

A painting of a waterfall with a golden light reflecting on the water. The scene is set in a rocky, natural environment. The water is white and foamy as it falls, and the surrounding rocks are dark and textured. A bright, golden light source is positioned above the waterfall, creating a shimmering reflection on the water's surface. The overall color palette is warm, dominated by oranges, yellows, and browns.

Yasmin Verschure

**WITH AN
OPEN HEART**

WITH AN OPEN HEART

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Yasmin Verschure

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Word of gratitude:

My heart is full of gratitude for all the supporting love-lights I received on my path during this period of seclusion. They fashioned the source of inspiration out of which this book could be born.

WITH AN OPEN HEART

by:

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Dedication:

*I dedicate this book
To my mother
To all mothers
To the Goddess in every woman
To the Goddess in every person...*

*To the immense Source of
Wisdom, strength and love and to
Everyone who is willing to let
this Source inspire him.*

Transformation

A person cannot transform himself as long as he continues to resist his existence on this earth, and as long as it is his vision not to suffer.

I am not telling you not to look for tools against suffering, on the contrary. However, in the present stage of the evolution of the earth, and the point this evolution has reached now, it is impossible for humans not to suffer.

The earth is a health resort and a learning school. When a person knows how to look at his suffering, he begins to move hidden strengths, which will bring about an enormous turn around inside of him.

He who has not suffered will remain poor; he will be like a painter who is missing the right colours to make his painting. He who has suffered will be able to use all feelings he has lived through, to add colour, relief en depth to his life.

All those who did something great in their lives have suffered. Out of black ink they have brought forward the most beautiful colours.

- Omraam Mikhael Aïvanhov -

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FOREWORD

*'In the secret of death
lies the secret of life.'*

- Kuki Gallman -

We live in a period of great changes, and time seems to move forward in an enormous acceleration. We are facing a radical revolution. Not only will we be transformed to beings of light, depending on our consciousness, our planet earth will be lifted up to a higher vibration.

Many of us have chosen to free ourselves from old karmic ballast. For the first time in history we start to understand the true meaning of being reborn before entering heaven. To prepare for the task that is waiting for us, to be initiated as enlightened beings, we first have to get through the tunnel; to pass the birth channel.

Before we fully understand this process, we have to go through the process of dying. Without being aware of it, we die every minute of the day. The past has gone forever and the future has not yet been born. What was reality once will never return. Living in the *here and now* will raise us above our fear of death. We prepare ourselves for our own rebirth and the rebirth of our beloved planet earth.

Nobody knows exactly what this revolution will look like. Nothing we can imagine can paint the picture of what will happen. Yet all of us know, and all of us feel some kind of movement, a movement that cannot be stopped. Voluntarily or not, we will be a part of this movement. Nobody can escape his destiny.

How can we prepare ourselves for this process in a natural way? We can long for our origin, we can pray and open ourselves to the all-empowering love of the universe. Creation is ready to support us in this process of revolution.

First of all, we open ourselves to abundance and dare to receive everything that is waiting for us. Secondly, we have to learn to be patient and to accept our challenges without grumbling. Although we may feel inconvenient, by being present in the *here and now*, every day, every minute of the day, we prepare ourselves for the future.

This book is a creation that originated in a period of intense challenges and trials, yet above all in a period of intense light. My enthusiasm dragged me through everything and never before have I known that I have such a sense of humour!

It was a period of putting things into perspective; a period of joy, love and relish. As I increasingly let go of my attachments, only emptiness remained. Emptiness is space. It feels like taking off an old jacket; I stand increasingly naked before my Creator. More than ever I feel privileged. Somehow, out of the invisible Source, I receive the strength and the power to get up again and again and to go on; to continue my way back to the light.

Once in a while, the physical vehicle was tortured. There were periods I felt I could not fulfil this trial anymore. Only in my deepest pain and despair was I able to surrender myself to the fullest. I started to realize that there are human limits to willingness, limits to what I am able to deal with. It is not necessary to carry the suffering of the entire humanity!

In whatever way, in this time of seclusion my evolution proceeded. After times of deep inner conflicts, the most beautiful creations are born.

It amazed me I had to write about India; the pilgrimage I made earlier in my lifetime. Yet it is not surprising, past and present are fully connected; they are forerunners of that which is coming closer every day. Apparently, there was a deep inner longing to experience the same faith and trust I had while wandering through India. Now, after so much struggle, and especially after so much celebration and joy, I can say my faith and trust are even stronger than they were before, yes even stronger than in that special period. I have an unshakable trust in my Creator. Pain or no pain, every minute I feel grateful and have the benefit of the space I achieved.

Sometimes people reacted amazed. How on earth could I shine like that in a period of such suffering? I replied: 'My body is suffering but I, the I Am presence inside of me does not suffer at all'. Usually this was certainly true. It does not matter what the lessons are we have chosen, it is the way we encounter and deal with our lessons. Sometimes my *little I* would slip away and I nearly became the suffering myself. We ultimately remain human as long as we are in a physical vehicle. Even though I am grateful for this divine temple, sometimes I experience my body as a prison, too small and too limited for the immensity of my spirit.

A few of my dear friends thought the theme of this book should be love, unconditional love. When there is love, then no road is too steep and no challenge too big.

It is a joy to let the new come into the world out of the safety of our cosy little home; out of silence, pain and emptiness. Judgments increasingly disappear. Who am I to judge? My fears are disappearing like snow in the sun. The more I let go of my fears and attachments, the more all my needs are provided for. The result is spiritual and material abundance

A few of my dear friends thought the theme of this book should be love, unconditional love.

If I still do not believe there is a Creator who takes care of me, how many proofs do I need to accept this?

This book, firstly written as a safety valve, by now processed and released, is certainly not only about pain and suffering. More than that, it is about the process of viewing; of becoming an observer and rising above pain and suffering. It tells about loving encounters and daily experiences. This time the emphasis is not on a physical journey, yet on a journey of the soul. Believe me or not, the experiences just as intense.

In all her simplicity, love embraces the essence of life. It takes courage every time again to dive into the depths and to peel off the next layer. It takes courage not to avoid pain and silence, especially in a society in which everything is based on pushing away any feelings, on not allowing pain or suffering. Yes, especially in a society where everything is based on appearances and achievements. In a society in which you are not appreciated for your essence, but for your practical use; your status.

How safe is it to linger in the form, to stay confined in dependency? How safe is it to blame others, and to put the responsibility for our situation outside ourselves? How safe is it to wait for the other person to take the first step? Through our upbringing it is spoon-fed to us! Unluckily the time we can hide behind other people's convictions, seems to be over. We are challenged to stand for our own convictions. We have to speak aloud, without fear of being an outcast.

After all, we are all pioneers.

Suffering is a process of cleansing of the soul. Love, unconditional love is the only way to heal ourselves. Although at first sight love makes the darkness more visible and seems to strengthen our suffering, at the same time love is the ingredient we need to cleanse and to free ourselves from our pain and suffering.

Let us stop pointing to others. As long as we accuse others of not loving pure enough, there is no need to look in our own mirror and we make ourselves untouchable. Easy and safe, but it will not make us grow. You can only grow by sticking out your neck, by making mistakes, by falling down and getting up again. Not only do you gain an experience, you are also one step closer to God, one step forward on the way to the light.

Let us leave judging up to God. In fact, He will never judge. God does not free us from pain and suffering we created ourselves. Knowing we could never learn our lessons as He solves our problems, as a lovingly father He is watching how we deal with life. It is not His wish that we suffer, quite the contrary!

The more we have the courage to open ourselves to the power of the sun, to the love of our Creator, the more purification will take place. It is not necessary to worry about other people's functioning. It is enough to face our own darkness and to enlighten it, so we can be a light for others, as in the past other people were a light for us.

We suffer most by the suffering we fear. The more we avoid conflicts, the more we will suffer inside. Again and again it takes courage to encounter others with a loving and open heart. It gets easier when we begin to recognize that piece of ourselves in others, which can never be erased, that eternally burning divine spark with which we are inseparably bound to each other.

Ultimately we are all spirit. We all originate from the same source, the one sun. Ultimately we are all sons and daughters of God, our Creator. And inevitably we are brothers and sisters of Christ.

Om Shanti Om...

'I am that I am'.

It is my soul desire that this message of love will bring joy and light in a period of insecurity and fear, preceding an era of turnover and renewal.

WITH AN OPEN HEART

PART 1 – FAITH AND TRUST

A report of my first solo journey, a seven-month long trip through India and Nepal. Call it Percival on his quest for the Holy Grail...

PART 2 – WITH AN OPEN HEART

Encounters and experiences in daily life, with an Open Heart, highlighted from a deeper dimension and with a hidden, spiritual message.

PART 3 – SURRENDER AND STRUGGLE

An intense process of inner transformation, the pain that goes with inner growing, and last but not least, the joy of the healing process.

PART 1

FAITH AND TRUST

Faith is letting go of control.
Out of an inner knowing that behind the visible world of illusion
lays an unknown reality, it is leaping into the unknown.
The more you are able to surrender yourself to the flow of life,
the more it will guide your path in every aspect.

ODE TO INDIA, MY MOTHERLAND

He placed his hands on my shoulders, looked at me and said: 'Where is the journey going to?' I felt shaken right down to my base! Soon the answer rose inside of me: India of course!

India, my God, what was I thinking about! Hardly recovered from a serious illness, with a body so prone to infections, they predicted even a trip to the south of France could be deadly for me. Anyhow, I knew with a deep inner security that now I was strong enough to survive.

That is how it all started. Once I had allowed this deep inner longing to come out, the plan soon started to materialize. A week later I went to a Buddhist retreat. In a personal encounter with the Lama he assured me I could go. My health would not be affected too much, yet I would have some trouble in prolonging my visa. How true this would be!

Once I have made up my mind things happen fast. First, I had to tell Giri I would go to India on my own. Painful for him, we often had fantasized about a trip around the world together. Yet I knew I had to undertake this adventure on my own, without anyone else.

I had to stop the professional training I did in Postural Integration. Not a serious problem, I could re-start it at any moment. (In India I discovered I had to use my hands in a more tender way).

More difficult was the situation around my youngest son. He would start High School in September and initially he would leave my house to live on his own. We had such a good time together that he wanted to stay another year. He reacted in his unique way: 'Do what you have to do, if I had the opportunity, I would seize it immediately'.

Another obstacle were the courses in bodywork and massage I gave with heart and soul at a new-age centre. I was already scheduled for the new season, the programs had been printed and the manager certainly did not like me to withdraw. Well, blood is thicker than water.

I looked for someone to live in my house for a period of seven months. Intuitively I choose the one who fitted perfectly into my picture. After all this the real preparations could start. I received many well-meant advices: 'Do not go to India on your own, it is a macho-land and they will trouble you'. 'Take along a little gas-cylinder so you can do your own cooking, otherwise you will soon have a food poisoning'. 'Do not drink anything on the streets, buy bottles of water and check if they are thoroughly sealed'. I took it all in and went on my own without gas-cylinder...

I prepared myself as positively as I could and constantly I worked with the affirmation: 'I am healthy and strong of body and soul, and I encounter only loving people on my path'. Just before leaving, I read the book *Autobiography of a Yogi* of Yogananda and received my first *Kriya-yoga initiation*. While others thought I was already a Buddhist and I should apply myself to Hinduism, it was my primal goal to deepen my knowledge of Buddhism.

I got the necessary vaccinations and booked my trip. Three months after my decision I was about to leave. That should be in autumn, the most pleasant time to be in India.

Apart from all preparations, the most difficult process was saying goodbye to my threesome. One of my sons was in a crisis and I started to realise that we could not even contact each other for seven months. Panic! What to do if something serious would

happen. When I fully realized this I got scared. This was letting go on a much deeper level than the material one. If I had ever been attached to earthly things, this belonged

to the past after my illness. I enjoyed the place where I had lived since my divorce, yet I felt not attached to it. Unexpected and old feelings came up, getting me totally out of balance. Just the knowing I was empty-handed, I had to let go of control. *Not my will...*

I still see us sitting on the doorstep, my eldest son and I. Suddenly I got up and found my stuffed bunny rabbit, given to me by my dear Giri. Even if the toy was beautiful and soft, I could not really appreciate it, I felt past that age. To my surprise, after a sad mood, it was suddenly lying in my bed. The touch of this soft cuddle was healing and reassuring!

I hand over my cuddly toy to my son: 'So, this is for you. Anyway, it is too big to carry along. Whenever you miss me, take this rabbit and you will feel connected'. A few days later, he gave me a new one. It was soft and small enough to take with me on my journey. It had its place wherever I made my altar.

All of a sudden the time has come to say goodbye. The day of my departure, I was taken to Schiphol by my loved ones. The moment I go through the customs I am at the point of breaking down. I just allow it to be, this is not just something.

Mumbai

Over an hour's delay, we take off and head for Mumbai. From there, I will go to **Ganeshpuri**. When we make a stopover at **Frankfurt** I join a group of women on their way to Ganeshpuri. We arrange to meet again at the airport and together we will take a taxi.

Around 6.30 AM we arrive in Mumbai. The time difference is four and a half hours. Although it is bare and not very cosy at the airport, I experience a strange kind of emotion, it feels like coming home. I place my feet on familiar ground. It is as if I know it all, this chaos, the shouting, this oriental atmosphere, every bit of it feels familiar.

Once we are through customs, we have to be careful not to lose our luggage. The porters are all too willing. My luggage exists of a backpack. In it is a sleeping bag, a pair of walking shoes for Nepal, some extra clothes and a few necessary things. So, keep your hands off, I will carry this myself!

The taxi's are about the only cars in India and they are mostly old Commanders. After the usual chaffer, we agree on a price and hit the road. Chaffering, it seems part of the game, just like shouting at a rickshaw-driver. It is even allowed to hit him on the back to let him know you are on to his tricks.

I chuckle and think back to the time my mother was still alive and we went to the market. Whenever she tried to get the price down, I felt embarrassed.

Here it is all part of the game. I knew this the moment I stepped onto India's soil. I also knew how to use my hands, the right one for eating and the left one for that what we in western society use toilet paper for. There is no toilet paper here, but mostly, however scarce the water may be, there is a little tap in almost every Indian toilet. In the end I start appreciating this way, it is very hygienic.

Ganeshpuri

The women and I arrange a taxi and go on our way. Once out of the city, we have to change taxis and this driver stops at the first petrol station to tank some petrol. He rather forces us to pay a hundred Rupees extra. Nicely but firmly I tell him that we do

not like his games. My fellow passengers are astonished. I stay firm. This is what they always try, I just *know* it. Four hours later, we arrive at *Shree Gurudev Ashram*. Above the gate is the following sign:

We welcome you in love and respect. The ashram is the embodiment of mercy. When you attain the right attitude, every dust particle can give you mercy. Be aware! Maintain discipline, regularity and purity in this ashram. You will achieve your aim only by being here.

You can distinctly feel the energy, even outside the entrance. Within the gate, all sorts of things happen to me. I become emotional, mutinous and carried away. Shortly, anything you can think of is going through me. It highly confuses me, I feel resistance and attracted at the same time.

The preparations for the yearly commemoration of *Muktananda*, the guru who preceded *Gurumay*, are on their way and there is a lot of activity in the ashram. They take us to a special place for western women. This means we do not have to sleep on the floor; we get accommodated in a room with sixty-five iron beds. There is even a bathroom with taps, buckets and warm water and this is an absolute luxury. Everything is spotless.

I have to sign in at the reception desk and receive the daily program. I am put up for seva; I have to wash the dishes twice a day. The first three days we western newcomers get some time to adjust. The same afternoon I do my first darshan. I greet Guramay while kneeling and bowing towards the earth. I do not give it a thought, it just happens. I do not bow to the human, the divine spark inside of me bows to the divinity in Guramay. It feels completely natural and it is a sign of respect for that what cannot be named. Guramay is an extraordinary young woman, simply dressed in the traditional costume of orange and red. With her impersonal glance she looks right through you.

A guru functions as a big generator, as a channel and a mediator between you and the almighty One. If you open up to this energy-vibration, it fills you with a higher frequency and your evolution-process will accelerate by doing so.

At that specific moment you have to face your shady side. You are forced to see what you would subconsciously try to hide. Old illnesses will come back. It is an intense process of purification, your energy will be lifted up to a higher vibration and everything that is not at the same level is being released and will disappear from your system.

According to the eastern philosophy, you can have many teachers but you can only have one guru.

After darshan I sit underneath a tree. The divine energy of Guramay feeds me, feeds all of us. Darshan becomes a daily ritual. The beauty of this place astonishes me. The gardens have a lovely shade of green, one you will rarely see in India. There are more than twenty varieties of jasmine growing and flourishing here! The temples and the meditation places are beautiful. They repaint the main temple every year, this time with a life-size yantra at the top. Its beauty is breathtaking.

On September 30, they open the *sapta* and from this moment on, they will sing mantras for seven days and seven nights. It is overwhelming! It brings me into a state of trance, which I reach more easily this way than through the classic way of meditation. Yet even meditating in this energetical place is much easier. When two or more gather in His name, it is easier to enter a higher state of consciousness.

Every day thirty thousand people gather in the ashram. Those who stay overnight are accommodated in tents and get their food from the main kitchen. The discipline is

unbelievable and the easy way all of this seems to happen will probably always be a mystery to me. Nobody needs to wait for his turn and the food is just lovely. While Indian people do not eat breakfast, in the mornings westerners can go to a special canteen. My breakfast exists of yoghurt and papaya with a few pips of it. Yoghurt is good for the bowels and the pips are a perfect protection against all kind of infections of the intestines. I also drink coconut milk, this contains the necessary minerals and vitamins to stay fit in the tropics.

Although there are special canteens for westerners, from the first moment on I mingled with the Indian women. It feels lovely to sit on the floor among my Indian sisters, and to eat from a steal plate or, during these busy days, from a banana-leaf. There is hardly any conversation, the lovely encounters happen without words. I thoroughly enjoy this way of eating and meeting, whenever I come across them during my trip.

The day starts early. The bell rings at half past three for the daily meditation. After this period of reflection, you can chant mantras, a kind of religious prayer, in the temple. There is chai, the real Indian tea, and we listen to the Guru Gita, the Hindu-bible. Then it is time for *seva*, service by working. This meditative way of working opens the gateway to God, yes, labour does pay off! During this busy period, we have more than four hours of *seva* every day. After lunch, we have a rest and we do more chanting before the afternoon *seva* starts. Of course, there is also some nice dinner and an evening program; no need to get bored. In the interim, you can go into the temple day and night. What an amazing energy, whenever you feel tired, you immediately become uplifted again.

My *seva* is heavy! Twice a day, for two and a half hours, I wash the dishes in an uncomfortable pose, in big bowls of hot water at an American speed at an outdoor temperature of thirty-five degrees. In the end, my back cannot cope with this. I ask for a more suitable *seva* and from that moment I have to squeeze fruit, there is nothing to that.

The laundry is overcrowded, so every day I wash my own clothes and dry them on the rod of my bed.

The energy is so pure; the surroundings just act like a clear mirror in which I can see all of my weakness. Old resistance arises and the inner longing to go right through them. Frustrations come up and I feel the need to judge. I want to rebel against all those rigid rules and structures, against the American discipline. Two different worlds are joining here and no doubt, I have a bit of both of them.

I spend quite some time in the cave and in the meditation garden. These places are not only suitable for my meditations; here I also keep up my diary. While learning and integrating the continually lessons, I try to look at myself in an objective way.

Smoking is not allowed in the ashram, so occasionally I go on the street to smoke a cigarette. It is a good excuse to withdraw within my own space for a while. I enjoy street life, the colourful women in their beautiful saris and the men in their dhoti's. Suddenly I find myself in the middle of a group of demonstrators and the police. Instead of feeling threatened, I just feel curious. They are protesting against the low wages in the ashram. A real pilgrim is not supposed to be interested in politics, so they take me off the street!

Once a while I go to the village and meet the lepers and the beggars. On the one hand I feel repulsed; on the other hand I feel pity for them. How different will I experience this when I return to India. Then I will have learnt to look through outer forms and I will thoroughly enjoy the inner beauty, the divine spark within each human being.

Except for her spiritual task, the ashram takes care of medical care and food for leprosy and sick people. Walking bare-feet through the sacred river and taking a footbath in the hot-water-well where the sadhu's are meditating is a lovely thing to do.

I borrow a sari for the *mahapuja*, a special women-puja, where the sacred fire is offered to God. Wearing a sari is compulsory and it gives me a royal feeling.

The puja is impressive and emotional. Tears are constantly running along my cheeks. All layers of my being start to purify. Guramay is everywhere and nowhere. You cannot hide yourself, not even in this crowd.

The big cleansing fire is kept burning for five days and nights. It is a tradition to walk clockwise around the fire one hundred and eight times, while meditating and reciting mantras. You can repeat this ceremony as many times as you like. It works cleansing. You use a mala, a kind of a rosary, which contains a hundred and eight beads, so you cannot loose count. The fire cleanses me to the deepest part of my soul. I feel an inner peace and contentment.

After three intense weeks I close my visit with a four-day meditation course and get myself ready for my trip to **Puna**...

Puna

My interest in spirituality started at the time I found myself in a crisis, around the age of twenty-six. I had many physical complaints and I attended a doctor who was human enough to listen to me. He advised me to read *Tantra* written by *Bhagwan*. It was a revelation and it gave my spiritual growth a new impulse. After my illness and being jobless, a result of being ill for such a long period, I had a big fight with my pride. It took me years to accept the unemployment benefit and to enjoy it. It gave me the opportunity to satisfy my hunger for anything alternative. I participated in many spiritual workshops, and became absorbed in astrology, massage and body work.

Although it did not appeal to me to become a sannyasin, I did not want to deprive myself of meeting the writer of this precious book. Armed with a statement that I did not suffer from the dreaded illness AIDS, I headed for **Puna** with another adventurer.

The overcrowded bus leaves early in the morning. People are packed up everywhere and even hang half outside in the open doors. Funnily enough, I enjoy and feel not hindered in my space. In **Vasai Road** we catch the train and have to stand in an overcrowded women-compartment. The women are very kind and help us to get on the right train to **Mumbai**.

