktanand first heard she was going to be given this name, she thought her ashram friends were having fun at her expense. Her favourite translation of her name was "free spirit". It was a given that it should go on her gravestone:

MUKTANAND MEANNJIN

"Free Spirit"

1951 - 2004

"Let the beauty we love be what we do" Rumi

Aum shri Durgayai namaha
All glory to Durga!



Rosary Crescent, April 2002