In Puna, a city with one and a half million citizens, it is remarkably cooler than in Mumbai. The traffic is chaotic and to cross the street in between all those scooter-rickshaws is a challenge. No doubt, Puna benefits from the devotion of Bhagwan. A room is expensive and you have to be careful for bedbugs. You will find the ghettos at the edge of the city. The ashram is small but well taken care of. Every day there are several sessions in the nice Zen-garden.

Bhagwan is not feeling well, so unfortunately I do not get to see him. When my travelling companion leaves, I move to a cheap shack, even without a lock. Before going to sleep I shove a little cupboard in front of the door, it is always nice to know when someone is coming in. During this period it is Diwali, the festival of the Indian New Year. The festivities go on day and night and there is a lot of firework. I explore the city, visit the places dedicated to Ghandi and read his impressive autobiography. By starting his impressing peace movement, Ghandi is still an inspiring example for many, and certainly for me.

Up into the mountains I visit a few small temples; the smog is hanging over the city like a big grey blanket. Regularly I visit the ashram, do some work in the library and follow meditation every now and then - and dancing lessons. After a week, I feel ready for a new experience and I book a flight to Bangalore. Because of the distance I will take a small plane this time. After that I feel so at home in India that I prefer to move around in the most simple way.

Bangalore and Puttaparthi

When I arrive at the airport, I take a rickshaw from a devotee of Sai Baba. He drops me off at the clean and not too expensive Geo-hotel. Although I stay only one night, six years later the piccolo will recognize me immediately!

While making a reservation for the bus, I meet another woman. We decide to go to Sai Baba together. To my astonishment my bus card comes out of a real computer!

The next day we travel together to **Puttaparthi**. The typical Indian bus has wooden seats. When you have been travelling for a while, you cannot feel your bottom anymore and the only toilet stops we make are at the roadside. Feeling embarrassed is typically western! The landscape is fascinating and I gladly look around. The farmers walk on very dry grounds behind wooden ploughs, pulled by oxen. Women cultivate the earth with very primitive tools. With every bus stop there is an invasion of beggars and people who sell their chai and sweets. Even if it is sometimes really shocking to see people so maimed, I enjoy all the activity on and around the bus. It is Sunday so we actually get to a speed of thirty-five kilometres an hour! To be a bus driver is a real art. It is not easy passing by and avoiding all these crossing people, the cows and the ox-carriages. It is astounding that so few accidents happen here in India.

After more than six hours we reach Puttaparthi. Bicycle rickshaws take us to the ashram. The energy and the climate are different comparing to Puna and Ganeshpuri. Now, at the beginning of November, it is around thirty degrees and still cool, in the summer the temperature can reach over fifty degrees. Then even Sai Baba leaves this place and flees to his ashram in the mountains.

After standing in a queue for quite some time to enlist ourselves, one of the devotees of Sai Baba gives us a small apartment. Patience is one of the most important lessons every westerner has to learn here in India. Patience was, until recently, not one of my strongest qualities. Over and over again will they point this out to me. I must say I am a fast student! It is some preliminary work, these lessons in patience, and the fruits of it I will reap later.

There are many cockroaches in my new home and I have to get used to them. Although seva is not compulsory, it feels good to do something. I start at the bakery with Anti, she is a dear.

In the mornings and afternoons there is darshan and men and women are separated and lined up in long rows. At the head of each row is a guard. We have a female one. She hands out numbers and row one gets the honour to enter the temple first. Surely these women would be good captains in the army. They know how to drill their inferiors. Trying not to get aggravated, I regularly take a few deep breaths. If you step two centimetres outside of the line, you are reprimanded. It is a miracle to maintain my goal and not to let myself be carried away by the visible forms. Presently Sai Baba only gives groups-interviews and I am requested to join a small Dutch group. This is quite a process for someone who preferably wants to find her own way. However it is always a challenge to break with habits and to set aside any resistance. Every group is recognized by their own colour of scarf, ours is pale blue.

When I am used to the energy and the space in the ashram, I can open myself to the subtle radiation which surrounds Sai Baba. Many see Sai Baba as the living avatar of these new times, of this new century, the waterman era.

An avatar is an impersonation of someone who has realized the divine within. And yet these enlightened souls still face the impurities of the matter they live in. Thus it would even be possible for a divine being as Sai Baba to break his hip. Sai Baba works with the energy of the heart. I will recognize this subtle, penetrating energy in myself, in others and in everything around me.

It is not busy and I get to see Sai Baba several times close up. Something in him touches me deeply. A distinct odour radiates from him, it happens to be the smell of petiole. Fascinating, sometimes I experience him as a male and another time as a female. Then suddenly I will view a child, and next I experience him completely without gender. You could say he integrates his divine form, so his physical manifestation does not matter anymore.

I witness some manifesting, like a ring and the divine ashes Vibuthi, which flow freely out of his hands. These ashes are purifying, you can use them internally and externally, and they protect against and heal several diseases.

When Sai Baba appears, some women become completely hysterical. For Indians touching the feet of the guru are their way of worshipping, it is a sign of respect for the divine.

A few days later we have the honour of having an audience with him. Each of us receives personal attention. Finally he blesses me. While putting his hand on my head, he is looking at me in a loving way. Several days later I still feel this hand on my head!

Regularly I go outside the gate to smoke a cigarette and to drink a cup of chai. I become friends with the owner of the tea-shop. When I meet him after darshan, my friend has saved his breakfast, which consists of idli's, and offers me half of it. It is all he eats during the whole day and it would be a big insult to refuse, so despite my well-fed stomach I accept this loving gesture. When my roommate leaves, they put me up in another *roundhouse* with two women. This time without any cockroaches, even the hard mattresses are clean, although sleeping on concrete is something I still have to get used to.

If I want an escape from all the people around me, I go into the hills. Being alone in India seems almost impossible. Within no time I am surrounded by curious young people: 'Hello, where do you come from. Are you married, do you have children?' Using my final piece of patience, I try to answer these recurring questions. I want to be left alone!

buying something, so I offer the shopkeeper a quarter of the price he asks for a dancing Shiva. No, well this is okay. When I leave the shop, the guy follows me: 'Here, take it, you are bargaining too much!' There is no way out, I am left with my first purchase. Friends will take my Shiva back home. I get a nice present, a beautiful woollen scarf, made of pure cashmere wool. It will become my travelling companion for many years. There are many beggars gathered around the gate. In their eyes, we westerns are rich, and materially we certainly are. Just the simple fact of being here! The ashram provides their food and urges us not to give them anything. There are also emphatic instructions for the prices of the rickshaws. Although I know it is protection of the locals, I feel it is

not always bad to pay a little extra. I befriend the flower girls while they try to sell me their self-made garlands. The girls are beautiful, very beautiful!

What about the children, the little tramps with their unwashed faces, their runny noses and their begging, just looking for love and affection. As usual, they steal my heart. I cannot resist buying them some food. Giving them money is not a good idea, in doing so I keep up the practice of people maiming their children and sending them out to the streets to beg. It is difficult to ignore a handicapped child. Although forbidden by law, they still practice these horrible customs, especially in the South of India.

The wishing tree on top of a hill is a spot full of energy. It is quite a steep climb. Underneath the tree is a cave, and for years the same monk has been living there. It is a lovely place where you can actually be alone for a while, how lovely!

I decide to move by the time Sai Baba will celebrate his birthday. Increasingly more people come onto the ashram and it is becoming too busy for me. Of course, I am involved in all the preparations and sometimes I get so near him, I only have to reach out my hand in order to touch him. The last evening, before going to sleep, I felt sorry I did not buy a mala, a prayer-necklace. I have to leave tomorrow before the shops are open. Then my roommate points to a mala hanging on the wall, personally blessed by Sai Baba and left or forgotten by my predecessor. Is this coincidence? Gratefully armed with this precious gem and strengthened by this divine energy, I leave the next morning.

Due to a flat tire, the bus trip to **Bangalore** takes more than eight hours. Leaving Puttaparthi was more difficult than I first wanted to admit myself. No doubt, I was deeply touched and I met some great people over there. Maybe this is one of the reasons things are not going my way. Returning at the Geo-hotel I did not even get a room until I had paid for it. Broke and tired I had to take another rickshaw straight away. It took ages before I found a branch bank that would accept my traveller-cheques. Lucky me, although they were ready to close, they were willing to help me. I wonder if they noticed my desperation.

And yet, this was not all. After all this I had to wait in line for hours to make a reservation for the train to Madras. In the evening I received a telephone call from home. It was a lovely gift to hear the two of them! After all this commotion I took a bucket-shower and actually had a real bed to sleep in. All the troubles are forgotten, what else could one wish for?

Madras

It is already dark when I arrive at **Madras**. It is in the middle of the monsoon and especially in the city this causes some real inconveniences. It is a challenge to stand firm with my rickshaw driver, and then even the recommended hostel does not appeal to me.

After collecting my mail the next day, I make a city tour. I get a good breath of fresh air at the **Marina Beach**. It is a pity I get into a money-fight with my rickshaw driver. Rain, rain and more rain, within no time I am completely soaked. The primitive sewerage cannot cope with this amount of water and soon Madras turns into a big pool of mud. I decide to pack my things that same evening and to leave as soon as possible.

The bus has no windows, I have the last vacant place at the rear and wind and rain can do as they please. The bus driver drives as an idiot and I tell you it certainly was no fun, this three and a half hour trip to **Pondicherry**.

Pondicherry

I find a great place to stay near the sea and I feel privileged by it. It is magnificent to see the sunrise above the sea in the mornings, because **Pondicherry** lays in the far east of India. I visit the ashram of *Sri Aurobindo* and *the Mother*. It is a small place and remarkably well looked after. Visitors can use every meal for the price of ten rupees a day. We eat brown bread, something that makes my mouth water!

There are things that shock me too, like the poster in the ashram with the text: *this food is for you and not for the beggars*. What is the care for these beggars like, why is that boy dying on the street, covered with flies and why does no one seem to take any notice of him? All these questions I fire off at Krishnamurti, not the famous *Krishnamurti*, but still a beautiful person who offers himself as my personal guide. He too cannot give me a satisfying answer and it remains a struggle to see such a suffering without knowing how to react to it.

Slowly I begin to understand that here in India life and death are close together. You arrive all alone in this world and you will leave all alone. This is natural and does not shock people. Dying means salvation to a beggar. However, I would like to be a part of this in a different way. At that time I did not know how I could be present without doing anything, without wanting anything. I still wanted so much to change situations. It was my own inability, my own feeling of being powerless, I was regularly confronted with.

Accompanied by Krishnamurti I visited several beautiful temples and special workshops, founded by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, where young people get the possibility to receive a professional training. The products made by them are sold all over the world. I meet another travelling companion. This lady believes that all Indian men are sexists who continually bother you. When we go to the beach and dive into the sea, it is obvious this happens. Well, to her it does. She gets angry and does not realize that she herself is creating this whole situation. I would say these boys are very curious. Anyhow, if I am clear and treat them with respect, they accept their place without any problem.

On *samadhiday* I meditate in the ashram near the shrine of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. I miss the inspiration that must have been here when they were still alive. As always I enjoy life around the ashram. Although the poverty is extreme, there is a lot to see and to experience. To me, in the first place, the people are the divine temples. It is lovely to visit markets, where women sell homemade products, vegetables and fruit. Women in India are beautiful and powerful. Among themselves, they are also very open.

That evening I cut my hair in front of the mirror. The backside is not too bad but the front looks rather damaged!

One day, we rent bikes and cycle to **Auroville**. This project started after The Mother had a vision to give young people around the world the opportunity to work and live here and to get to know the Indian culture. Once again, I meet some very special people.

After a week, my new travelling-companion and I go to **Turavannamalai** where we will visit the sacred mountain **Arunachaleswar**. There in the ashram the famous guru *Rama Maharashi* once lived.

Turavannamalai

The three and a half hour bus ride is quite a happening. Life in India is colourful so every time I get to see many things. Although the people live in poor circumstances, they radiate a natural feeling of self-esteem, something almost unknown to us.

They take life just as it comes. They believe they are a part of a continuous cycle, in which they incarnate time after time to experience things. By knowing this they can accept all situations in their life. They believe that when they live life in the most optimal way, they become a bit more whole and next time they will incarnate into better circumstances. It has nothing to do with resignation, just with acceptance of the way it is.

Lack of social supplies makes the rich take care of the poor, and it also makes people very creative. We have a great day looking at the products they make and sell. By exchanging this energy they can buy the necessary rice and that little bit of vegetables. The majority in India lives under the poverty line and can afford to spend about three hundred rupees a month, at this moment that represents about twenty-two Euros.

People are keen on their bodies. Although water is more costly than gold and they sometimes have to walk for hours to fetch a pale of water, which they carry on their heads, for many of them bathing is a daily ritual. If there is a river or washing place in the neighbourhood, then the people go there. Women and children separate themselves from men. Women bathe with their clothes on and later the sari is washed in the same river. In the middle of all of this, the pot-bellied pigs play around.

The tea-stalls usually have just one bucket of water at their disposal to wash the glasses in so you had better not be too fussy. Luckily, I am not. I live with a strong connection to this country and the people, and my faith and optimism are so big that I am not afraid to become ill. In addition, these tea-stalls are great places for encounters.

The fact that I smoke makes me very attractive. Usually I buy real cigarettes. This is a luxury. Most people can only afford *bidi's*, a kind of a small cigarette rolled up in a tobacco leaf. I have tried to smoke them, but it took too much effort to keep them burning. Sharing cigarettes means making friends, well that is among the men, the women do not smoke.

Over here, everything is shared with everyone. If you take the train or the bus you bring along an extra lunch, packed in banana leaves. I never felt hungry during my trips. Apart from this generosity, there are many stopovers, so merchants are able to sell their food and drinks.

We book a simple room in the village and visit the ashram where they offer us a hot meal. Without respect they throw the simple food onto banana-leaves, and it looks like nothing on earth. On the streets, of course, there are the holy cows. I also meet a cynical Dutchman who has such a lot of remarks on this country and its people that I amazingly ask him what for God's sake he is doing here. He probably does not realize himself that all your negative feelings and qualities rise up repeatedly in these surroundings.

The holy mountain with the cave where *Rama Maharashi* withdrew for many years is an enormous power place. I will climb this mountain many times and fill myself completely with this healing energy. We visit several temples and a few fortresses; these last ones are right on top of the mountain.

I meet a nice swami. He has lived in silence for twelve years on this mountain. This seventy-six year young one is not only beautiful to look at, he radiates such a lot of warmth and beauty that it is also lovely to be accompanied by him. Together we walk

around the holy mountain, a distance of about twelve kilometres. At one particular moment, I sink knee-high into some dirt. It is not the first time and it certainly will not be the last. It all comes with the packet!

Tiruchirapalli – Tamil Nadu

Early in the morning, my travelling companion and I take a bicycle rickshaw to **Turavannamalai**. This is where we part. I take the bus to **Trichy**. I carry a load of bananas, which is a great source of food, they are cheap and you can buy them everywhere. Once again I do not need them, my kind neighbour insists on sharing his breakfast with me.

Often I feel ashamed towards these people, ashamed because my feeling of 'mine and thine', my deep-rooted western fear of lack. No doubt one of the most important gifts I gave myself in India is that I learnt to share more with others, without a feeling of shortage. The opposite proves to be true! It does not matter if it is a lot or a little, it does not even matter what it is that we share, it is just a gift to share. The more energy I allow to flow, the more will return to me.

My sense of poverty is deeply touched here in India. By seeing all this material poverty, it felt as though I regularly looked into a clear mirror and I became conscious of my fear for shortage. I felt I had always cherished my poverty. It had given me the opportunity to point an accusing finger at those who had more material wealth than I did. No doubt this opened my eyes and made me decide to let go my sense of self-pity. Afterwards I never found myself back in this same material poverty in which I found myself before. Increasingly I started to see the inner wealth in India, which was reflected in the eyes of the people. I learnt to react better to beggars. When I gave them money, they seemed to appear out of nowhere and after a while I felt completely mad. I decided to continue doing so but focused my attention on supporting small projects. It may be just a drop, but all drops together form the ocean!

Five hours later I arrived at Trichy and although my rickshaw driver told me he knew a better place than the tourists' bungalow, for the last time I trusted the Lonely Planet. The room was so dirty and it smelt so badly that even I felt too good for this. In the end, I went to the recommended place. It was a small Indian hotel, where they received me in great spirits. The place was even cheaper and I got a simple but clean room. The room boys did not feel embarrassed chattering on the bed near me, nice and cosy. Feeling pleased, they gladly went onto the streets to buy a cup of chai for me. Tipping one rupee gave them a feeling as though they had won the jackpot. Service in the south is very important.

Near **Trichy** there is the biggest temple-complex of India. It dates from fourteen hundred years BC and is so enormous that it would take days to visit it completely. I meet a very nice guide who is willing to show me around the temple, of course for money, even here only the sun rises for nothing. After a few hours, I am completely soaked by the many impressions and I decide to leave it for now and to return another time. These entire different temple entrances, the statues and pillars are so overwhelming that it is too much to consume in one go. Of course, the temple elephant is not lacking. It is a living expression of the elephant god Ganesha, a symbol of prosperity, happiness, good luck, strength and success.

I love the Hindu temples in India. They are meeting places where people bring their puja to the gods and collect their tika from the priests. Then they get together

somewhere in a corner, cosily sitting on the floor, and entertain each other. People are lovely and curious. Among them I enjoy doing my puja and receiving a tica.

There are treasures of gold and jewels hidden under these temples, but nobody would dare to break down a temple just for that.

The temperature in the south is constantly between twenty-four degrees at night and thirty-five degrees during daytime. It is a different heat compared to ours. The atmosphere is dryer and the water constantly runs down my body, which helps me not to feel muggy. As a result of the dusty roads, my bucket water turns black, every time I wash myself.

I visit the impressive *Rockfort temple* on the mountain. To get upstairs you have to climb up four hundred steps, carved into the rocks. The special Hindu temple is only open for Hindus. Later I have the privilege of being allowed to enter anyway.

From the top of the hill I have a beautiful view over Trichy, the enormous temple complex which surrounds the complete city.

After a few days I continue my journey and make way for the ashram of Father Bede Griffiths. I wonder how I will find him, because I heard he was seriously ill and even that he had passed away.

Tannirpali – Shantivanan Ashram

In the south, you will not find any English announcements on the buses. The bus stations are enormous, so it is quite a job to find the right bus. Luckily, there is always somebody who is willing to help and before I know I am on the right bus. Public transport is the main way of travelling from city to city and often better organized than in our country. Within the cities, there are several possibilities to move from one place to another, the rickshaw is the cheapest way.

A nice man warns me when I have to get off, which is just somewhere at the side of the road. My backpack is already outside the bus before I manage to climb over all the people and the luggage. A handy porter makes use of it and I grant him this favour. After all, he has to live too. I follow him across the sandy path to the small ashram. It is a lovely spot near the holy *Cauvery River*, the same river that runs along Trichy. To my joy, *Father Bede* is still alive and as healthy as he can be.

Father Bede is such a dear man. I feel struck by the simplicity that radiates from him. To me simplicity is the essence of true faith, which makes all outer fashion disappear.

They assign me a sober hut, which I share with a sweet Italian girl. In all his simplicity, Father Bede is a special man. He is a Benedictine monk and was transferred to India years ago. No doubt he, just like me, has found his old roots. He has a big and loving heart and integrated Christianity with Hinduism in a remarkable and lovely way.

His loving presence has placed an aura of light around this place, in which everyone can quench himself. In the simple church you find traces of both religions. The services are in Gregorian, Sanskrit and Tamil. Indian people singing bhajans and mantras, they lovingly and respectfully surround him without adoring him too much. Although he is primarily their spiritual father, he is very much one of them. In no way does he pretend to know everything. He fully admits that meditating is very difficult. According to him, you have to step into it without any expectations, every time again. What helped him on his spiritual pathway was chanting the same mantra again and again, patiently and continuously, and having lots of faith and trust. In his own simple way, he was an example in word and in deed. Sitting in a circle on the concrete floor he ate with us in the simple room, and enjoyed the sober food with the playfulness of a child. If there

was not such a lot of love in preparing this food, no doubt there would have been all kinds of malnutrition.

In the mornings, breakfast existed of idlis. I have never loved these steamed, hot and spicy rice-balls, but here it was almost a delicacy.

The few times I went into the village, I was the object of a lot of attention and before I knew it a shameless crowd of children gathered around me. I spend many hours at the Cauvery River. It is such a lovely place where I can see the sunset and the sunrise during my daily meditations.

There are many great people. First I meet Michael, an Englishman and brother of the order of Mother Theresa. With him I have many deep encounters on the banks of this holy river. I also meet three bosom friends Dolly and Kenneth from Sri Lanka and Leo from Tamil Nadu, students who are spending their free time in the ashram.

Due to the war between Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu, Kenneth and Dolly have not been to their home country for years. A few years after we met, together with four other people, they made the crossing on a private boat. All six were shot. I am shocked when I hear this news from Leo....

The ashram is small and the atmosphere is intimate. During the morning-seva we clean vegetables and share important information. This way I get to know when a ten-day *vipassana* will take place in Bodhgaya.

After a few days in this divine place I say goodbye to all these lovely people and also to Father Bede. When I am home again, I will discover how strongly I am connected to this place. During a special kind of meditation I went 'home' and found myself at the banks of the Cauvery River.

Later, when I return with Giri to India, I do not want to go back to the ashram, I do not like to stain my memory in any way. Years later at the airport in Sidney, it is a wonderful experience to find a video of Father Bede recorded shortly before his passing away. Finally, my question has been answered: Father Bede has returned home. Of course, I buy this video!

Together with Leo, I go back to Trichy and drop my luggage in his room. We take the bus to the Srinagam temple and join up with Kenneth and Dolly. Again, I receive a fantastic temple-tour and learn a lot about history and symbolism. We laugh a lot, enjoy a lovely meal and drink ice-coffee, which is delicious. Kenneth tells me confidentially that, when he ever marries, he wants to find *a girl like me*. These boys are way ahead of their age and it is lovely to be in their company. Together we visit the *Rockforttemple*. This time I get a special tour in the beautiful *Ganeshtemple*. When Larry and Dolly leave us, they kiss me abundantly out on the street, which is very unusual in India.

There is an invitation from *Swamy Premananda* and after picking up my backpack, Leo puts me onto the right bus. Several hours later, when I arrive in **Fatrimanagar**, there are no rickshaws, and I drag myself and my luggage through the tropical heat and the loose sand to the ashram. There I get to hear that Premananda is in **State Bank Colony**, close to Trichy!

I walk all the way back to the road and surrounded by villagers I have to wait for the bus. Although a few busses are passing, nobody seems to speak English. I trust that once again an angel will appear. Of course, this happens! This angel travels with the same bus. He is not allowed to sit next to me; men and women are sitting separately in the south. Nevertheless he is watching over me, so I can relax until I have to get off.

Finally, around seven pm I am in State Bank Colony, tired, dirty and hungry, and just in time for the puja of Premananda. Sitting in his house between his devotees, we are waiting for his appearance. I wonder where I get the patience from. Two hours later he enters. The whole happening lasts for another two hours and although I am invited to stay in his house as long as I like, I decide on the spot that this is not the place where I belong. No doubt he is an honest man and maybe I am just too impatient. The miracles this man supposedly has performed are no less than the ones Sai Baba performs. Maybe I am not searching for miracles anyway.

However, before I leave, I have a short talk with him. He is surprised that I want to leave at this late hour, but I have made up my mind. I actually find a rickshaw on the street, which brings me back, undamaged, to the Indian Sevana Hotel in **Trichy**. It feels like coming home. The owners are so delighted to see me that they try to please me in every way. With the same happiness, they collect a cup of milk-coffee from the street. I look like nothing on earth, there is no warm water and I scrub myself as good as possible with cold water. My clothes go into the same bucket; you learn to be economical here.

In the morning, I go on to the street for a much-desired breakfast existing of slices of white toast and real coffee. It is just about the nicest treat I can imagine, it is a luxury not found very often. Then I take the bus to the other side of the town, and wake Leo, lazy bones. He is pleasantly surprised to see me and takes four days off from college. During those days, we hang out together and we thoroughly enjoy it. He shows me many special places and takes me to a real Tamil movie. There are a thousand seats in the theatre, women occupy thirty of them, among them there is one white one, me. It is not the kind of film I really like, yet the experience is worthwhile. Groups of students, even females, gather around me and want to know all kinds of different things. They openly show their childish curiosity, how lovely!

The next day we sit in a tea-stall, when panic hits the street; a snake has entered. Before we realize what is happening they have taken care of the snake. This is something I am to face more often. In these small and open tea-stalls, there is no lack of company. Mice just play underneath the table. Luckily for me, my fear of mice has disappeared.

Leo advises me to go to **Kodaikanal** for a while, a mountain-station fifteen hundred meters upwards, it seems lovely and cool up there.

I have to say goodbye to my dear friend Leo. We continue to write each other at certain intervals. In some way, he considers me a teacher. When I return to India, I cannot reach him. Later I find out that he is married and soon will become a father. When we return from Spain he writes that he, twenty-eight years' old, that he is zero-positive. I feel a lot of despair and loneliness in this letter. I cried for two days, cried for the suffering of this world, cried for the suffering of my dear India. My first impulse was to get on a plane, but my body refused this. In the end, I will not see him again on the physical plane. Yet I get an unexpected chance of being in touch with him during his dying-process, by e-mail. Then he leaves his body and becomes a part of my backup-team in the other realm....

Kodaikanal

Leo is right. It is certainly cooler in Kodaikanal and the rain sometimes even pours down from the sky. Within a few minutes, my backpack with everything in it is soaked. My stay is dirty and damp. Despite my socks and my sleeping bag, I do not know how to get warm. Luckily, when the dawn arrives it is dry. While the mist slowly disappears, I

take a morning stroll through the lovely surroundings. It looks like a fairy tale and I am thoroughly enjoying the mountains, the lakes and the waterfalls, the flowers and last but not least...the beggars! God reflects Himself in everyone and everything. It seems a good idea to stay for a few days to recover from all my intense experiences, only peace and quietness, being alone in nature, yes being part of nature for a while. O no! During the afternoon, the sky becomes grey again and I do not know how fast to put my wet things into my backpack. Before knowing it, I am on the bus to **Madurai**.

Madurai

Despite the pouring rain, I enjoy this lovely ride. When I arrive, I walk to the Tamil Nadu hotel. The room is reasonable and dry. I fix a line and all things from my backpack go on it. Even the cover of my camera is soaking wet.

The small restaurant is great and the people are friendly. I have not eaten so nice in weeks and I enjoy dosai masala and coconut rice. What a luxury after all the dal-bhat. By now, I have been in India for two and a half months and Madurai seems a good place to extend my visa. Unfortunately, it will not be ready within a week. Despite the good food and the beautiful temples, all the beggars, the dealers in black money and the pushy shopkeepers are getting on my nerves and I choose not to stay here for another week.

When I am enjoying the beauty of the temple that afternoon, a class of schoolchildren, who want to get on a picture with this 'strange person' one by one, bombards me. Believe it or not, this is a sort of attraction I really enjoy.

Quillon – Kerala

I want to make a train reservation for Quillon, but they tell me that this is not necessary. How stupid to believe this, it means I have to stand for hours in an overcrowded train. The presence of a beautiful Indian couple makes it worthwhile. At every stop, the man buys some food. Proud of their country and their culture, they want to share this. They even invite me into their house, but I just have decided to play tourist for a couple of days. After they get off the train, I discover that I am in the wrong compartment. Quickly I change and worm myself onto an iron bench between ten men, directly next to the stinking toilet. Not really something you would write home about! Eight hours later, I arrive rather knocked out at Quillon.

First I make a train reservation for Madras, where I shall try to extend my visa and ultimately I will travel to Puri. The whole station in Quillon is full of sleeping people. Packed tightly against each other they lay on the concrete floor, adults as well as children. Stations are places where the homeless take shelter for the night; in the north to protect themselves against the cold during autumn and winter, here in the south to protect them against the monsoon. In the mornings there are always a few who have died. Their bodies are collected on open platforms of cars and because they belong to the lowest cast, they usually dump them into the river.

I seem to be getting a bit numb when it concerns things like this. This is absolutely not true, it touches me deeply. However, if I should take in all the pain and the suffering, living here would become impossible. On the one hand it affects me; on the other hand this way of life seems very natural.

How many lives have I already lived here?

In the spiritual sense, these simple souls have a natural purity, different from most rich people. To some point I start to recognize that living without material possessions offers a life without worries. Although my way of living is luxurious compared to what those people have, I experience every day with just a backpack, as carefree. Now my energy is not overshadowed by worries about my bills, appointments to answer on and structures to live up to, it is much simpler to live in the *here and now*.

In the eyes of the people around me, I just see the inner wealth we have already lost. Life, work and death, it all happens in the same place. The totality of life is not torn apart and divided into little parcels; nothing is hidden behind the scenes, yet everything is visible.

Nothing is wasted; the dumps are combed through and anything usable is re-used or eaten. How amazed those people would be to see what ends up on our dumps! The holy cows or scruffy dogs are eating anything not edible for people. Strangely enough, I find these last animals more pathetic than the beggars. Years later, when I return to India I find it almost liberated from rats, mice and scruffy dogs.

In the train, anything leftover is thrown out of the window. Up until now, this did not cause any problems. Wrappings were made of newspaper or banana-leaves. By introducing plastic, this became a problem. Cows do not know the difference; they do not digest the plastic and will ultimately die of it.

In Quillon I take a rickshaw to the *Palace hotel*. There is no arguing on the price, which is a miracle. Usually they ask twice or three times as much. Although this is still not very much, it is important to focus on the common price. Otherwise transportation will become too expensive for local people. I treat people with respect and usually this leads to surprises. It is certainly not the way the rich Indians usually treat them, sometimes it is quite shocking to see how the people who are better off look down on their poor brothers and sisters. No doubt, this is a negative result of the class system.

I arrive at a beautiful place and get a lovely room. The people are sweet. Next day I hand in my package and take only some hand luggage with me, existing of my diary, camera, toiletry things and some underwear. I have a new panjabi and the scarf has different functions, I use her as a towel, a beach dress, as a sheet in the train and as a protection against flies.

First, I leave on the bus to **Allepey** and embark on the famous *backwater-trip*. I get quite a fright when I see all the tourists. Although there are westerners in the ashrams, I have never met so many of them. I choose to indulge as much as possible in the energy of the local people even though the conversations may be simple.

Well, I did want to play tourist for a while, so I put up with them on a wooden boat. I thoroughly enjoy everything passing me the next two hours. Later I share a room with two Danish girls. With one of them I travel to **Trivandrum** the next day. Together we enjoy the quietness of the city and after sharing a last meal I continue my journey alone to the most southern part of India, **Caap Comerin**. I find a nice and quiet room in an Indian hotel. Due to a lot of commotion, I wake up in the middle of the night. At first I do not understand what is happening. The next morning I discover the complete hotel is filled up with Indian Pilgrims. Caap Comerin is one of the seven holy places in India and I forgot for a moment that today it is a free Sunday. Believe me, they know how to do things; a night in a hotel with Indian people means a noisy and sleepless night!

I leave the hotel early and take a boat to visit the Vivekananda- and Ghandi Memorial. People are picnicking and enjoying themselves everywhere. I spend some time with a group of Malaysian people, who invite me to visit their beautiful country. At the most

southern part of India there is a 'public toilet'. Men and women go separately. The smell is taken along by the wind for miles and miles.

Young couples, who have been given away to someone they never saw before, use this opportunity to elope with their real loved ones. They like to know everything about this situation in our country. Seen in this light we are very privileged. Most of them ultimately marry the ones they are supposed to marry. Refusing such an organized marriage means being cast out of the family. In India this is almost the same like signing your own death penalty.

Luckily in some circles this begins to change and there seems to be more space for love-relationships. This does not mean these relationships are better. On the contrary, organized marriages often function better; astrologists have carefully selected the backgrounds of both candidates. Such a relationship is free of expectations and therefore it has the possibility to grow in respect and love, whereas a relation based on amorousness usually collapses when the passion has gone. Shortly the government prohibited paying bridal treasures, but in spite of this it still happens a lot, even in the higher classes. This brings about unknown dramas.

The status of widows is still not good at all. You can recognise them on the street by not wearing a top underneath their sari. Usually they are dependent on the goodwill of their family. When they have children it is not too bad, if not then usually their in-laws are not prepared to help them in any way. Although law forbids it, widows are still burnt alive together with their deceased husband.

During the time I was there, this fate happened to a sixteen-year-old girl. She lost her husband just after the marriage ceremony, even before the day they were allowed to live together. It makes you feel powerless to be confronted with situations like these.

That same afternoon I go to **Kovalam** beach. I did not plan this, so I did not bring my bathing suit. Outside the bus I meet the 'colonel', who takes me to a cabin behind his house. I ask him how to resolve my problem concerning the bathing suit; his daughter seems to have something for me. A moment later he hands over her underpants. Well lucky me, I have them myself. Within no time I am at this beautiful beach, in underpants and with my scarf as a beach dress. The turquoise water is beckoning me in such a way that I throw my scarf on the beach to dive into the water. How small the world is, I nearly stumble over one of my students! We greet each other as if it is the most natural thing to do and then first I take a dive. The water is lovely and I enjoy it as long as I can. The coast, the palm trees, the fishermen's cabins, it is like a fairytale. The water is cleansing for body and soul.

In the evening we go out for dinner, I must say he is nice company. The food is lovely; there is plenty of fish and all different kinds of fresh fruit. Very early the next morning I stroll along the beach and that same afternoon I travel back to Quillon. First I go by bus to **Trivandrum**, there I have to take a dangerously overloaded bus to Quillon. Standing in the gangway, completely stuck between Indian men, it is not at all easy to keep my balance. When those busses serve as local busses, the springs are worn out. On top of that most bus drivers do not seem to be attached to their earthly existence.

Four hours later and completely distracted, I arrive at Quillon. Before I let someone take me to the old palace, I do some shopping. In the Palace I get a warm welcome and occupy a suite with balcony and bath, a real luxury. The boy even runs the water for my bath, unfortunately the hot water runs out before the bath is a quarter full. Oh well, just the thought was a luxury. I have my meal served on the immense balcony, where I have a beautiful view over the lake. Nothing is too much trouble for the staff and slowly I

begin to recover. It is a shame I cannot sleep because I did not think of a mosquito net. I do not want to wake anyone up so the mosquitoes disturb me the whole night.

Madras

My train leaves early this afternoon. I have a compartment with an Indian father and his daughter who share their food with me while initiating me into the Indian middle-class family lifestyle. This girl is in the luxurious situation that she is allowed to study, and the relationship between father and daughter seems unusual and touching. When everyone is ready to go to sleep, the seats are unfolded and we sleep in this small compartment with the six of us. I do not sleep too badly. When we arrive at Madras twenty hours later, I land in a chaotic situation, which no doubt has to do with my impatience; no longer than necessary do I wish to stay in this city. Not very objective, due to my first experience, yet in general I do not like big cities.

The waiting room is full, so I take a rickshaw to the YMCA, the female Christian Youth Hostel, only to hear that I have to come back four hours later! I am not even allowed to leave my luggage and once again I get on an overcrowded bus, back to the central station. Many problems and endless patience later it still seems that it will take hours before it is my turn to make a train-reservation for **Puri**.

Then I meet a few nice fellow travellers, who are also waiting to make their reservations. They offer me to guard my luggage so I have my hands free to collect my mail. This couple will serve me a second time in Bodhgaya, and even more than now, they will be my true rescue angels.

In the station I wash and dress myself as well as possible, and take a rickshaw to the post-office. Back at the station I still have to wait another hour. Suddenly there is a change of guards and within two minutes I have my ticket!

For the second time I take a rickshaw to the YMCA, get a bed in the sleeping facility and dump my luggage. After resting for half an hour I make my way to the foreign tourist office.

I have been told this is the place where obtaining a visa is no trouble at all. No such luck this time, I have to come back in two days. I already made my reservation for Puri and for the second time I think of the wise words the Lama said, and painfully I get aware of my impatience. It is time to realize I am not at home, I cannot always get things the way I want them!

Musicians and medical students love Madras and in the evening I go for dinner with a few students. The following morning I have to leave at six o'clock, there is even no breakfast for me. I miss the love in this Christian community and after this experience I do not feel the need to sleep within any accommodation run by this organization. I will rather choose a less clean room with honest warmth.

Puri

The distance to Puri is twelve hundred kilometres and it will take the train twenty hours to get there. They give me a women's compartment and I feel pampered in a heart-warming love. The women share their idli's with me and I feel embraced with their love and completely at home. All this time a little girl amuses herself with only some kind of a magazine. You do not hear her complain for one second. At four o'clock in the morning we arrive in Bhubaneswar, I hug Babu and kiss her goodbye.

At the station I meet Ganesha. Before we take a rickshaw to the bus station, we drink some coffee together. I am not allowed to pay. The bus to Puri will leave before sunrise. I had not counted on the fact that it would be so cold and I suffer more than is good for me.

In the end, I arrive at the main goal of my journey. I am looking forward to meet Swami Harikananda, the present guru of the Kriya-yoga ashram and the successor of Yogananda. I am haggling a lot with the rickshaw driver before he takes me to the ashram. They promise me their help with finding a room. Hours of waiting later I decide to look for myself. I have no option then to take a quite expensive room in a tourist bungalow. Even if I have to pay only five euros; it is twice the amount I have been used to pay. Life in the north is more expensive and the service seems to be less. I wash myself with a bucket of warm water and feel the joy of being fresh and clean.

Puri is overcrowded with locals, celebrating their holiday, usually from **Calcutta**. They love this holy town. I find a charming restaurant where the food is delicious and where I meet a few nice boys. My first action here will be to prolong my visa. After a lot of bureaucratic mix-up and the usual bribe money, I only manage a forty-five days' extension. It is clear that India is freeing itself from unwelcome foreigners. Some tourists let their visas expire just to stay in India. Before, this was never a problem, now they have to flee constantly from one ashram to the other.

Back at the ashram, I hear *Harikananda* has become ill and he has to stay in America for his recovery. This is very disappointing for me and later I will experience the consequences of it. Without his energy the ashram feels inanimate. The samadhi-place of Sri Yukteswar, the guru of *Yogananda* and a great astrologer is situated here. Now his unique knowledge is becoming available to all of us.

Inside of the ashram I meet a Dutch man who is willing to offer me his room. Although it is a bit further away, the price is much cheaper. He forgets to tell me the other occupant is a rat, of which I become aware the next day when I find my diary half eaten up! Luckily me, I have a mosquito net over my bed!

I spend my time meditating in the ashram, and doing the specific kriya-meditation, which has a cleansing outcome on the endocrine glands. The fishing-village is at the beach on the way to my room and I really enjoy the fishermen. How fascinating to see the strength of these people with their little wooden boats. Even though they cannot swim, they all join together to bring the heavy nets in. Their accommodations are very poor, the people themselves are 'primitive' but beautiful and their children are pure and unspoilt.

I enjoy my new friends and together with Rob I spend many hours at the Market Square where we sit among the sadhu's, and share the holy hash pipe. During a meditation in the ashram, my purse is stolen. Luckily it contained just some petty cash and I feel less shocked than the caretakers.

I find my favourite tea-stall, where the eight-year-old Bai is serving me. Proudly he shows me his healthy puppy. It is a lovely dog and Bai is visibly happy with it. I have come across the only healthy dog during my time in India.

There is a big leper-colony in **Puri** and you will find many beggars. As some kind of an exhibition, they install the lepers on the Market Square to beg for their daily food. Begging in India is not at all a bad way of getting money.

I go for a day of sightseeing and land in a bus full of Indian people including a video. That is the last thing I want, so I install myself next to the driver and thoroughly enjoy the lovely landscape. When I look over my shoulder, I am amazed to see all those hungry faces watching the movie. We visit the lovely sun temple in **Konarak** and the

Udkayagiri caves. Although I do not like this way of consuming, I experience this day as a fine one.

By the time it is Christmas I am really ill. I have been living in India for three months now, usually eating and drinking on the streets and hardly ever buying a bottle of water, and now I am ill. I hardly manage to go to the late service in the church, and then I go to bed with a high fever. There is a party going on in the hotel and it is not exactly quiet. I feel miserable, lonely, and abandoned and begin to get tired of this place. It is time to go to Bodhgaya. I long to meet somebody with whom I can share my inner feelings, and I know Michael is waiting there for me. Aside from that, somewhere in January the ten-day-long *vipassana* will start. By now I have severe diarrhoea and I spend most of Christmas in bed. The next day I feel well enough to take the train to Bodhgaya.

Bodhgaya

There is a nasty atmosphere in the train to **Gaya**. This has to do with the explosive situation in Punjab. The train is full of soldiers and you nearly break your neck over the luggage and the guns. I feel half a person and grab every opportunity to lie down. I have to get up every time a new passenger gets in. At four o'clock in the morning we arrive at Gaya. The floor of the station is filled with sleeping people, the atmosphere is very unfriendly, even threatening and there is nobody who speaks a word of English. It is an awful situation, I was warned of before.

When I finally manage to get to the bus station, they tell me there will be no busses today. Pure misery forces me to choose for the only remaining solution, a horrible trip of twelve kilometres at the back of a bicycle rickshaw. Finally I arrive, cold and miserable, at Bodhgaya. I share a room in the *Burmese Vihar Tibetan monastery*. It is at this place I meet up with Michael. He is happy to see me and so am I. Soon it gets clear he has certain expectations I cannot answer. This casts a cloud over our reunion. As I feel a great need to share my experiences, it makes me feel twice as lonely as before. Miserable I spend a few days and nights in bed. I have a fever and diarrhoea and the only toilet, or at least what is supposed to be one, is outdoors. It is winter and quite an effort every time again to get out of my bed into the cold. We try to find another place somewhere else, however, because of the New Years Holiday, everything seems fully booked.

On my third day Michael takes me to the caves of the Buddha.

This is the place where Buddha withdrew for a period of meditation and teaching. However ill I feel, that moment something happens to me. I feel a force, much stronger than I am. We walked three hours over the open planes before we reached the caves; an effort, which I never could have made all by myself. I feel so good, I feel being carried. This is absolutely true. When we arrive at the stupa I start walking around it anti-clockwise, as if I had never done anything else. It is a wonderful experience and I feel I must have been here before.

Full of renewed energy we go back home. This is another three-hour walk. When we pass through a small village, I have to sit down for a while. By now I feel weak and emotional and the tears constantly run down my face. All the villagers are gathering around, and they just stare at me in absolutely silence. I feel a deep understanding and empathy. Finally I get better and after greeting everyone with the magical *Namaste*, we continue our journey.

As soon as I get to my room, I am back where I was before, just as miserable and feverish. The uplifting energy is withdrawing and I cannot get myself warm even not with some extra blankets. After two more miserable days and a serious row with Michael, I let myself be taken to the tourist hotel. It is an unfriendly, careless place. When I saw it before, I did not even like to think about staying there. Now I agree with everything, as long as there is a toilet and a water tap inside.

At the hotel they tell me the rooms are occupied, there is only place in the dormitory. Later this proved to be a big lie; they are just too lazy to make up a room for me. I spend a miserable and lonely New Year's Eve in this unfriendly, soulless room. The nearby toilet has leaking pipes and when I have to go there, which I frequently have to, I get all wet. In the morning I feel all softened up. If there is no room available there is nothing left then to return to the monastery. Everything seems to be better than staying in this careless place.

Thank God, I seem to have been tested enough. At the reception I meet a family from **Calcutta** who make their apologies for this horrible situation and invite me for breakfast. They hope I do not get the impression that all of India is like this, and they offer me a stay in their home in Calcutta. But I am here to participate in a ten-day long *vipassana*. At least their kindness makes me feel a bit better. Then another miracle happens. For the second time I meet Gabrielle and Boman, my rescue angels in Madras. They are surprised to see me and offer me a bed in their four-person bedroom. There is a shower with warm water and a toilet. The beginning of this New Year is starting to become a party for me. No longer do I have to go outdoors to get fruit and drink, my angels take care of everything.

Hardly recovered and just before the ten-day *vipassana* I visit a Tibetan monastery. I enter the library and to my surprise the book '*You can heal your life*', by Louise Hay is just laying on the table. Something is clearly mirrored to me! All this time I had such a faith and confidence, even the dirtiest water could not affect my infectious body. Somewhere on the road I lost this unshakeable faith. I lost it the moment I heard Harikananda was still in America. What dependent I had made myself. Once more I was shown to trust my inner guidance.

I had felt so disappointed, I could not get to terms with it emotionally and straight away my body reacted by getting out of balance. What a coincidence to find this book here. Of course it is no coincidence; it is a loving blink from upstairs to put me back into my inner-power.

Full of good intentions and without mosquito net I move into another Tibetan Monastery. Once again I meet a special person and under his unique guidance we all meditate in a group for ten days in absolute silence. Those among you, who have done this, know that all the things you will encounter can be quite an ordeal.

This of course also happened to me. Sitting half an hour each time, in lotus position, without moving, with your eyes almost closed, you look at a point one meter in front of you. You are in this world, without belonging to it. You focus on your hara and follow your breathing. At the end of each session, you walk in a meditative way for ten minutes and sit down again. In all, you meditate about ten hours a day. Your body hurts in the most strangest places, hidden emotions will rise up, and the only thing you have to do is to observe and to let go.

We have two meals a day. The morning breakfast consists of porridge, and the afternoon lunch is composed of vegetables and rice. We quickly get used to only two meals a day. The compelled silence is not at all a problem for me, and I really enjoy it. Besides, I feel some kind of a masochist to put myself, voluntarily, through so much pain. I seem to be the only one without a mosquito net, so all the mosquitoes focus on

me, not at all a pleasant experience. The path to enlightenment obviously goes through pain and suffering! One particular moment I just want to get my things and leave. Something stops me of doing so, and then finally the change breaks through.

That specific moment I raise above all pain and suffering, and this is a wonderful experience. No longer is there any suffering; there is just joy and wholeness. In a split of a second I cast a view behind the visible reality, I experience an overwhelming wholeness, my own totality and I remember being *All-One*. I have to forget this experience again, because as soon as you try to hold on to such an experience, you have already lost it. The next session is as heavy as before, but now I know what lies behind all pain and suffering and this gives me the courage to continue. The *being* of Christopher is like a seed of love, embraces and quenches us all. His daily hour of teaching and his simplicity is energizing us to the full. When this ten-day period has passed, I feel embedded in my essence and once again penetrated with a strong faith and confidence. Obviously, everyone has been waiting for this moment, I feel sorry that the silence is over. If it were up to me, we would have left this place in complete silence.

Varanasi

I join up with Suvi from Finland. In an overcrowded scooter-rickshaw we set off for Gaya, where we take the train to Varanasi, also known as **Benares**, one of the most important holy cities. I feel like a rock in the surf and let myself not be bullied by an unfriendly man on the platform. In order to get seats on the evening train, we have to bribe someone, and even then we have our seats in separate compartments. Corruption is a typical phenomenon here and you cannot always avoid it.

Arriving in my compartment, I get a heavy time. Five rich Muslims have taken up all the seats and look at me in such a contemptuous way, I have to swallow a few times. However, I have been through worse things. I send up a silent prayer. I do not wish to spend the night with these gentlemen, yet I demand, without blinking my eyes, my rightful seat. Reluctantly they move over a bit and apparently untouched I sit in their middle.

When the conductor drops in, he straightaway sees what is going on. Immediately he takes me to the women's compartment. There I am warmly welcomed and the top bed is still available. I thank the universe and enjoy my rest. Around half past two my sisters wake me up, we have arrived at **Varanasi**.

At this time there are just a few hotels open, so Suvi and I let someone take us to the tourist bungalow. It is just a short distance, but our rickshaw driver keeps on cycling and cycling, hoping we will think it is far away. I know these little tricks; it is all part of the game. I can deal humorously with it but Suvi gets angry. To tell you the truth, this makes me laugh.

The next morning we go to a lodge at the river **Ganges**. This room is not very hospitable, but the view over the holy river is very special. I wander a few days around the Ganges and through the narrow alleys. There are so many holy cows that you have to look carefully where you put your feet. Not only this, it is recommendable you keep some distance, otherwise they just splash in your eyes. There are many little shops and teashops around: in the last ones I will drink a lot of chai.

Especially the fascinating scene at the Ganges touches me. All these pilgrims, and people with their impressive rituals; bathing, meditating, doing their washing, cleaning their vegetables. It is an impressive and fascinating scene, which fills me with respect and a deep awe. The pilgrims come from everywhere to find a piece of enlightenment in this ancient holy place. For the first time in my life I witness the burning of dead bodies

on the gaths. It is a deep cleansing spectacle, I will be watching for hours. It looks as if I can see the physical body transforming into spirit.

Somewhere I meet Chandra. Chandra is a spiritual guy and knows everything about Varanasi and India, about yoga, tabla's and meditation. He looks after me and we spend some time together. Together with Suvi and Ramas we go to **Sarnath**. Chandra and Ramas cook a delicious meal in a clay-pot, on an open fire and we meet a lovely swami. We are too late to buy a ticket for the train so we travel back to Varanasi without ticket. Standing in this third compartment is an experience by itself. Children and grown ups are sleeping on iron seats. The entire floor is packed with people, animals, food, cockroaches and a lot of mess. If you are afraid, or do not like getting dirty, you must never travel alone through India.

I get an indefinite feeling about Chandra and Ramas, and Suvi and I take our own bike rickshaw to our lodge. With a mad driver, it becomes an amazing and dangerous adventure. Suvi even loses her last bit of self-control and starts hitting him! Funny, I am not afraid and I simply have to laugh.

When Suvi has left I speak with Chandra. He tells me Ramas and he are earning their living by entertaining female tourists, especially in bed. I thank Chandra for the honour; he has come to the wrong address. He knew this already, yet he offers me to show me around as a friend. I gladly take his offer and in exchange for free meals he gives me a fantastic week, which I will never forget. We first go to the music school. I meet a nice teacher, get my first music-lessons and after he assures me there are teachers in Nepal, I buy my own tabla's.

We go back to **Sarnath** to meet the *Dalai Lama*. Although the Dalai Lama speaks Pali, I experience his *being* as enervating. This divine human is completely detached from earthly material things. He is simply *that* and fills me with joy and simplicity. I feel a deep sense of calmness and peace, which has everything to do with his *being* and not at all with his *doing*.

We take a boat tour, and later we hire a boat with boatman for an entire day and cross the Ganges. On the opposite side, we rent a bicycle rickshaw and sitting between the two men, we go to the market to buy some vegetables and rice. We visit impressive temples and find a lovely spot at the ghats. While the men prepare a lovely meal, I enjoy watching the bathing women and the playing children. Of course I stay at a respectful distance.

The scenes touching me in particular are those showing the grace and the skills of the women, and the purity of the children. People remain the most beautiful temples of all. During the bathing you cannot even see a naked skin, yet when they have finished they wear a clean sari. This sari is wet though, they had to do the washing as well. The women of India are beautiful and dignified. Although to us they may not seem emancipated, they radiate more self-esteem than many a western female. They seem to know where they live for, and they live it to the full. The women enjoy themselves among each other; you cannot even speak of any loneliness. Apparently they do not treat their children with soft hands, they scrub them from top to bottom, and many of them start to scream.

The peace I built up during the vipassana, is still wrapping my soul. Although we eat in typically Indian restaurants, where only men come in, I am treated with respect everywhere. We eat dosa in all kinds of varieties, extremely cheap and delicious. We drink rice-beer along the Ganges and in the company of swami's and sadhu's we smoke the hash-pipe. We visit temples and playing the tabla's starts to fascinate me.

Apart from this, the energy of India is so intense and demands such a lot of me that suddenly I feel run out. I need time to let things integrate. Instead of prolonging my visa and going to Darmsala, where it can be really cold at this time of the year, from one moment to the other I decide to go to Nepal!

Nepal

After having been in India for more than four months, I leave for Nepal. Chandra takes me to the bus, which will bring me to **Sunauli** near the Nepal border. Dear Chandra, thank you for your inspiration, thank you for your being. I will treasure this time with you as a precious gift in my heart. You are a beautiful human being.

The distance to the border is only two hundred and sixty kilometres, yet it takes us nearly ten hours. From this point I take an overcrowded bus to **Pokhara** the next day. We are locked up for more than ten hours, with three of us on a small bench and I share my food with my Nepali neighbours. People get sick and vomit in the overcrowded gangways. The smell is extreme.

Strange emotions are bubbling up inside of me. An overwhelming longing takes over. It is the feeling of homesickness, I recognize it from the time my mother re-married, and I had to leave my safe surroundings to go and live in the south of the country. It is a heartrending longing, a deep inner feeling of melancholy for India. It is a strange experience and cannot be explained.

In the evening, after a lovely but tiring journey, I arrive at **Pokhara**. There is no taxi, no rickshaw, nothing. This time I have to carry a heavy load all by myself, and believe me, the tabla's are not light in weight. Extremely tired I find lodgings. When I wake up in the morning I have a beautiful view of the snowy mountaintops of the Anna Purna and the Vistail. It is like a fairytale from the Oriënt. I go out for breakfast on the street and start to explore Pokhara. At first, the many tourists in this place shock me. Totally unexpected I meet Gabrielle and Boman, what a welcome surprise! At the Hungry Eyes we drink coffee with apple pie, a real luxury. Their apple pie is the greatest of the world! Alas, I cannot find a tabla-teacher. With a rented bike I travel through the neighbourhood and cycle to the Tibetan Refugee Camp. The Tibetan people earn their money with weaving and selling cloths. What the Cashmere represent in India, the Tibetans represent here. They are handy business people and hard workers. I meet many nice people on a Nepali dance event. Compared to many Indians, the Nepalese are very kind and modest. Peace radiates from them, you do not hear them even shout. My mind tells me I should be very happy, but the feeling of homesickness remains. By now, I have mastered the art of haggling and I buy my first souvenirs. I meet a nice young man who offers to be my guide. Without hesitation I move my belongings to his lodge, and for a week we hike together on the *Annapurna-trek*.

As soon as we go into the mountains and leave the tourism behind, my homesickness disappears like snow in summer, and I feel a new inner balance. We walk and climb more than eight hours a day. In the evenings we stay overnight in simple accommodations in the plain villages. Renting a bed is just two rupees; five euro-cents. In the whole village there is only one toilet, built somewhere against a mountain. Mostly it is a simple wooden shack, with a big or a small hole in the floor, it varies. You have to be careful not to fall into the hole.

Nature is rough, ancient, and breathtaking with wild rivers, snowy tops of the Himalayan Mountains, and the rhododendron is blooming to the full. Without doubt it is the most breathtaking nature I have ever experienced. During the day I just wear a

blouse, but the nights are cold and the higher we get the colder it is. It is cosy in the villages. In the evenings the villagers play music and we sing and dance on the village square. The food is simple. There is only dal bhat or fried rice. The little vegetable available is fresh and it does not make you sick. Here it is important to make sure you drink only boiled and filtered water.

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. Death rate among the children is high. The main reason is the heavily contaminated water, used for everything. Rain takes all the excrements from people and animals to the river and into the streams. Doctors without Frontiers are doing a tremendous job with their health- and education programs. It is not easy to get in contact with the people in the small villages. They live isolated and the only way to go into the mountains is by foot or on a donkey.

It is unbelievable the heavy loads these small, tawny people carry on their backs. Women usually carry things on their heads and children are taught at a young age to do their share. The people walk barefooted, shoes are a luxury and often their feet are covered with ulcers. They consider me as a medicine woman, which probably is not so strange. Undoubtedly it is still in my blood!

Luckily, I carry some dressings and some natural medicines in my bag. I dress the wounds and give loving attention. As always, this last one is even more important than the first. There are no boundaries to the gratitude radiating from their eyes. I feel at home, the overpowering feeling of homesickness disappears. I am in the *here and now*, every hour, every minute, absorbing all the beauty, especially enjoying these beautiful human temples. It is so natural to love them.

One night we sleep at a Ghurkha-family. The young mother is cooking above a clay oven in a simple room. While sitting and squatting Tikaram is our interpreter. Sincerely I tell her how beautiful she is. Today it is a festive day; she has caught a bird in the forest. This bird gets plucked and boiled with everything still in it. She makes a curry out of it and I get the first bite. It tastes delicious!

Tikaram and I share a small room at the front side of this little wooden shack. There are at least fifteen people living in this simple accommodation; elders, brothers, sisters, and children. It is a pleasant happening. Half the night is spent chatting and laughing. The Nepalese are good at that. Even if I do not sleep a lot, I enjoy this gathering. No doubt we westerners lost this kind of joyfulness after television was introduced.

When you have to go to the toilet, you just go outside, through the only opening there is. There is no running water. People stay up at sunrise to get their drinking water, sometimes from miles away. The villages have a central pump where you can wash yourself like everyone does.

The higher up we go, the colder it gets. We drink raxy, homemade rice brandy, to keep us a bit warm at night, and we eat *batta*, toasted soybeans, it tastes delicious. My condition is remarkably good. The nature, the sober way of living, and the clean air have a healing effect on me. During our trek we are often just the two of us, and I enjoy the beauty and the silence. We see blooming laligrass and jasmine, such a lot of jasmine. Hash grows at the back gardens, one of the reasons that Nepal is so popular with individual hikers and tourists. This resulted in prohibiting using and dealing in hash. The punishment is severe. What a shame! Tourists bring a certain amount of wealth, which is good. The other side of the coin is that many natural customs are taken out of proportion.

We see many monkeys, pass enormous waterfalls, and walk across little hanging bridges without banisters to hold on to. Very scary! I never thought I would dare to do this, however I just do it! Tikaram teaches me a few Nepalese words. People love it when I greet them and even have something nice to say. Children, yes, children, they

are so beautiful. They play for hours in the mud, entirely disappearing into nowhere, into everywhere. Completely satisfied and in harmony; so divine, so connected to their origin. The mothers carry the little ones on their hips. The sick and the elderly people are transported in baskets on the back. Sometimes people carry their basket in between them, on a stick on their shoulders. Not everyone has the luxury of owning a donkey. Even bathing is a luxury that only seems important to westerners. You'd better not ask how often those people wash themselves. Twice a year is quite something. That extra layer on your body is not a luxury when you do not have a heated house. The only warmth is found around the cooking place. Believe me, these people do not stink, they do have a certain odour, which is certainly not unpleasant.

When we return in **Pokhara** I enjoy the pleasures of life, invented just for tourists. The lodge has a real shower and twenty-four hours per day warm water, a real luxury. After having scrubbed myself from top to bottom, I do my laundry. There is a tap outside and something like washing powder. It is lovely to stamp the wash barefooted in a bowl, it cleans the clothing quite well. Less clean is the 'laundrette' on the other side of the lake. Here they do the washing in the lake and beat it on the rocks. Very effective, but your clothes are soon worn-out. They find my panjabi's ridiculous and I exchange them, with some regret, for Nepali clothes. I keep one scarf. It will serve me for years.

In my favourite little restaurant I refuse to eat with a spoon. For months I have been eating with my hands, like all native people do and I like to continue this. My friends appreciate this and rinsing my hands becomes a daily ritual. Using some simple Nepali words is highly stimulated.

Every day I meet my friend the beggar. He cannot walk and sits the entire day on the ground along the road. His radiation is one of pure love. It is lovely to sit in silence within his aura and recharge myself.

How sweet the people are, this is not my way of life. I appreciate a more sober lifestyle. I park my tabla's, say goodbye and leave for **Chitwan**, the Sahara in the heart of Nepal. I get on the local bus, on roads even worse than in India. The bus is overcrowded and the height is not suitable for westerners. With aching knees I arrive at **Tandi Bazar**, where local transportation is waiting to take me to my lodge. This wooden cart, with wooden wheels and drawn by an ox, is respectfully called a *helicopter*. The journey takes one and a half hours. The lodges are simple mud-huts with thatched roofs. Although it seems reasonably clean, at night a rat pays me a visit.

The next day I meet Vincent and Kumar and move to the Tiger lodge. Now I am right near the river. The three of us take a walk through the jungle and observe the rhinoceros. What a fascinating animals. The boys take me bird watching and I enjoy it thoroughly. Dealing in drugs is the other side of the coin. My wish to be left alone in this is respected without comment. Although you see them ponder: strange tourist, not smoking hashish, not even drinking a beer. I do not care.

More than a week later I leave for **Kathmandu**, the ancient capital of Nepal. This means another ride with the *helicopter*. I came down a peg of two and made a reservation for a special bus. Unluckily this special bus does not arrive. There is nothing else left for it but to worm myself into the local bus. This time they really pack the people into it. Although the bus has some windows, there is no fresh air.

After departing, the bus stops again and the conductor allows anyone who wants to, to go outside on the roof. I do not have to think twice, I am on the roof before I realize what I am doing! I scrupulously try to hold on and keep my eyes shut tightly. After a while, I have enough courage to open them and I am so captivated by the scenery that I decide to continue looking.

The road is very bad and the bus is from an unknown age. We do arrive at Kathmandu in one go. Once again we have to worm ourselves back into the bus, even here travelling like this is not allowed.

In Kathmandu I have a look for a restaurant, always a good opportunity to find lodgings. I succeed, although not quite to my satisfaction. The next morning I find a place that is more to my liking. After the luxury of a shower, I go out to explore the city. With all her old temples and stupa's, Kathmandu is worth the effort. A main attraction is the lively trading on Durbar Square. There is sheer poverty here, yet on the other hand you find restaurants of so many different nationalities, you get confused. This is a pitfall for every traveller, especially when you come from India or out of the mountains. For less than one Euro you get a luxury salad with all the trimmings. Eating this salad causes diarrhoea within no time!

I get some marriage proposals. Especially to the guides, the Sherpa's of the mountains, westerners are attractive. In their eyes we are rich and they are fond of jeans and Walkmans. Yes, the tourists have already introduced the feeling of shortage and greediness.

By now I am quite good at exchanging money on the black market. Of course you must remain careful not to get caught. Swoyambhu Stupa is a beautiful stupa half an hour outside of Kathmandu. To visit Pashupatinath is real homecoming to me. It feels like a *small India*. Here I find again the burning-ghats, where the Hindus burn their dead bodies. The place is full of Indian people, tea stalls and little cosy restaurants.

Finally, I am back home! This is the place to celebrate the birthday of Shiva, a phenomenal happening. Sadhu's, gurus and swami's from all over India and Nepal gather here. Some of them have been on the road for two years. The smoking of hash is allowed for a few days. Everywhere there are groups of colourful, smoking people gathering around big fires. Our group is invited to join in the celebrations. My purse is stolen, even if I know who did it, I cannot prove it so I have to keep my mouth shut. I am glad I left my belongings in my room, so far this worked well for me.

Many sadhu's only wear a loin cloth. The rest of their clothing consists of their hair and paintings. Some of them are deformed and crooked, caused by days and weeks of sitting in the same yoga position. Often their bodies are covered with ashes from top to toe, a sign of detachment and purity. The community takes care of them and they get lots of attention. During these days I meet many fascinating and inspiring people.

The only public toilet in **Pashupatinath** cannot take the pressure and the muck just flows along the street. The people just do not know how to use a toilet!

The burning of the bodies goes on day and night. Men are involved in the ritual while the women have to watch it from the other side of the river. It still fascinates me. Although there is hardly any water, they throw all that remains in the river. Women wash their vegetables and clothes in the same river, between the playing pot bellied pigs.

They do not allow me in the temple, what a shame. Luckily I can cast my eye on Nandi, the colossal golden bull, Shiva's favourite animal. While I wander through the streets of Pashupatinath and the surrounding hills, I see loads of monkeys, not at all shy.

In **Bodnath** I meet new friends. I get a room with a Tibetan family. My breakfast exists of noodle soup. The stupa, the biggest in the world, is huge and energetic. At this place I meet Dominique and I offer her to share my room. Together we celebrate Tibetan New Year and we dance modestly on the square, in a circle of Tibetans. The temples are beautiful.

When we go into the mountains, we meet beautiful women. They just sit in front of their huts, spin their own wool and call us in for some chai and homemade popcorn. It is nice to be able to make myself understood. It gives a feeling of sisterhood. We are even invited to a wedding. A lot of laughing, singing and dancing is going on. Our hosts make sure we get everything we want. The Tibetans are diligent when we play carambole with them. In nearly all the beautiful monasteries they teach Buddhism. I prefer to go to the *Kopan Monastery* in the mountains. Normally you can also get Tibetan lessons there, unfortunately not at this moment. Anyhow, they allow me to stay for a few days. I am not sure if it is such an honour to share my bed with bed lice, oh well, you will have to take it as it comes! Apart from this, my stay is comfortable and I meet monks from six to sixty years of age. I drink the disreputable butter tea, handed out during the services, and I enjoy the monk's joy. They play like children in the puja and are full of mischief, like filling balloons with water, and putting them on top of the door. If you fall for it and become wet, they laugh heartedly. Religion here is a feast for young and old, everywhere you see happiness.

It is something we could learn from, we are much too serious! God is not a serious matter, God is joy and delight, and He totally fulfils our soul desire if we dare to open up to it.

After a few days I leave for **Bhaktapur**. I have serious diarrhoea and for this reason I look for a room near the square. It is Holy Festival and they throw coloured powder at each other. Soon I too look very colourful! I witness a wedding and a fortune-teller wants to predict my future. The highlights in this beautiful old city are the Newari dances. All the temples around the square are decorated with candles, a lovely view, and for a whole evening I am treated to all different kinds of exuberant and less exuberant, but even so fascinating religious dances, it is great!

A Nepalese boy tries to court me, and together we drink rice wine and eat some tough buffalo meat. Not really my favourite, still you have to taste it, if you like it or not. Their religion forbids slaughtering the holy cows. Buffalo's only get killed when they do not give milk anymore and then they are old and tough. They make lovely curd and lassie from the milk. Here it is tastier than anywhere else.

Never before have I seen such an untidy, begging, children. Their clothes and their bodies seem not to have been washed for months and their noses are running of green snot. We share some food and play all kinds of games, and I learn them to play hopscotch. They love it. From that moment we become friends.

I visit temples and potters on the square. The shops are too expensive, and set up for group tourists, who pass by bus. After having enjoyed myself a few days, I return to the mountains. I still have serious diarrhoea. A scary ride for more than three hours in an old open truck takes us across nasty, steep and unpaved mountain roads to **Nagarkot**. The roof sagged under the weight of the people. I do not feel safe; on the contrary I try to hold on with hand and feet.

At my destination I find a nice room with a toilet, not a luxury at this moment. I have a beautiful view over the snowy mountaintops of the Mount Everest. I do not have much energy and during the day I just have the benefit of sitting in the sun while I work on my Mandala.

Nourishing myself in this lovely atmosphere, I begin to feel human again. I do not like to travel on a truck again, so when I feel well enough I decide to walk to **Sankhu**. I walk for nearly four hours through a breathtaking atmosphere of rice fields and enjoy the lovely views of the Himalayas. It is a lovely day and I feel as if I am walking through paradise itself, which no doubt will be just as beautiful as this. Once I lose my track,

which is exiting for a while, and luckily for me I find the right track again. At the moment I just feel too tired to go on, I see as if it were a mirage **Sankhu**.

From here I take a bus to **Bodnath**, hopefully I will find a room there. No luck, everything is full booked. I drag myself to **Pashupashunath** and take a break of the ghats. I feel relieved through the delightful energy. With my last bit of strength, I manage to find a little hotel. I get a warm welcome and after a shower and a dal-bhat I start to regain humanity. The next morning I feel like a sleepwalker, and it begins to sink in that I really need a doctor. I decide to go back to my hostel in Kathmandu. Bai is completely over the moon when he sees me and my old room is still vacant. I take time to freshen up and get to sleep for the rest of the day.

The next day I go to the ayurvedic clinic. It looks more like a barrack than a hospital. People just have an iron bed. The hospital is not the best place to be in, if you are not ill yet, you will certainly get ill there. The family nurses the patients. We westerners certainly are spoiled. For us all the excessive provisions are so natural.

The doctor prescribes ayurvedic medicines. I have to collect my prescription in the afternoon at Durban Square. While waiting for nearly two hours, and spending this time in a coffee shop, I meet a fascinating man. He works in Kathmandu and likes to take me to one of his projects. That afternoon, when he comes to pick me up, I feel absolutely too weak to go out. While he is still in my room, the heavy weather bursts out.

Bolts of lightning are flashing through the dark air. Thunder and lightning! Within five minutes my room is completely flooded. Trees of several meters wide are being pulled out of the ground just like matches. Within no time Kathmandu is without water and electricity. It is impressive to see what is happening. It all happens in such a short time, I do not feel afraid, I just feel impressed.

The result of all this is shocking. The moment of the disaster, boys were playing a football match. Everyone tried to get out through the only entrance there is. In their panic, the people push and hit each other to death. Over ninety young people, aged between sixteen and twenty, lose their lives. Kathmandu is mourning. I also feel affected. The next days I regularly watch the burning of the bodies on the ghats in Pashupatinath. On the one hand, it touches me deeply. On the other hand it is a deep cleansing experience. Looking into the fire and experiencing the energy brings peace to my body and soul and it makes me feel stronger.

Then the moment arrives that Giri comes over for the last weeks of my journey. I wrote him to bring everything he is able to carry concerning jeans, T-shirts, and shoes. Full of expectations I go to the airport. I get a fright when I see him. His western lifestyle and the stress are clearly visible. I immediately sense his tension. No doubt, he knows I am no longer the one who left six months ago. We have to get used to each other anew. I take him to a little restaurant where we have a lovely meal and a good talk. The next day I show him street life in Kathmandu. He gets to know my little friends, together we buy some souvenirs, and I show him my new way of doing business. Yes, I have become very good at that, who for God's sake would have thought this half a year ago!

I have organized the tourist bus to Pokhara. For me it is the first time I travel in such a luxury, for Giri it will be easier to get accustomed to everything. This time Pokhara feels like coming home. I meet many old friends, we take a few days' rest, and so Giri can acclimatize.

Before going into the mountains, we pay a visit to the doctor's. This lovely fellow advises us not to go into the mountains. Not only do I have an infection of my bowels,

but once again an infection of the kidneys. This time we look for a room with a toilet and find shelter in the house of an old friend of mine. The toilet is certainly necessary because Giri likes not to be inferior to me, and immediately he gets diarrhoea.

There are clothes for Tikaram and Jire, a radio for Dharma and many more presents. It is lovely to see all those happy faces. This is a week of relaxing, of drinking lots of water, of enjoying ourselves and of getting used to each other again.

Knowing the clean air and the atmosphere in the mountains will nurse us, we decide to go on our trek after five days. We do not want a guide; we choose an alternative *Annapurna-hike* and plan lots of time to do it.

A jeep takes us to the starting point of the hike. It is a rough ride over bumpy roads and crossing the river. We climb for a few hours and eat dal-bhat in a place that is familiar to me. It is great to see the lovely people again, they will never forget you. We continue our climb to **Khare**, which lies at a height of sixteen hundred meters. It has been enough for today; we are not up to a lot yet. Next day we reach **Chandrakot**. Filled with devotion, while enjoying the lovely surroundings, we sit along the side of the road, watching the porters. We try to find out who has the same size of shoes as we, which is not so easy! Most Nepalese walk bare-footed. Their feet are wide and they look bigger, but size forty-one is still enormous for them.

When we think the size will fit, we hand over our shoes. I do not know who is enjoying this more, it is real fun. Underneath a tree where the porters stop for a break, we hand out T-shirts. They immediately throw away their old ones and beaming with joy they put on a new one. Once again people show me their open wounds and I play medicine woman.

The third day we stay at **Birethanti** near the *Khala River*. We enjoy the sun and the water. Although actually too much now, the next day we have a tough walk ahead. Once arrived in **Ghandrung**, we soon forget our suffering. We wash ourselves at a pump and the children pick lots of flowers for us. We feel like royals with all these lovely faces around.

Although it is springtime, it can be quite chilly at night. There are still some blooming rhododendrons around and I even find some lali-grass. We enjoy the breathtaking views, the marvellous enchanting views over the snow-covered mountaintops.

On the fifth day we take a break. We have no guide who has to be back at a certain time, so we are not in a hurry. The lodge in **Banthanthi** is dirty, dark, and cold. We do not take off our clothes, a phenomenon I have grown accustomed to by now. Again, the people are beautiful.

The journey to **Gorepani**, on a height of two thousand and nine hundred meters, is quite a quest. This is where I find my last familiar address. We are very welcome, yet it is extremely cold up here, Giri has high fever and I have diarrhoea, not comfortable when the nearest toilet is at a distance of five minutes!

Quickly I make a decision. Ill or not, downhill it will be much warmer. I hire a porter and while he is carrying our luggage, we try to stay upright. Giri is worse off than me; he misses the 'jungle immunity', which I have acquired by now. Somehow we are lucky, our path goes, more or less, downward.

Finally, we see our first sadhu. He is on his way back to **Muktinath**. We pass along beautiful rice fields, many small villages, beautiful people, and even more sadhu's. This last group is not satisfied with just a cigarette. The worse Giri's energy gets, the better mine runs. Our porter is a dear. As a reward, I give him my watch and he is over the moon with it.

We meet many dear people and we will find an excellent doctor in **Tatapani**. This place lies on a height of twelve hundred meters and is very suitable for people who suffer from bronchitis. During daytime it is warmer up here and the nights are more comfortable. It is a great place to recover. There are oranges growing on the trees, and hot water-springs. It is a holy place, so once again we meet many sadhu's. This is the moment to change our plans, we are not going to Muktinath, we do not want to have to *do* things anymore, and we will simply take the time to recover and to enjoy.

After five days we resume our trip, we have had a good rest and by now we take the alternative route. We travel along the river, there is certainly less climbing. The landscape is different, however still very enchanting. Even today there will be enough challenge. At a certain place the path has been washed away and for a frightful moment we hang against a hillside. Lucky me, two sadhu's see our tricky situation and they manage to pull us up to a safe spot. I have to recover from this adventure. Yet our rescuers are pleasant company and soon I feel relieved. It is hot during the day and there are only a few tea-stalls. That night we sleep with a family and this feels very good!

On the way to **Kushma** we see many walking 'bales of straw', under which there seem to be people. Full of pride the mothers show their children, how beautiful they are! And what about the smiling faces of the children, not even young adults, yet they carry those heavy loads on their backs.

This trek is not popular amongst the tourists. This means we encounter even more hospitality and many times we have the honour of sitting with the locals underneath a holy tamarind tree, the special meeting place in every village. I bandage wounds for the women and children and hand out cigarettes to the men. They are so pleased with this. The children prefer sweets and we take care of that. When we leave, all the villagers are waving to us.

The landscape changes continuously and remains fascinating. We walk to the next village. Life in the countryside is charming to look at, the women do the dishes with water and sand, the proven thing to scrub with, the men work on the land with their oxen and wooden ploughs. What is more delightful for a child than to play with his bare but in the mud? People bring in the harvest and the rice is sifted in a stable where the buffalo stays.

We drink chai in front of the hut of an old man. He wants a look through Giri's glasses. The glasses are prescribed so I can quite imagine the man is seeing nothing through them! Laughing I hand over my coloured and less strong ones. Amazed he looks at me, since quite a while he sees a clear world. Seeing such a joy helps you not to drag on about the loss of your sunglasses.

There are not many lodges up here. Usually we sleep with families, this time a noisy family. When I go to wash myself at the well, I come across an old friend. This sadhu is a very beautiful one.

It is becoming tropically warm. The bridge has collapsed and people carry each other on their shoulders to the other side. They just do it with such care and love!

The village barber does his work on the street. He is not only good at his job, but also very cheerful. Everywhere you see newborn life. Cacti grow in between all the green. We drink chai at the place of a neat lady and she bakes us a lovely omelette.

Giri gets addicted to playing carambole. It is a nice way of getting into contact with people on the street. Despite all the poverty, there is no begging in the mountains. Becoming friends with the women goes so naturally, without hesitating they hand over their children to me.

When we arrive at **Kushma** we are kindly greeted in the Friendly Hotel. Little Nao with his open smile makes sure we have everything we need. We remain there for a day. In the temple we meet our sadhu-friends. After the puja we cannot escape, we sit pleasantly in between the entire divine, and there is a lot of hash smoking. It gets to me more than I expected and I can barely remember how we got down the scary hill path that evening. For sure we were in a high state, and no doubt the gods took care of us. The next day our heads are clear enough to continue our trip. Giri is wearing the topi from Kushma, on his head. It makes him very popular, especially with the children. After a day full of fun and playfulness we sleep in the Lucky Hotel in **Karkeneta**. Once again this means the family sleeps outside to be able to give us their room.

The nineteenth day is the last day of our track. We are amazed by those people, carrying things on paths, hardly deserving that name. How pitiful our shoes are completely worn-out. The sun is warm and the river is dry. The mountains are coloured and dressed in beautiful red. Children are made flea-free and they seem to enjoy this loving care by their mothers. What a joyful and simple event is this mainly outdoors life! It takes us two hours on foot to **Naudanda**. Here we bump into the first truck. By now everything we do not need anymore is given away, including our walking shoes. Later we will discover this was not such a good idea, because there is quite a walk ahead of us. Before reaching Naudanda, we have to wrestle on sandals for a few hours, on the loose sandy paths and through the river. From there we take a bus to Pokhara. We have hardly any luggage left. Tired but very satisfied we drag ourselves to the lodge, the same one we left our souvenirs and tabla's in.

The next day we say goodbye to all our favourite places, including my meditation place near the temple at the lake. We say goodbye to our friends and once more we enjoy all the pleasures this place offers after the sober stay in the mountains. With an aching stomach, which does not necessarily have to do with saying goodbye, it could also be due to the excessive dal-bhat, we get aboard the night bus.

At five o'clock in the morning, we arrive at **Kathmandu**. Bai is happy to see us, although he has to get out of his bed for us. Alas, there is no room available and we will have to look for another lodge. After we find one, I take Giri to my favourite places **Bodnath** and **Pashupashunath** where we say goodbye to my friends. This last day in **Kathmandu** we get food poisoning and I can safely say I'm feeling quite bad when we get on the plane.

We make a stop in **Dacca**. We have to wait for quite a while, I fall asleep, and we miss the announcement for our departure. By the time we want to pass through customs, we are dragged into a car that takes us to the airport on shrieking tires. We are the cause of an hour delay. Feeling sick or not, I feel surely embarrassed!

Via Mumbai, Dubai and Athens we fly to Schiphol, where we arrive around ten o'clock the next morning.

After a period of seven months I am reunited with my sons, two big strong men with sturdy arms nearly squeeze me to death. Missed you? No, not really, yet it is very good to have you back home...

EPILOGUE

The all distracting feeling of homesickness for India, which came over me the moment I crossed the border with Nepal, returns to the full when I am back home. It completely tears me apart and stops me from functioning. Nothing interests me, there is just one longing: India. My back is completely stiff, and my hands cannot even reach further than my knees.

I want to know what is behind all this and decide to do a regression. I see myself in different lifetimes in India, Nepal and Tibet. Life in the ghettos, lives on the street, lives in higher classes, and in many religious lives. After this session there is more inner peace. I realize I had some level of consciousness which I must still have by now.

It is up to me to make this consciousness manifest again. This experience gave me something else as well: I get more understanding for people in certain situations. Knowing nothing horrific is strange to me, I do not feel I am more important than other people.

All I was is what I am at this moment. There is no past and no future, just the eternal now. It is nonsense to keep on talking about past lives and the higher consciousness during those times. Now it is the moment we have access to the highest level of consciousness.

The lesson in all of this is that I have to give my achievements and spiritual values shape again. The will to do so is becoming increasingly stronger and clearer. Maybe I understand better why for me there was never this one particular guru, although I very much longed for this. I have to travel another road, the road of the heart.

I sign in for a Reiki course, which becomes a remarkable experience. It frees me from my homesickness and after this weekend my hands can touch the floor again. It is exactly the energy I need now to be able to develop myself more. From this moment, I start releasing, and begin to focus more on Reiki, even though I also pick up my old job. My master initiation is an intense experience of coming home. I feel I want to free my energy and focus completely on this work, to give it shape as fully as possible. And so it will happen.

Now it is clear, the past and the present have everything to do with each other. I fully realize India was the cradle, the baptism of fire, and the womb from which the new could be born, the base on which the seed could continue to grow. My wandering was an initiation, which will determine my life and my being, each and every day.

The deep believing and trusting which started to bear fruit in India will make me fully shake on my foundations years later, when I am asked if I am willing to drop my beautiful Reiki path, my new priesthood in life, and to trust that finally not any form of structure can embrace the fullness of our heritage. Love is just love, which continually expresses itself in different forms.

There is no end to the depth we have to go to! After every trial and the approaching resurrection, faith and trust will become an even stronger fundament in the Here and the Now.

‘In the secret of death
lies the secret of life.’

- Kuki Gallman -

MEDITATION 1

LETTING GO IN FULL CONFIDENCE

You can record this meditation on a tape or ask someone to read it out aloud. If this is not possible then read the text a few times and try to follow it step by step. If you like, you can play some proper background music.

- Sit on a chair or on a cushion on the floor. Loosen your neck by turning it a few times so the energy can flow through. Close your eyes and connect yourself to your invisible roots or prolong the coccyx to the ground. Breathe a few times deeply in and out and imagine your pelvis is a scale in which you rest. Surrender yourself in full confidence to the rhythm of the earth. Know she will carry you. Let your breath regain its natural course, but stay aware it is concentrated in your hara, your ki-point, about two centimetres below your bellybutton. Feel the energy slowly rising from your pelvis into your body. Follow your breath as far as possible.
- Imagine there is a cup in front of your third chakra. It is a chalice. Make it as nice as you want and try to visualize every detail.
- On the inside of the cup, write down the names of all the people you are worried about or whom you feel emotionally connected to. Take all the time you need to do so.
- Bring the cup outwards through your third chakra and take it in both hands. Stand up and walk slowly to a place where there is water; a lake, a river or the sea. Choose whatever is best for you. Sit down, squatting at the water's edge and plunge the cup in the water. Let the water cleanse it, take the cup back and let go all of your emotions. Be left with a clean cup.
- Get up slowly. Walk to another place where there is fresh water: a lake, a waterfall or a well. Choose whatever feels right for you. Fill the cup to the brim with clear fresh water. Place the cup at your lips, and drink...
- Notice however much you drink, the cup remains full. Now put the cup away in your heart-chakra and know that it is always there. Whenever you feel thirsty, allow the cup to come out and drink...
- Slowly come back into your body and welcome this new day with a heart full of joy.

As soon as you feel you are spoiling your energy or using it the wrong way, take a moment for yourself, and allow the cup to come out. Drink as much as you need and know there is abundance. The source, our source, will never dry up.

PART TWO

WITH AN OPEN HEART

ADVENTURE

*'Do not believe what your eyes are telling you,
everything you see is limited...'*

- Jonathan Livingstone Seagull -

When I think of adventure, I immediately think of the image of the fool in the tarot cards. The fool is travelling the wide world with a stick on his neck. Inside the cloth you find all his possessions. He represents the number zero, the holy circle, the beginning without end. He is the totality, the symbol of the infinite, the symbol of the divine. You will see this image every day in India. It is the sadhu wandering the country. His only possession is some tableware, held in a cloth, beside the clothes he wears. The entire world is his home. In western society it is Parcival searching for the Holy Grail. They have in common that they are exploring their inner world, searching for the divine within. While trying to discover themselves, they are reuniting their spirit with their physical form, and become increasingly more spiritual. That on its own is an endless adventure.

In his book *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull*, Richard Bach describes affectingly how Jonathan refuses to accept the limitations of his earthly seagull-existence, and decides to take up every challenge to overcome the outer limits of being a seagull. During this process of falling and getting up again, he constantly discovers new possibilities. He teaches himself to fly increasingly higher and every day, through practicing and perseverance, he breaks through his limitations, and shifts his boundaries. This way he manages some 'stunt-flying' and ultimately he reaches unknown heights. He breaks through boundaries, which in the seagull-world are seen as impossible. You would think the other seagulls admire him or at least that he would inspire and stimulate them to take on the same challenge. This is not at all true. He comes across enormous resistance, which ultimately results in being cast out of his family; a painful and incomprehensible process. Undauntedly and faithful he travels his lonely path. Increasingly he conquers his divine heirloom and once more, he regains all the abilities he had realized within, during the past. Ultimately there is the reward from upstairs, this time in the shape of a 'wing', which he dares to accept by now. Before he got this far, he went through feelings of deep loneliness, fear and insecurity.

Jonathan is the ultimate example of a searcher for truth, a symbol for each human being who feels there must be more than the visible reality. Jonathan stands for each individual who realises his inner spirit and decides to go beyond the earthly limitations. Knowingly he has always been and will always be in whatever form, there is no beginning and no end, he is just a part of everything and everyone. Deep inside, he gets aware of his ever-burning, immortal, divine spark; aware that he is part of eternity.

Each of us is a part of this infinite wholeness. The moment the memory of this unity becomes alive, the longing wakes up to give shape to this unity. Then we start our inner search for the light within.

This road can be dark and lonely at times. This road will surely not always be easy, yet for the strong-minded among us, the real determined ones who have the courage to start anew each day, ultimately within the deepest of the deep there is this hand that reaches out, and you will hear a voice saying: 'Come, there is no need to do it all alone, I Am always here, I will carry you'. And all you have to do is to grab that hand.

From that moment on your journey will never be lonely, although some people continue to turn away from you, because you are too threatening for them.

In essence, we are all *one*. Today or tomorrow, after several years or in a next life, at a certain moment we feel encouraged to go on that journey. The tools we use will be different. Although the true tools are hidden within each of us, at first we will be brought into contact with these hidden aspects through outside mirrors, like workshops, books, music and meetings. These tools will encourage us to hit the road.

Then you become a second Jonathan; you begin the search within. You will discover a treasure of possibilities, pleasant ones and less pleasant ones.

Now you are a gardener working in his own garden. No doubt you will come across 'weeds'. The things you will have to get rid of, in order to enable the seeds to grow into sturdy plants. In the end, if you persist, they will bloom to the full.

Especially in the beginning, your fear will sometimes literally paralyse you, the fear of getting rid of the 'weeds' to the full, in order to let new and rare plants take root. However strange it may sound and although it is bothering you so much, it is old and secure, and even feels safe.

Unfortunately, this time you cannot push your fear aside, and you actually step into it to the full. Suddenly you have the courage to get rid of that first bit of weed to its roots. Let us say this piece of weed is connected with the emotion jealousy. You welcome this emotion and thank this piece of 'weed' for the fact that you needed it, yet you are determined to get rid of it completely. You do so with patience and love, and you do not condemn yourself if it shows up again, but you continue working on it. Then it becomes compost and you spread it over the fresh earth and see: the leaves are appearing already. You are focused to the full, you give it love and water, you watch the little plant becoming sturdier every day, and it grows into a beautiful strong plant. Full of expectation you wait, this time more patiently, to see what the flower will look like. Every time you go through this experience it will be a breathtaking adventure.

In the beginning of your journey, you will often feel lonely. You will feel misunderstood as though you are the only 'fool' on this planet. In the end, just like Jonathan, you will be rewarded for your perseverance.

Each time you have made something bloom, there will be another piece waiting to get rid of. No, that will not change, it will never stop, because every time you will open a door to a deeper layer, another universe. Yes, every time you will dive deeper into the unknown. You do not let yourself feel discouraged or get impatient, because in eternity there is no time. However, there is one difference with the first time. Although the challenges may turn out to be bigger, it will become easier, and the new will appear sooner. At the moment you drop your resistance and stop fighting against... Yes, what was it you were fighting against? If you stop fighting, this energy you needed first to prove yourself, and to bring down yourself and others, will become available for this adventure; the digging and the exploring of your own garden.

Full of desire you look at every new plant. How the birds are making their nests and the insects are searching for honey. You are full of awe for all the possibilities within you, all those things you never noticed, and when you no longer expect it, ultimately the reward will come. You feel *one* with All. You feel that you are a part of everything and everyone. In every person you start to see the reflection of your own divine spark. No longer will you feel lonely, because you know and experience you are guided out of the invisible world. This help was always there, yet now you feel it literally. You start to look around and recognize those souls who are busy on the same adventure, just like you; they are part of your new family. You feel intensely grateful, connected and happy.

You feel like Jonathan. You are flying straight towards true freedom...

I remember as if it was yesterday when this adventure consciously happened to me. It is a long time ago, after a period of serious illness. From that moment on, I decided to hand over my body no longer to 'experts'. This meant I did not want anyone cutting into my body, and on an alternative way I chose for an intense, deep process of *healing*. By the time I recovered, I felt like a newborn baby discovering the world. I saw the little miracles around; flowers opening in bloom, leaves on the trees, a calf playing in the meadow. I truly saw it, with inner eyes and that moment I knew with absolute security and a deep confidence that there truly is a God; a force, which takes perfectly care of absolutely everything.

I realized I had never really lived. I was programmed like a robot. Every minute was taken care of. It did not have much to do with living; it was nothing more than survival. Now I had really survived this, I felt life as a precious gift, a big adventure. I took it upon me to give it another shape.

It is a process I am manifesting through the years by falling down and getting up again; a process in which I often cast myself out of the group. It seemed the only way to be faithful to my inner truth. At first I often felt lonely and abandoned. I felt like a fool, the only Jonathan. Sometimes I met other fools. Yet after a while I had to disconnect again. Even they could not handle my 'curiosities'.

Suddenly there was this hand and a voice saying: 'Come, I am always here, I will carry you whenever needed'. I took that hand and knew that I could never be lonely in that same sense. Sometimes there are many people around me, many budding Jonathans, and suddenly it is quiet around and I continue my journey on my own yet never *alone*.

My pals, visible or not, are always with me.

Exercise 1. Learning to observe

This is an exercise learning to observe and to support your inner journey:

- Put on walking-shoes and go to the forest or another place in nature where you will not be disturbed. Walk in your usual way for ten minutes.
- Take a standstill, close your eyes and focus your attention on your feet. Ground yourself in the earth as though you are a sturdy plant or tree. Now begin walking consciously. Roll of your feet from heel to toe and focus your attention on your stomach and feet.
- You will be amazed at the result! You will discover a completely new world in and around you.
- Silently walk like this at least for half an hour and write down your experiences.
- Be determined to be no longer in a hurry and try to integrate this process in your daily duties. At first for half an hour, later you will do it automatically because it feels good.

The result is astounding. You will be doing as much as before in the same time but now you do it out of a feeling of inner peace. It is a great by-product to protect yourself this way from the chaos around when it is busy, for instance in the city.

WEEDS

'The second birth in the spirit means the death of the ego'.

Life is an experience. You can compare it to a farmer who takes care of his land. He farms the land so the soil can receive the seeds. In the old days he did this by hand, now he has modern machines, which enable him to cultivate more land in the same amount of time.

Then the moment arrives that the land is waiting for the seed, and the farmer starts to sow. The time of waiting, the time of contemplation has come, the seed needs time to germinate and to sprout. This takes a lot of strength, what a fight it is for the tender plant to bring its vulnerable leaves up above the earth. When the farmer is enthusiastic and connected to what he is doing, you will see him on his land every day. Through his care and his love, he nearly pulls out the plants with his eyes.

There they are; those first tender plants. What do you think? Can the farmer just sit down and relax while waiting for the harvest to ripen? No, first, he is dependent of the weather. When it is too dry, the plants will dry out. Nowadays that is not a problem with the modern sprinklers. Yet, he must constantly be alert and awake. It must not rain too hard, it must not be too wet because then the little plants will be flushed away. Another problem is the stubborn weed. It grows along with the crop, and flourishes as well as the plants do. The fight with the weeds begins and the more the farmer wins the fight, the more he will gain control over his land, and the plants will grow abundantly. Then he has to wait for the harvest.

Has all the danger gone? No, there is still a long way to go. A terrible disease can hit the harvest and destroy it just like that. There you are, tired and sad because of all the hard work and nothing remains then to start all over again. Do not forget you do not have to start like the first time. You have experienced failure and this has given you new tools and insight.

Not always will the harvest be destroyed, there will also be fertile years. With the modern sources available nowadays, the farmers will regularly have a good harvest.

This also applies to our personal 'fields'. We come to earth with our personal blueprint. You could say this is our assignment for what our soul has chosen to experience in this life and what challenges come along with this. You could naturally say that everything is predestined. In essence, every creation starts as a thought; a plan that will develop itself into a form and it will materialize step by step.

You could compare all this with building a house. First, there is only the thought, the building plan. Gradually this thought becomes effective and finally there is the result, the materialized house.

Every soul looks for an ideal situation to fulfil his/her blueprint, to express itself into a form, as an aspect of the divine, as being one of its capacities, being a cell in the organ that is a part of the body called *humanity*. In totality, all these different bodies form our visible creation. We need certain circumstances to fulfil what we came for. If I had felt safe and secure in every way within my family, there would have been no challenge to grow, to untie myself from the past, to find and to live my own Self. We live in a time in which many have chosen to get rid of old karma at a fast speed, to get ready for the radical changes that are happening in- and outside ourselves.

When Giri and I got this house, the garden was overgrown with a certain kind of weed, which prevented the other plants from becoming big and strong. To cleanse the garden,

I worked in it for days. After a week the job appeared to be done. However, the weed was coming back in the places where I had started. Luckily not in such a big amount as it did before. After a few weeks the weed seemed to be under control. I just had to remain watchful, not to let my attention slip. The garden bloomed and bloomed.

Then I was hospitalised and not able to work in the garden for a long time. What happened? Yes, I could start all over again. However, this was only partly true. Although the garden certainly needed working on, this specific weed had not returned. I had got rid of it by its roots. This new weed was from a different calibre. It was not threatening to the other plants. The more I encounter every challenge in my garden, the more my plants will strengthen and the more they will be able to manifest more clearly. You have to remain alert and awake, yet the result will be a joy to the eye.

Our life is a continuous cycle of starting all over again and again. We have to stay alert constantly and keep on watching. There is not a step we can leave out; everything must be manifested step by step, and firmly rooted. The more we go through this process, the more *tools* will be given to us. Yet it seems the weeds become increasingly obstinate, so we must dig even deeper. This is because we are stronger, we can take on more and we can explore more of our land.

Our all-embracing love for ourselves and others is our special tool to cultivate our field. With this precious gift, we can work on a deeper level. The more easily we apparently get rid of those first layers of weeds, the more achievements we get at our disposal, and the deeper we have to dig. The weeds become increasingly stronger and tougher. We become impatient, things are not going as fast as we would like.

We like to think that the more books we read and the more workshops we take, the faster we will grow. On the contrary, the result is the same as over-manuring. The plants will grow too fast, the roots are not strong enough, the stems become too long, too thin and too weak, and the plant will just die.

As we forget how important and fertile the waiting-period is, our impulse will die before something new has been achieved and we can start all over. Luckily, not quite from the start, we learned something, maybe just some patience and some extra consideration. Then slowly but surely we start to understand that there is no time in eternity. There is no need to hurry. There are a lot of things we cannot control. We just have to let go in full surrender until the right moment arrives.

Look at the oak tree. Feel the difference between a young and vulnerable small tree and that strong sturdy oak, the one you can cuddle up against, and that gives you such security and strength. If you should cuddle up against the young little tree, it would simply fall over!

Sooner or later we will realize that it does not matter whether we run fast or not. As we, after trying to find enlightenment outside so many times, finally get the courage to enter within, we will observe the most beautiful garden; the result of all our long-life achievements...

WITH AN OPEN HEART

'When we encounter each other with an open heart, words become superfluous'

I met you in a new-age centre where I was teaching bodywork and massage. You were a junky, and for the final part of the drugs-program, you lived in a 'rehabilitation home'. In order to make your comeback into society easier, you had to work outdoors for a few hours each week. You stood behind the bar when I entered the canteen. I placed Barend, my cuddly bear, which during those days always accompanied me, on a barstool. Although many adults think it is a bit childish, Barend's soft fur crosses bridges. People, who, due to previous experiences, are fearful of touching, can slowly overcome this fear through such a cuddly toy. A toy like this opens our sense of touch; it helps to release the pain of rejections, and opens up to a deep and loving contact. Barend feels safe, asks nothing and performs little miracles. Miraculous, the amount of sadness Barend has transformed by now.

It was your first day behind the bar and you were fascinated by what you saw. I ordered a cup of coffee and looked at you, curiously. You were small, with broad shoulders, sturdy arms, and a lot of tattoos. You looked at me open-minded, so typical you. Behind that stout appearance, I saw a person who was vulnerable and longing for a bit of love, understanding and affection. I liked you from that first moment. There was something open-minded, something un-spoilt in you. We had a talk, and from that moment on I started looking forward to seeing you. You had something refreshing and you were not caught up in certain structures or ideas. One morning I was at the centre and heard they had kicked you out of the program, because you did not obey the rules of behaviour. Not yet ready to make it on your own, afraid to come in contact with old friends and to fall back into old patterns, you were looking for a safe haven. I did not have to think twice. I offered you shelter in my house, until you were strong enough to take the next step yourself. You came and you got our attic-room. I lived together with Giri and although our place was not big, it was no problem to share it with you. Although you did take up your own space, you never took up any of ours. We agreed on some jobs to be done, because boredom is a problem for addicts. You did each job with love and dedication.

You honoured me more than I realized and made this obvious in many ways. You found it difficult when I had to go on a ten days' course. When I returned you had not only decorated the room, you had set the table with all kinds of nice things to eat and to look at. Among these things was a beautiful Buddha you had bought on a second-hand market. Full of expectation you looked at me, I just had to praise you. You had a boundless need for appreciation, which of course you received; I fully enjoyed this loving pampering.

The moment arrived to face life again and you went looking for a room. We helped to decorate and you even found a little job. Somehow the loneliness was too hard for you. The next phone-call came after you had relapsed into you old addiction. You had been caught stealing and once again you were in jail for almost six weeks. This was difficult to accept, even for me. When you were released they asked us if you could come back. I realized this was not a solution. After the protection and warmth you had received from us, the step back into society was even bigger than before. If we repeated this, it would only get worse.

I let you go, with pain in my heart. I had to accept that I was not able to solve all the problems in the world. The only thing we heard from you, was that you had found a small job again. Then you disappeared out of our lives. I hope you are doing well, I hope you have been able to transform the longing for drugs, which is really a longing for unity within yourself, unity with God, into some kind of fruitful expression. You were beautiful, spiritual and very sensitive. Too sensitive for this cruel world, where there seems to be no place for people like you. You deserve to find tranquillity and peace. You are worth it.

Years later

One of my former 'Reiki children' enthusiastically organizes a lecture in the south of our country. Although there are just a few people attending, I know this must have a reason so something special can unfold itself...

A man knocks at our door. According to him there is a young man walking in front of the building, he wants to present a bunch of flowers to a special lady. A few moments' later Giri returns with a tramp, dirty and not even shaven. I immediately recognize you, dear Ferdie, and wrap my arms around you to cuddle you. A broad, teeth-less grin is my reward! I notice that you stink, and not just a little bit. Yet at the same time you are still that same beautiful soul you were when I met you, long ago. You tell me about street-life where you earn some money by playing the guitar. Unfortunately your guitar and identity card have been stolen. My first reaction, how naturally, is to give you money for a new card. Something inside me stops me, we just sit cosily together and I read out your story. You like it; you had already read the book! At that specific time, I had to conclude with pain in my heart that I was not able to save the whole world...

This time, with a heart full of love, I look at you differently. I know it is good as it is. No longer do I feel the need to save or to change the world. I know by experience that this world is perfect. My way of looking at things has developed somewhat! I do not even want to change your situation. This, dear Ferdie, is you and this is probably what your soul has chosen to experience. Consciously or unconsciously, you wish to learn something. When you have learnt this lesson, no doubt you will drop this kind of life in order to experience new things...

Later on, when we walk back to the car, there is a tramp in front of us. He gives himself a shot for the night. 'Goodbye dear Ferdie, thank you for the beautiful roses, and take care of yourself!' 'Goodbye dear Yasmin, I certainly will!'

We arrive home in the middle of the night. My whole body is itching. I take a shower and scrub myself from top to toe. I immediately put my clothes in the washing machine. Then, with an inner feeling of satisfaction, I get into bed and crawl deep underneath my woollen quilt. Although it is winter and I know that Ferdie is asleep somewhere in a porch, I feel happy. Being connected to All That Is, I have freed myself from any sense of guilt. That, dear Ferdie, is your priceless gift to me!

Addictions

People with extreme addictions (we all have addictions to some degree) usually have a strong influence in their horoscope from Pisces, Neptune or the twelfth house. They are very sensitive and usually have paranormal gifts, yet do not know how to deal with them. There is a deep, subconscious longing to connect with the divine, to rise above boundaries. Drugs offer an expanding sensation, the feeling of being able to cope with

the whole world. They take you out of your earthly limitations and the moment you are stoned all restrictions disappear.

Soft drugs are not addictive and sensibly used they will not harm your health. It does not even make you aggressive, something that can easily happen with, for instance, alcohol. The risk is that it is a stepping-stone towards hard drugs and once you are addicted to those, it is difficult to reverse the process. Trading in drugs is illegal, the prices become very high and the stuff is cut up. This last is a real threat to your health. Stealing is the automatic result to get the money to buy the stuff.

Once I was giving body-therapy, I demonstrated a massage on an addicted girl. It scared me how open her crown-chakra was. This immediately made her problem clear to me. No wonder she was not connected to the earth. Being with feet on the floor would mean she would experience life with all its limitations and she did not want this. She subconsciously knew where she originated from and really did not want to be here. This is a problem you regularly encounter by young people.

I taught her how to close her crown-chakra and how to protect herself and I literally advised her to wear something on her head. It worked!

Alcohol gives a feeling of being free from all limitations and you can encounter everything without shame, and especially without fear. Suddenly you dare to say things you would normally never say, you take steps you normally would not take, because thinking about these things paralyses you with fear. Youngsters, who are too young to go to a pub, sniff glue and other cheap things, which ruin their health. These are all possibilities to flee from a world, which is felt as being hard and unfair.

Alcohol has the nasty side effect that it can make someone aggressive. Think of all the football riots and the victims it makes in traffic. Having drinks is seen as a social and a companionable code. Most people do not think too hard of alcohol and many business-deals are arranged with a drink.

In my opinion, most jails and psychiatric institutions are full of people who are over-sensitive and cannot cope with life in our present society. They have, mostly unaware, a strong connection with the cosmic world, and disappear into oblivion. In our society, where everything is based on achievements and efficiency, there is little space for over-sensitive people. This is a shame, because they have some special qualities to offer. They are the rebels, the reformers of the entire world. They do not fit into society and as a result, they end up in psychiatry and jail sooner than those who are able to adjust. Let us not speak of the horrible effects the use of medication has on their sensibility!

Although I seldom watch television, I recently watched the news. They showed images of a state in the USA, which made use of old style punishments. The prisoners are put in chains and they have to work along the public roads, in order to be an awful example for other 'weak' persons, and to show the voters how seriously criminals are dealt with.

It shocked me. Once again I felt how polluting all this, so-called important news, is for my body and my energy system. No wonder I am avoiding these kinds of communication as much as possible.

Well, back to the images. We seem to think that black people represent evil. It was mainly blacks who were working this way. Forgive me; I felt moved by the openness and the beauty of these people. They looked into the camera open-minded and answered questions without shame. The guards, in this case the superior white race, armed with guns and pistols, showed so much aggression and hatred, that it made me feel cold. It was not difficult to see how they enjoyed their tasks. Once more, I wondered who were the real criminals!

I do not pretend to have a solution for these enormous problems: the addictions, the increasing violence, the aggression and the criminals. We are constantly trying to control the results and therefore we do not reach the actual cause. We try to change situations from the outside. In my opinion, there is only one way to change things; to turn inside and to get to the root of it. I think it is reasonable for each of us to see how much space we have for someone who is 'different' and who thinks dissimilar, how do we communicate and how do we deal with respect? Are we willing to open ourselves for the opinion of others? Are we prepared for an open communication, in which we set aside our prejudices? Prejudices have to do with fear. Fear to be like 'that'. Fear of being different and of not belonging to 'the group'. This is why we keep all these signals carefully outside. We forget it has everything to do with ourselves, with our own addictions, our own depressions.

I do not think you can solve violence by using violence. I also do not think that it works to raise big armies, and to increase the police force. However, what can we do? I try to see what I can change inside of myself, and as a result there is something changing in my surroundings. I certainly do not want to be dragged into fear, which pollutes more than any nuclear waste. I try to look at things with an open mind. Somehow I do not encounter aggression and violence very often. I have dealt with that quite well and, if possible, I try to avoid the opportunities which will cause this.

As regards to addictions, believe me, I also have some. To stop smoking does not mean that we are no longer addicted. As long as we are attached to cigarettes, sex, alcohol, food or whatever, we are addicted. The mirrors on the outside show us our obsessions and give us the possibility to either cherish them or to let them go.

To my idea, it is not of any use to forbid things, as some spiritual trends like to do. On the contrary, prohibiting smoking, alcohol, drugs, sex and eating meat does not mean you are free from your addiction. Everything you suppress will ultimately revenge itself, and your addictions will appear to the full, in whatever way.

The more you start living consciously, the more things will change without forcing. You will increasingly come into harmony with the needs of your physical body. After having been a vegetarian for years, whenever my body asks for it, I now and then eat some fish. To my opinion there is nothing wrong with eating meat and fish, as long as you do so with respect and are fully aware of the way we treat our animals. Be consciously aware of what you eat and know where the food comes from.

Do not punish yourself for things you still need. You are a human being and there is nothing against enjoying things nature offers you. Make sure they do not control you, stay responsible of your addictions, then you do not have to get worried. When you smoke, try to do this as consciously as possible and enjoy every cigarette. When you try to quit smoking out of willpower you will not succeed. Smoking will let go off you, if you no longer need it. Until then, just enjoy it! Take responsibility for the fact that you smoke and do not blame the cigarette manufacturers!

Do not let yourself be fooled by all those people who find it necessary to judge. By the way, the judging one is usually you. There will always be people who like to project their displeasure onto others. You can choose not to join their game anymore!

Exercise 2. Spoiling yourself

When you have difficulty accepting warmth and intimacy, it often has to do with the past. Go to a shop and buy yourself a lovely cuddly toy. Be sure it is really soft. If you think others might find this strange, it is just your thinking.

Do not worry about what others think of you; there will always be people who enjoy criticizing others. Feel empathy for them, no doubt they lacked a lot of love too, yet do not play along in their game! Your inner child feels safe and secure if you take its wishes seriously. Believe me; you are never too old to play. In fact, a living and loving person is always in contact with his or her inner child.

Treat yourself to something you would easily buy for others, a beautiful rose, or some lovely bath-oil. In short, ask you inner child what he or she needs at this moment.

LOVING PRESENCE

'A bird will throw her youngsters out of the nest, when they are big enough to learn to fly. She only allows them to return to the nest, the moment they are capable of flying independently'

- Ramala -

Loving parents give their children space to discover their own nature. The more parents have realized their own nature, the more space they have, and they will be careful to make their children not too dependent. They know children are only lent to them, in order to guide them for a while along their path. We teach, learn and grow from each other. You may teach your children how to fly, but when the moment comes they are ready for it, you have to let them go. They need to fly away to learn their limits, to make mistakes, to get hurt once a while and to discover their own world.

When we see our children as divine temples, we will give them the necessary treasures to take along on their pathway to independence.

No doubt the time will come that our children get independent. How well we are prepared for this, cutting the threads, which connect parents and children, is often a painful process on both sides. If the parents have created the necessary space within, often the children are fearful to leave the nest. Or the other way around.

For every incarnated soul it is a shocking experience and as difficult to accept as the process of dying at the end of the physical life. Many children feel misunderstood, lonely and abandoned. Deep within, there is the memory of perfection, a memory of their origin; the essence of their true being. Can we, as parents, protect our children against this?

No, we cannot. Although we may have worked hard, we will never fully understand the lessons our children have chosen. We love them and will create a climate of space, according to the level to which we have achieved these ourselves. Even then, each soul will have to go through resistance and this never happens without pain.

The more we accept our own challenges, the more we encourage our children to grow, to fall, to get up and to start all over each time. It is an infinite process.

Raising children asks an attitude of loving presence, of being constantly alert not to fall into each other's pitfalls. The ultimate deed of love, also toward our children, is not trying to claim one another. Do not try to solve their problems constantly. The more mature they get, the more responsibility they must bear, to become strong adults.

Is this not the same in every relation? The moment one of the partners has lost his identity, we become an extension of each other and no doubt one of them is pulling the load. Such a relationship can be satisfying, but is not nurturing for both partners. It is time to let go in love. Give each other the necessary space to go on; either in a new commitment or separated. We must renew our wedding vows every day!

The same processes are found in relationships between masters and students, between guru's and disciples. A good teacher will throw his pupil out of the nest when the moment is ready to fly. A process most students do not appreciate. In order to practice all the things we have learnt, we have to create a certain distance. Everyone, sooner or later, must be thrown back upon themselves.

Only in the emptiness and the silence can you find your true nature. The teacher is a tool and not the goal. The goal of all of this is to become your own master, to meet and

to live your own divinity. At that moment you no longer need a master in the material form. You have become a mirror in which others can reflect themselves. This is usually the moment you can return to your nest. You are at the stage you can share your things out of equality. Before you reach this point, you have gone through many ego-trips...

COMMUNICATION

'Try to see in every encounter the divine spark behind the outer appearances, and listen with an open heart to the hidden message the other reveals to you'.

In our house you will find no means of communication like a television or a newspaper. Last week in a teahouse I read an article about three Dutch women who had been brutally raped and abused in Turkey. It touched me deeply. Maybe rape is the affair I feel most aversion to, you cannot be touched with less respect in what is most vulnerable to you, your womanhood. One of the victims had not survived. I feel compassion for the women, who have to find their way in this hard world, being so maimed. Although I know everything has its reason, sometimes I have difficulty to understand all of this.

I also feel compassion for the culprits and, in this case, for the Turkish people. People whom Giri and I got to know as the most hospitable people on earth. It was a big joy to be their guests, and to let us be showered by their friendly hospitality, the delicious food and the unexpected trips. They eagerly wanted to show us the beauty of their country.

I feel compassion. No doubt we will use this incident to discriminate. This is something Turkey cannot afford, who can? I choose to feel compassion, instead of hate. Why for God's sake people do things like that, and what an awful punishment awaits the culprits! What a humiliation and misunderstanding will come across their families. All will be doomed lifelong, because of us human judges who, instead of looking into our own mirror, like to judge others. In the end it will lead to more hatred...

Who are we to think we can judge others? He, who is without sin, let him cast the first stone...

Of course, we live in a materialistic world. We must intervene in such situations. Since we have such a lot of repressed aggression inside, it is difficult to find the right view to give others their lawful punishment without judging. A 'punishment' that gives possibilities to learn and to grow from our mistakes, so the culprits will be able to return into society as mature citizens.

The more we purify ourselves, the more we understand that there is a divine essence in every human being. Even the greatest crime will not cause us to be doomed forever. On the contrary, the most divine beings were once the biggest sinners. From this achieved insight, let us start to send love, instead of hatred. It is probably the most effective way of resisting criminals.

Let us open up ourselves to a healthy communication, with respect for all the diversity in ourselves and in others. Other cultures bring along different problems, yet also different values. Values, which may not always be ours, but at least we should try to understand them. Mutual understanding and respect will lead to flexibility and versatility in our being and in our society. This results in more colours and even in more joy.

Misuse of power

Why do we constantly try to force our will upon others, in personal relations as well as in political affairs? It has to do with fear and uncertainty, with lack of understanding and with our way of communication. Instead of encountering others in an open way, we immediately try to convince them we are right. This is how our governors are doing it and this is how we do it. Look at how we communicate in our relations. You will be astonished of the power-games and the oppression. Behind all of this is an enormous fear of losing control over the situation and other people. At the end it is the fear to face our own fear.

To avoid this feeling we try to be superior. Our partner is the one who has to change, and we accuse each other of everything possible. I too made myself guilty of this, and once in a while it still happens. I am by no means a saint! By now I realize sooner what is going on and usually I am able to laugh heartily at my own arrogance. I am even able to say: sorry, this has nothing to do with you.

Personal relationships

Let us have a look how we communicate with each other. Most wars are fought in personal relations, because in these interactions we mirror ourselves, more clearly than anywhere else. In addition we feel safe enough to encounter the confrontation, so a lot of aggression we bring upon somewhere else, is worked off in our personal relationships!

This game starts when we fall in love. Apparently we fall in love with that particular person, because he or she looks pretty, is strong or vulnerable, in short, all the aspects we think highly of. This is not all, this person has at least one quality we admire and which we would like to develop ourselves. The fact that we are able to see this quality means this is a hidden quality of us.

Let's say we fall in love with someone who is a natural leader. As long our partner has this quality stronger than we do, this will not cause a problem within our relation. The moment arrives that we like to explore our own leadership. We think we have been followers for too long. This is when the power-game starts. What we first admired now calls for resistance. We get annoyed and start to blame each other. Well, that is how it usually happens when we are not conscious of our attitude.

Communication can be different when we have enough self-confidence. The purpose of a good relationship is the willingness to encounter each other in a loving way, in order to learn and to grow. No longer do we drive ourselves crazy by all the things we think we should do, and we claim a certain evening, without allowing anyone else to disturb us. No television, no work, no telephone, no clock, no other appointments. We give each other space to share in whatever form, and we are willing to listen and to support each other in love. That is what I call communication from the heart. Suddenly we understand each other completely.

It is good to ask for support during your growing-process; your road to master ship.

When we, as a result of this openness and the process of mirroring, have given birth to the quality of leadership inside, we experience a period of peace and harmony within our relationship. No doubt there is something else waiting to be worked on. It keeps life exciting and it makes us grow.

Counselling is a good way of learning to listen with an open heart. I use this method when the groups are too big and personal feedback would take too much time. I can see how difficult it is to listen, and also how uncertain people become when they receive full attention.

Body language is the most important way of communication. If you are able to read the body a bit, you can see if words and feelings are corresponding. Regularly they are not in balance. People, walking the spiritual path, think they must be love. Often they confuse this with tolerating everything.

Although in essence we are divine perfection, sometimes our behaviour is not desirable. When a person's actions do not reflect his essence, we just can accept his being, without tolerating his deeds. Deprived of rejection, you can be a loving mirror without giving other the feeling of being attacked.

Positive criticism is a loving support; you only give to people you find be worthwhile. Would you otherwise go through so much trouble? It helps both of you to grow!

Be honest when you want a relationship and dare to confront yourself with your own fears. Look at yourself, lovingly and honestly, but not ruthless. Sometimes I see people hugging during a conflict. First of all you must clear things up. First you must encounter the confrontation, and then there is space for a well-meant hug.

Communication offers infinite possibilities, but can be destructive too. If we encounter the other with an open heart, without prejudice, this no doubt will contribute to mutual understanding and inner enrichment. When we give the right example, no doubt the moment will arrive we develop new ways of communication on all levels. No longer do we have to oppress other cultures out of fear they will trample us, literally or economically. Each person, every culture, each country offers a contribution to a wider vision. We will have a more complete vision of entire humanity. No longer are we citizens of the Netherlands; we have become citizens of the world...

No doubt this understanding and this new way of communication will lead to more space for every individual in our society, whether white, black, handicapped, fat, thin, old, young, mad or normal....

Communication with God

When I speak about communication, I cannot skip the communication with God. I am fully conscious of the fact that on my own I am absolutely nothing. The cosmic world is supporting me in every way. Since I have fought my battle with God, I use His name to represent the connection with my true Self. I have no need to call this energy differently. Yet you can call it anything you like.

Realize that naming what cannot be named in itself is a restriction! Anyhow, in the physical form we need to name things.

It is lovely to thank God for the past day and to welcome Him in the morning into my life with the intention of making this day a joyful one, despite what happened yesterday or maybe even last night.

This way of communication is what I would call a *prayer*. For many, prayer is a great way of communication; especially if you let the words rise from your heart spontaneously. God does not like fixed structures and prayers: it is the intention that counts for Him.

If I am doubtful about anything, I go to the stillness within, the place in the middle of my heart-chakra, where there is always peace and quietness, even in times of chaos. The answers are bubbling up increasingly faster.

Meditation is a nice way of connecting ourselves to our divine essence. Choose a place where you feel comfortable and where you can let the emptiness remain empty. It is not always easy being quiet. When unrest and things show up, you feel anything but pleased! If you continue to breathe peacefully from your hara, and welcome everything without judgment, in the end you will arrive at the point where thinking and feeling fall together, and there is peace and quietness.

There are many ways of meditation. Choose the one that fits you best. Zen-meditation helps you to be present in the here and now, and to make an earthly connection, you need to be grounded to grow in spirituality.

You can also choose the heart as your centre-point, as the connection between heaven and earth. You imagine your heart is the sun, expanding with each breath.

When meditation makes you flee from things, then it would be better to have a look at what you are doing. Ask yourself if the form you chose is nurturing for you.

Nature and communication

There are many ways to connect with the divine or with your true Self. Being in nature is a great way of communication, and suitable for those who have difficulties in sitting still for a long period. Walk consciously and let yourself be touched by the trees, the flowers, the butterflies, the birds and the sky. They all cleanse your heart-chakra and take you immediately to the place within where you can be at home completely. Your energy field is cleansed and you reload your battery.

Exercise 3. Counselling

- Sit opposite each other and make yourself comfortable. Choose a subject. Take ten to fifteen minutes each. The one who is listening is the timekeeper. As your partner has one minute left, give him/her a sign. Be consequent with time! Time is time!
- It is important to speak in the 'I' form. You will immediately notice the difference, you directly experience your feelings and will go beyond your emotions, so you can drop them. This is in contrast with our experiences as we do the exercise in the 'we' form. Feel the difference! When time is finished, change the roles.
- At the end of this exercise, do not make the mistake of keeping on thinking about it. Do something non-verbal afterward. This can be something nice, or you can give each other a treatment or a massage. Do something both of you enjoy. Have fun!

FREEDOM IN RELATIONSHIPS

An orator spoke to him: speak to us about freedom. He said: 'You can only be free, when even the longing for freedom becomes a harness, and when you no longer speak of freedom as a goal or as a fulfilment.'

- Kahlil Gibran -

The moment Christ merged with the person Jesus; he was completely free from earthly limitations. This happened during the baptism by John, in the river Jordan. Until that day, his life had been a struggle to be compared with those of every human being who travel the road of enlightenment. Although he already possessed magic powers at birth, it was an intense struggle to learn to handle these powers.

The moment of his baptism, spirit entered the physical form, the power of heaven connected to the power of earth. In doing so, Jesus realized a gigantic mission, that moment he freed us from our 'sins'. Christ gave us the ability to realize the Christ-consciousness within by letting go our identification with the material, and remembering our essence. This made it possible to start the search for our rightful inheritance, the divine unity, out of which we all started and where we will ultimately return to.

For this reason Christ could not be crowned as a material king. His kingdom could not be of this earth because he alone held responsibility to the One, his father in heaven. The Christ did not die on the cross. Christ represents the soul in every human, and is connected to the immortal soul. It was the earthly vehicle, the person Jesus who died. During his resurrection he probably made use of a materialized body, making it able for his disciples to perceive him. A phenomenon great spirits still use today. The moment the fusion between spirit and soul takes place, the human is lifted above his attachment to matter. The fear of dying disappears and life is allowed to enter to the full. It is a challenge for a physical body to carry such powers and even the human Jesus regularly suffered after his realization.

Relationships and connections

The greatest challenges lie within our personal relations. We find it difficult to enter real interactions and we create increasingly more distance. Did we in earlier days have relationships with the vicar, the doctor and the grocery man, those times seems to be over now. Neighbourly help has been replaced by paid, impersonal instances, through which we can keep our privacy. There is hardly a 'good morning' on the streets anymore. We build increasingly higher walls to protect ourselves, and not to be touched too much by everything that hits us. Nobody cares what happens between the private walls. In short, we estrange increasingly more from our surroundings and ourselves. There is not much left of the relations we used to have with our healers, the shaman and later on our doctor. We are terrified of the infringement on our privacy. Although wholeness is something that in the end cannot be influenced, because each soul determinates this by itself, relationships as mirrors and support are of real importance.

Why are we so afraid to enter into a relationship? We are incredibly afraid to become dependent, and to lose our freedom. Yet entering a relationship is inevitable in order to grow internally. People around me are little mirrors in which I can reflect myself and through which I can grow, if I choose to. It is all by choice, I can always choose to go through life with closed eyes.

Fear of relationships is typical of westerners. We stick to all kinds of possessions. Attached as we are, we constantly have to experience the pain of loss: the loss of a partner through divorce, the loss of a parent, a child, the death of a dear friend. The loss of our house, our health, and so on.

When we are prepared to let go of our attachments, we can enter a relationship without fear. The more our consciousness grows, the more we reunite with everything and everyone around us. We start to feel we are all one. The connection is always there, whether we want to face this fact or not. This bond has nothing to do with demanding things or expectations. This bond is the ultimate form of love, and only exists in absolute freedom. As soon as there is some claiming, you are fearful of losing something. How for God's sake can you lose anything you never possessed?

People on the spiritual path like to boast that the only connection they search for is the connection with God. On the one hand they are right. On the other hand they forget that God is mirrored in every human being. Is there a better way to get to know God than to see the divine in all His appearances?

The more I let go of my fear and dare to connect myself, the more I unite myself with my divine origin. Then it does not matter whether you will be in my life tomorrow or not. If I am afraid of losing you, it is impossible to enjoy this moment. When I dare to encounter and to embrace your beauty, then this meeting will leave a lasting memory in my soul, and allow me to radiate even more love than before.

When I know that love crosses bridges, I do not have to be constantly in your presence. And in absolute freedom I can enjoy what is, and what always will be.

Life is simple. Go inside and discover your own centre. Let the light within grow into a powerful beam of light and you will be a light wherever you are and wherever you go. Together, out of complete freedom, we will enlighten the entire world.

Exercise 4. Experiencing your inner space

Relax and lie down or sit on the floor. Let your breathing take its course until you feel relaxed. Imagine that every time you breathe out, some of the tension flows out through your feet or, when lying down, let it leave your body through your back, into the ground.

- Imagine your image of freedom.
- Draw your attention to your fourth chakra and feel deeply what fear is blocking you of realizing that image.
- Try to feel how far you are willing to drop this fear. Breathe the fear out of your body, and let things happen.
- Focus your attention on you heart-centre and feel nothing but peace and quietness. There is no fear or limitation.
- Go back to your image of freedom and visualize it in all its perfection.
- Hand it over to the cosmos, in complete trust and let go of it, knowing that it is already manifesting itself within you.
- Repeat this exercise at the beginning of each day and step-by-step it will bring itself into reality.

OPENNESS

What else is life other but God's power in movement?

- Ramala -

I met you when I was recovering from a long illness. I decided to withdraw in a monastery. It seemed to be a fantastic place to reflect.

You were one of the guests. During the meal you glanced at me with eyes that said: what a divine mess, isn't it? Your appearance was that of a monk, bald with a round head. You radiated a natural openness, which immediately appealed to me. We became friends. God, we had some laughs together! Sometimes this felt a bit awkward in this place. You had a big mouth. People liked you or hated you. I belonged to the first group, the minority.

I did something I seldom do, I gave you my address. A few weeks later you stood on my doorstep. In a natural way you took possession of my house.

You were a tramp and literally did not have a thread on your body. You were the fool, the lunatic, and not interested in the opinions of the outer world. You had no possessions. Once in a while you went to visit your children and then I would, for instance, give you a pair of jeans. Surely you would meet some poor guy on the train, worse of than you were, and so you came back the way you went, wearing the same clothes.

You did not plan to court me, as though you felt I was not ready for that. You were simply my faithful companion, my buddy. Naturally you took on some jobs, like working in the garden. It seemed you became one with the earth. I intensely enjoyed the way you dedicated, connected and surrendered to all of this. Thanks to you I opened myself even more to the miracle called life.

You were an anthroposophist and for hours we could paint and philosophise together. All this you did in the same way, modest and pure. I still remember you sitting opposite me at the table. You were one with everything you did. This inspired me to open myself up to an unknown source of creativity.

One afternoon while I was resting, you got me out of bed and I had to sit on the back of your bike. It must have looked funny, you with your bald head, your short body and your fat legs. You cycled towards the meadow the way you worked in the garden and painted, just as intense. There we sat together, in the grass, arms wrapped around our knees, looking at a newborn calf, it was deeply touching...

You took upon the vegetarian cooking; the food was lovely and your care heart-warming. Once you had a look at my youth photos. You took them to my room to ask something about it. There were the wedding photographs from my stepfather and my mother. I reacted hysterically, raging I tore them out of the album, tore them up and burnt them. It was a deep ongoing trauma I had not yet dealt with. With you I could be myself completely. I could rage and cry; for you nothing was strange and you helped me in a fantastic way in letting go and forgiving.

A while after my birthday I opened my storage and discovered a considerable amount of liquor had disappeared. That moment I knew with surprising clearness that you were an alcoholic. Being a social worker I thought: how stupid, I should have recognized it, I had met one or two!

I did not feel angry, I was not even disappointed, it was just a fact. I talked about it. You said it was not that bad and we went on as we did before. One morning I came down and, without leaving a note, you were gone. You took my last money. The house felt strange and

empty without your cheerfulness and your humour.

A few weeks later I received a letter in which you wrote that you could not cope with life without me, you were planning to commit suicide. Until that moment, I never seriously realized you could be in love. Now you were making things difficult for me. I was still in the process of feeling responsible for others. I had done so my whole life and what else had I become a social worker for?

After fighting with myself, I changed my mind and went looking for you. Again you were in a monastery, a different one, because you had not paid for the last one. Although willing to look for a solution, I did not want you in my house anymore. We chose a shelter for the homeless. You had to make the phone call and you did. That same evening I took you there. It was painful to leave you there. Because of your warmth and your natural openness, you were soon the sunshine of that home, and you got in charge of the kitchen. Once in a while I visited you and was allowed to stay for dinner. I felt at home among 'the trash of our society'.

You did not stay there long either. You had to be free and roam, like the sadhu's in India. I lost contact for a while until you enthusiastically phoned me one day. You had some money and wanted to take me out for dinner in the most expensive restaurant in the village. First you emptied all the quarters-automats and filled my hands with plastic fumbles. Once again, I was thoroughly enjoying everything. You had a lot to say in the restaurant and you did not do it quietly. Modesty was not one of your strongest points. I felt the couple behind us getting quite annoyed, however you did not annoy me at all. While smoking a cigarette, you proclaimed loudly this was the perfect moment to call a cab. I lost it and I laughed my heart out; it was only ten minutes walking from my house!

When the lady behind us went to the toilet, the man could no longer control himself. He started scolding the 'scum living on social security'. I did not feel affected and neither did you; undisturbed you asked the waitress to phone a taxi. I must say, I respect the staff's self-control, they did not give in! You gave me an unforgettable afternoon. You left your mark with all you met, positive or negative. Your shameless openness immediately raised the 'worst' in everyone.

Quite some time later, you stood on my doorstep again. By now I was living together with my present partner. You stayed a couple of days. Apparently, you could not handle there was somebody else in my life. You left like you did before, early in the morning, without leaving a note. Only your footsteps in the snow made it clear this was not a dream.

You still have a warm spot in my heart. When you come into my thoughts, I know I have to look more clearly, and I have to allow myself to enjoy. Then you remind me I had momentarily forgotten to open up to all the beauty in and around me...

Exercise 5. Experiencing your openness

Look for a quiet place, outdoors or indoors and lie down or sit up straight. If the weather allows, you can sit down nicely on the ground somewhere in the grass. Close your eyes, feel your vertebrae in a straight line above each other, and imagine your coccyx prolonging itself a bit down into the earth. Allow the energy from mother earth to enter your spine through your coccyx, and to flow into your body, backwards and forwards, while filling every cell of your body with this earthly energy.

- When your breathing is nice and relaxed, focus your attention on your heart and imagine a rose. Enter this rose with attention and allow the leaves to open up, one by one. Go in the centre of the rose, feel the peace and quietness and stay there as long as you like.
- Allow plenty of time to return. Remain seated with half closed eyes and see the wonder of life within and around you.

WONDERING

'Think positive, speak positive, and live positive'.

- Zoreaster -

Because the owners were emigrating, we had to leave our temporary sweet cottage in Utrecht. We could not find another accommodation in our country. For that reason we sought refuge in a spiritual centre in the south of France. We get a tiny place at our disposal and Giri is giving a helpful hand with the building activities. I support the housekeeping. I try to do every job with love and attention, how futile or boring it may seem. This, by itself, is a nice meditation.

During the weekends we explore the Kathar area. The Kathar are a sect to whom I feel strongly connected. To me they were Christians preaching the true lessons of Christ in their purest form. They did so in complete simplicity and in connection with the ordinary people. This made them such a threat to the church that they had to hide for years. They were supported by the elite and withdrew in castles, of which the Montsegur is one of their last bastions. In the end they had to surrender and they were exterminated in great numbers. The parfaits, the priests, went to the stake singing.

To travel the road of priesthood, they lived in celibacy. They did not eat meat and went through impressive initiations which the Bethlehem-cave was a part of. When we went to visit this cave I was deeply touched and automatically followed the initiation path. Later, sitting in front of the cave, I felt moved by the appearance of Christ, which was manifested so clearly on the mountain-wall opposite of us. It was breathtaking and impressive! The parfaits were living witnesses of Christ. They served the ordinary people, and along with their spiritual wisdom they used simple methods of healing. If necessary, they initiated people on their deathbed in order to make the transition to the immaterial world as easy as possible. They did not raise churches and were opposed to outer appearances. In all simplicity, each of them carried out their duty.

During one of these free weekends we travel to **Albi**. Two and half-hours later, after a beautiful ride and a few interested stops along the impressive river the Tarn, we arrive in a luxurious teahouse in Albi. I am shocked when I see the price of a cup of coffee but well, today it's Sunday and literally, we are sitting here like God in France. Yet, when the coffee is being served my surprise begins. This is not ordinary coffee; this is dressed up coffee, served with love and attention....

I feel a strange sort of emotion.

We are sitting at the window and a beautiful scene on the pavement is captivating me. I am looking at a child of about three years old. It is not quite clear whether it is a boy or a girl, yet it is of no importance. Sitting with my chin supported in my hand, I observe this child. I am completely fascinated by its beauty. It is as though outside and inside become one. I am the child and the child becomes me. Completely natural, this little creature outside is not conscious of what is happening around him. Fully engaged in the here and the now, he is completely innocent and unspoiled. I am not capable of turning aside my glance, and I am ending up in some kind of a supernatural state.

I do not know how long it takes before the mother gets up and they disappear out of my view. Somewhere in the distance Giri is saying that he is going to collect our coats from the

car, because it appears to be cooler than we thought.

I am still not completely back on this planet. Somewhere in the background I hear Russian church-music, which immediately drags me into a higher atmosphere...

I feel satisfied, enlightened and perfect. I am completely present in the here and the now, and free from earthly limitations. I am totally connected to the infinite divine child inside of me.

UNIVERSAL LIFE ENERGY

Jesus sees and Jesus feels. Jesus feels the powers being released at a service, both from the Jews and from the surrounding pagans.

He senses the powers, during those days people liked to call them demons, which cling to certain places where people like to gather. He somehow physically feels the pain of the people around him.

- Jacob Slavenburg: 'Another testament' -

Energy is present in everything and everyone. Everything exists of energy. There is no dead material; all material has a soul. When we talk about energy in the form of electricity, you are able to make this visible. When we talk about universal or cosmic energy it remains difficult, because it usually is not tangible or perceptible. In the end it is!

Imagine entering a room. You feel at ease, neutral and sometimes you experience aversion, and you want to walk away. Why do you feel completely at ease in one situation and in another you just want to run away? It is the moment you experience this subtle energy and you have to react to it.

The road to consciousness makes you more sensitive and you begin to experience and perceive things you did not notice before. It is a process with less pleasant sides to it, you could feel uneasy before you learn how to handle this!

Your ethereal field is about ten centimetres away from your physical body. Your physical body exists of this layer. Therefore, to smooth your aura after an energy-treatment or massage is often experienced as a subtle, loving touch in the body.

The emotional centre is connected to the second chakra and is about seventy centimetres to a meter from your body. It is associated with your emotions, your joy, your need to create, and your sexuality. This is the area where you can feel other people's emotions, according to your increasing sensibility. At first, this can be confusing because you cannot understand why you suddenly experience such a change when someone gets near to you.

It is important to handle other people's space with respect; to encounter others with respect, in order not to roll over someone's borders like a boomerang. Every person has the right to his own space.

Now you can imagine what happens during a fight when we are too close to each other. You throw your anger into the other person's emotional field. This will cause such resistance that this person can do nothing but fight back, not at all understanding what is happening to him. Now you understand why the most loving people can turn into animals when they are in the middle of a war or in another violent situation. Violence calls for violence!

Your mental field is certainly bigger, and it is associated with your lower thinking, power and with fear. At a larger distance, you are aware of other people's fears. It is not a joke that I can sometimes smell them. Your influence on your surroundings is bigger than you are conscious of. Maybe old patterns and power games become clearer now. Maybe you felt imprisoned without being able to escape, and this is literally true. If you feel locked up again, take some distance. Preferably go outside into nature, emotions do not linger so long there. Feel what is yours and what belongs to the other. Increasingly you will develop the ability not to get involved in these kinds of games.

My sensibility has increased after I started walking the spiritual path. Being an intermediary is not only a great responsibility, it is also a challenge to the physical vehicle.

First it seems that matter and mind are pulled out of each other. It takes time and cleansing to integrate this process into the physical body. The material vibration constantly increases and matter is slower than mind. That is why many of us regularly have to withdraw in order to restore the balance, the renewed balance between giving and receiving. Even Christ regularly withdrew into the desert.

The above mentioned words by Jacob van Slavenburg are a revelation. Each of us has to live through this process in order to learn to recognize and to handle it. You cannot close yourself off to this, because then the mess cannot get out either. You can somehow protect yourself by clearing your own emotions, which increasingly makes you a little light in the darkness, and the darkness will lose his impact.

Several times I have been to places where the energy paralysed me completely. I got blocked and started to feel heavy and depressed. I did not understand why others were not affected by it, they seemed to feel quite pleasant there. Now I know your surroundings are mirroring your inner being. If you carry much weight within, you will perfectly feel at ease in surroundings where this emotion is present. Joy and lightness simply make you realize that you feel depressive.

Why for God's sake this sensibility? Really, it is quite logical. During your spiritual growth, more light descends within you and your vibration increases. Everything no longer resonating with this new vibration, everything standing between you and your highest good, will be cleansed. Increasingly more of your original being will enter into each cell of you, the process of enlightenment. Your physical body must adjust, must cleanse in order to vibrate on this raised vibration, and this results in pain and suffering. The process of growing consciously makes you perceive more. Usually it means your sensibility becomes stronger, and this can imply some kind of clairvoyance. You can experience pains and emotions of other people. If you want to be of any help to others, first learn to observe without judging. Do not take other people's pain upon yourself. That is suffering, and you do not help anyone with that, least of all yourself. The greatest lesson we have to learn is to transform this suffering into empathy, into being present without judging. No one knows the blueprint of anyone else. The process of spiritual growth can be compared to the process that takes place between teachers and students. Let us have a look at India. A guru has some followers, who come to the ashram, apparently just to be there. What exactly is happening? You could say that these gurus represent a big generator and his followers are small batteries. Being in the presence of such a guru, you reload your own battery and your battery, read aura, becomes bigger, stronger and more sensitive. You can become conscious of oppressed emotions and feelings. A guru could even transform certain processes for you, but he will never do so if this would intervene with your learning situation. A guru or teacher has come to earth, not to come to terms with himself, but like Jesus and Buddha, to support others on their way to enlightenment.

Before a guru or teacher has access to his totality, he first has to go through the process of matter again. The moment his spirit has fully entered matter, the reach of his aura is so great that people who are sensitive to it will experience it from miles away.

Years ago when I went to Findhorn, I experienced that certain places have a strong energy field. Findhorn is a spiritual community in the north of Scotland, where, during the fifties, the founders were living there on spiritual principles. They inspired this place with their positive deeds and thoughts, and in the end the cauliflower grew bigger than anywhere in the world, on soil that used to be infertile. Nowadays Findhorn functions as a centre where people from all over the world meet each other in order to grow mutually.

I have had similar experiences in India. Especially in Ganeshpuri, I noticed this creative energy far outside the ashram. Blissfulness and resistance took turns. The energy-power

in such places as well as in gurus, acts as a mirror. They make the dark inside visible immediately. That is why we sometimes get frightened by such an energy-manifestation and would like to run away from it.

Energy is just energy, it is neutral. Depending on the situation, it can have either a positive or a negative result. A few years ago, we had a small flat in a pauperised neighbourhood. I literally lived through things that had happened there once, and this was not pleasant at all. I even wanted to jump from my balcony. I felt completely imprisoned in the emotions from generations before. This awful experience demolished me within no time. It became understandable why people did not stay here for long and why there was such an amount of crime.

There is no such a thing as coincidence; we were not there by accident. We cleansed this place emotionally and energetically, until the 'demons' stayed outside and it was liveable for less sensitive people. Then we could leave, not earlier!

You can clean your living-place energetically, yet do not do such a thing for others unless they give permission. You do not have the right to take away other person's learning process. It is not by coincidence that these people live in such places. They need these experiences, until they identify with their own process. Naturally, they get the need to clean their inner house and the space around. Make sure the situation remains liveable for you!

Sometimes you find yourself in a situation, not concerning people, where your help is needed. One time in Jakarta we spent the night in a cheap and filthy hotel-room. The room was filled with fear and I immediately knew there were several lost souls inside. It was too late to find another room, so I decided not to be paralysed by it, a real challenge! Lying on my bed, I started sending light to these souls. I told them they were no longer in their body and ordained them towards the light. Giri dreamt about black cats jumping over his bed and disappearing through the door. In the morning it felt much more pleasant inside the room.

For people who die unexpectedly, death is a shocking experience. Their soul does not realize it is no longer in the body. Desperately, these souls try to contact those who are dear to them. They are wandering in the astral level, full of emotions, and must first get a clear view of their situation. Sometimes we can bring this clearness.

In these days, during which many souls die disorientated, this will become an important kind of work. The emotional or astral aura around the earth becomes intoxicated by wandering souls. This has its influence, especially on sensitive people. Do not let yourself be daunted or flooded by fear, be clear and send love and light.

Channelling can be a risky thing. Usually you will attract lower astral spirits. Their energy is not nourishing for your spiritual growth at all.

When the time is right your true Self will reveal itself in a way that is clear and manageable. Remain critical, only you are responsible for your growing process. Do not give your power away and know you are guided. Light, love or God will manifest itself in many different ways. Know that the more you grow, the more the spiritual world will let you go; you have to cope with your own responsibility, no less and no more.

The last initiation to reach complete unity is not received by human hands. It happens when our small I and our big I melt together, when our spirit completely descends into matter. This is the moment the Christ in us is born and we become a divine human...

Exercise 6. Learning to perceive the aura

- Stand opposite each other and about five meters away from your partner. Use your right hand as an antenna and feel the energy. Slowly walk towards your partner. When you encounter a layer of the aura, this will feel like resistance on your hand. You can also experience tingling or warmth.
- The first three layers are quite easy to feel. If you manage this, then try to feel all seven layers. Start from a distance of around ten meters.
- Feel the emotional layer, which is around seventy centimetres around the body. Try to feel the changes when you enter the emotional field of the other, and experience what it feels like when the other person enters your sensitive layer. Share your experiences. Now you will understand that it is important to treat each other's space with respect.

Exercise 7. Ritually cleaning a room

Take some dried sage and lavender. Sage is for cleansing and lavender has an initiating function and neutralizes the less pleasant smell of sage. Indians use a mixture of white sage and lemongrass. You can buy this in special shops. Also you can add branches of the thuja-tree, known as the tree of life, this reinforces strength. A mixture of dried sage and lavender however will do perfectly.

Mix this in a bowl and set fire to it. You do need some patience for this! When the herbs allow it use a feather, otherwise, although it is not the right way, blow softly to keep the smoke forming.

Take the bowl between your hands and cover your whole house. Treat all the outward openings, like doors and windows, with extra attention. You can place candles and incense in the corners of each room. This is a fantastic and effective way.

Make it a nice ritual, which you can start and end with a prayer, mantra or whatever is suitable for you.

- In some cultures, they first ask the earth permission before building a house. This is a great way and you probably have less risk building on earth radiation. Terrestrial radiation can be very disturbing in a house. Place a pyramid in the centre of the room.
- Consider this: ask permission before you chop down a tree. Do the same with flowers you want to pick. Show respect towards every living being.
- The burning of the essence of sage and lavender in an oil lamp is great to clean your aura and to reinforce it. They recommend it for people who work with energies.
- Always rinse your hands under cold water after you have given treatment. Throwing your hands down in order to cleanse them is polluting, according to the Maoris, because you throw your filth somewhere else! It is better to dedicate your energy, or have a bowl of water near you during a treatment.
- Never go to sleep without taking a shower. Imagine that everything that does not belong in your aura flows away through the sink.
- To my surprise, many people who are on the spiritual path are not conscious of the connection between spirituality and matter. Everything is energy and all matter has a soul. To handle energy with care means consciously handling all matter and all energy sources like water and electricity. Especially in a society where we have hardly a relationship with our energy sources, because they are so readily and naturally to hand.

ENERGY AND FOOD

And Jesus said to them:
*If you fast (just because it is in the law),
you will bring forth sins for yourself;
If you pray (just because that's the way it should be),
you will be condemned;
If you give alms (just because it is compulsory),
you will damage your soul.
If you go to a country
and travel through districts,
when they receive you:
eat what they offer you
and heal the ill amongst them.*

*What goes into your mouth will not make you impure,
yet what leaves your mouth – will make you impure.*

- Jacob Slavenburg, 'An other testament' -

Jesus warns us that when we deal with food too fanatically, we forget that our words and thoughts can be more impure than any food. However, due to the production-systems, our food is of poor quality and the stress we live under is an attack on our physical body. Ready-made meals, the microwave, refined products and junk food are bad to a healthy and conscious organism. Fresh food prepared and consumed with care and love will not harm us, it will give us all we need.

While showing his friends he can eat tainted food, Yogananda demonstrates you must not underestimate the power of thinking. Yogis get their prana, the ultimate life force, directly out of the cosmos, and instantly they transform their food.

Although I am mainly a vegetarian, I enjoy all lovingly prepared food and I give thanks for every meal. For me it is not natural that I have food in abundance, I know this does not apply to many people in the west.

In former days, we ate products grown by ourselves, and after winter came the forty-day long period of fasting. This period made us conscious of our immortality and it was a great preparation for our transformation, our birth into spirit. We left the time of introspection and dying behind and were reborn into the light of spring. We cleansed our cells from the clinkers of winter so they could bare this new energy. The spring-cleaning also belonged to this ritual!

During our wanderings, Giri and I not were always able to eat according to our own norms. Once again I felt the need to fasten during the forty days before Easter. Afterwards I felt reborn!

When we talk about pollution, we usually mean that which is visible. Of course, it is important to see how we can treat that energy in a different way. I hope you get aware of the effect of our emotions, words and thoughts on the energy field around the world and on our surroundings. I dare say our emotional and mental pollution influences our planet and her inhabitants even as much as whatever visible pollution.

Of course, you can wait for someone else to do something about it. Yet, your input is many times bigger than you think, so have a look at your own contribution. Work on accepting yourself and on transforming your emotions and your thoughts. The effect of this will be visible in your surroundings. People around you also have their own reach, and set the stone rolling.

Insight is the first step towards changing our environment.

Every day you will draw the energy into your aura, necessary for your learning process. That is your lot, not your destiny; it is what your soul has chosen to come to terms with during this incarnation. Your electrical-magnetical field attracts those things that resonate with your blueprint. The way you deal with your situation is the only important thing for your growth. Do you see yourself as a victim, thinking everything that happens is a coincidence, or are you the leader of the game, taking responsibility for every situation, even if it may seem very incomprehensible? Never focus on the darkness, but on the light. What is darkness other than the lack of light? Finally, the light will clear away all the darkness, nothing more and nothing less. The only thing you have to do is to let your light shine on every situation.

Plants and animals have their own energy fields. Trees are great transformers of polluted areas. They are transforming blocked energy, and reloading the aura. Every tree has its own specific energy. Strength comes with the oak. A beech will give you a feeling of clarity.

Although we do not realize this enough, we need the worlds of animals, plants and minerals to live and to survive. Especially in cities and in places where space is limited, there is an enormous pressure on the transforming capacity of nature. It is extremely necessary to give nature a hand by restoring our connection with nature.

Sometimes in the forest I feel nature's grief. Believe me, this is no nonsense! That is why shamanism is so popular. From the time they are born, Indians learn to communicate with plants and animals, which make them well attuned to the needs of mother Earth. They use nature-powers for their healing-work. There is no need to get back to those olden days, energetically we have a different vibration, and we are growing towards a new consciousness, a renewed earth. We are constantly evolving, and it is important to restore our relationship with nature.

We learn to use our sensibility for the greater good of All and we become tools in Gods hands. We become co-creators and lighten the task of our Creator instead of longing He would do everything for us! The benefit of communication with nature is that we learn to protect ourselves against influences from outside. The trees teach me when I have to withdraw my energy, and when I have to ground myself better.

That the life force can be unbelievably strong is noticeable in an acorn. Apparently simply lying on the ground, in spring it roots itself into the earth. The outside peel disappears, the fruit remains and it grows; first in the darkness, and then it finds its way back to the light...

Isn't it amazing to consider that in this tiny acorn, all of the potential of this huge oak is present? If you let this fully sink in, you can become nothing but still. Still in amazement of nature, the miracle of creation...

Exercise 8. Protecting yourself

Sometimes you find yourself in a situation in which your chakra's can be fully open, because you feel safe. Before you return to the other reality, you can do this exercise. This is also useful when you are increasingly sensitive and you go, for instance, into town. The more your heart chakra opens, the more your natural protection will grow. No doubt, the time will arrive when this protection becomes so strong that you will no longer need this exercise.

- Focus your attention on your crown, imagine your crown-chakra being a lotus flower, and slowly fold all the leaves until it is completely closed.
- Do the same with your third eye, your throat chakra, your heart chakra and do not forget your third chakra and your hara, because this is the place you lose your energy to others. Make sure you open your first or base chakra to the full.
- Imagine placing a bowl with indigo coloured liquid on your head and slowly tip it over, a layer of one-centimetre of indigo covers your whole body, from your crown until your feet.
- Place yourself within an aura of white light.

This exercise is for protection. You do not close yourself completely. This would not function because you would not be able to let things flow away anymore. After doing this exercise you will feel absolutely better. It also helps to withdraw your consciousness within yourself, within your hara, to walk and to *be* centred in this point. You will feel less vulnerable!

GRATITUDE

God is omnipresent. To experience the divine, there is no need to go to a church regularly. I recognize His face in all His creations, every minute of the day.

It is still almost dark when I get up. When I poke my head out of the window I see it is snowing. Wow! It is wet snow, yet everything gets dressed up in a virgin white blanket. After my morning meditation, I decide to throw around my programme. I go into the forest right now. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today!

What a great feeling, to place the first step into a fresh thin layer of snow. The whole forest exhales innocence, virgin innocence. I inhale purity into every cell of my body. What a privileged person am I, just to be able to be here!

It is slippery, especially on the un-trodden paths. It is usually like that; when you leave the straight path you have to be cautious and aware of unexpected happenings, nothing is sure when you leave the familiar paths.

I get close to the place where I normally meet my deer. This time they are not there. My first reaction is one of disappointment. Nonsense Yasmin, even without deer there is plenty to enjoy. What about all those fir trees, decorated in white coats on this Christmas Eve? It is magical; the whole forest is like a fairy tale. I continue my path through the ditch, it is slippery and wet. I go to the magical circle and greet the sun. Although it does not show itself, it is always there. That is one thing I know for sure, the sun is always there. I connect myself to the four wind-directions and their elements: earth, water, fire and air. I walk through light and darkness: the male broad-leaved trees and the female pine forest. At the end of the path I want to turn right, yet a strong impulse forces me to turn left. Then I can no longer hold it, I really have to go.... Wet snowflakes whirl onto my face, so I look for shelter. Tracing, I look into the pine forest, and there they are grazing, three deer. They look at me with their brown innocent eyes, and continue to graze or at least two of them, the third one is running off. I hold my breath. I have not seen them here before; I would not have discovered this if... I feel a deep gratitude. Surely I am a privileged person!

Yesterday a dear friend of mine phoned. She told me that a deer in Christianity stands for the universal Christ. I held my breath: of course, that is why with the Indians a deer stands for loving kindness, undauntedness and for an open heart.

Here I am, almost eye-to-eye with you, my dear deer. Grateful that I am here at this moment to enjoy your beauty, and open to the message you will give me.

Grateful that I am here, on this earth during these extraordinary times when old forms will disappear, so new forms can be born. The air vibrates of metamorphosis. We all know it, we all feel it, consciously or unconsciously. Confrontations in relationships and between people are increasing. The new millennium asks for a different energy, a new approach.

It is the female power that is commanding her place again, the goddess within can be replaced onto her pedestal and intuition will take up an equal place next to intelligence. For men as well as for women a touching and interesting process.

My cells are becoming increasingly subtle, more sensitive. It is a thrilling process for my body; the more subtle energy must literally be grounded. Where else can I do this better than in this ancient place?

The deer continue their way and I continue mine. Full of this love experience and intensely enjoying the purity and the clarity of the forest in her white coat, I walk towards my tree. After we have greeted each other I nestle myself against her trunk. I close my eyes and focus on her inner power. In my mind I go back to a nasty experience, which happened a few weeks ago. I was walking through the forest in a completely different state of consciousness, when suddenly I was very alert. I smelt danger and kept a watchful eye on the path. A man was approaching me whom I did not trust at all. Trying to let the nasty feeling not get a hold on me, I greeted him. Later I turned into a path and immediately got this same feeling, the urge to flee. No, fleeing would not help. No doubt he would be faster than me. I could not avoid this confrontation, and tried to remain peaceful and to radiate love. Why are there people, who want to oppress others, rape them or even murder them? No doubt they are lonely and feel disconnected from their source. Love is the only remedy. Although I cannot avoid a slight shiver, I look the man straight into his eyes, and greet him with a heart as open as possible.

Later on, I notice I lost part of my carelessness, I stay watchful. Although I do not wish to be determined by fear or limited by my surroundings, I want to take up my own space with love and respect, without challenging fate.

Last week, this time not alone, I encountered this same person and believe me, something in his energy seemed to have changed. There was more flow, more openness. Could this be the result of my loving attitude? I am at least willing to believe this!

Today, sitting with my back against the tree, I suddenly feel that I roamed the forest freely, like I used to do before. I feel even more protected by the unseen world. I still have my common sense, so it is okay to remain watchful, but still...

I hug my tree and walk on. Suddenly I sense the presence of my father. Although I was still a child when he was killed in an accident, this is the first time I experience his accompany. I clearly feel he is enjoying me, he winks at me and I sense our connection. I see him amongst his horses. He was a horse lover. I am sure he could communicate with them. He could be very clumsy with people but not with horses. Animals are faithful, they take you as you are, and they never judge, that is the difference. No doubt I have inherited a certain gift from you dear Dad, and I am happy with it. Simultaneously you let me know you found your way in the other realm and things are going well for you. What a great gift!

It is time to go home. I fancy a coffee and my feet have become cold in these boots. When I withdraw in my cosy little place it has stopped snowing and by the time I drink my coffee the snow has almost disappeared. The scene of this morning is still in my heart, in each cell of my body and that is something nobody can take away from me.

CHILD OF THE UNIVERSE

*There are many facts, yet only one truth.
The facts can be named, the truth cannot.*

- Inayat Khan -

I work barefooted in the garden and enjoy everything I touch. It is spring and each day shows something new. Suddenly there is the young blackbird in the jasmine bush. He looks helpless at me with his slanted little head. Quietly I start talking to him in my mind. Then he gets nervous, and he moves towards the next bush. Minutes have passed. Sparrows are courting and bees are searching for honey. The tea flower smells lovelier than ever.

I am a child of the universe and accept my divine origin and heirloom. I take full responsibility for my being on earth and for my divine spark. Limitations are challenges that I joyfully accept, in order to see how I can overcome them. Shifting borders brings me closer to my creator. In a previous incarnation I would already have gone back to the other realm, to let the processes of transmutation and transformation I went through these last few years take place in the unseen world. Since my soul knows the importance of these times, she chooses to go through this alchemistical process right now. The increasing vibration, involving all the pain, the suffering and death-experiences, has its cleansing effect on the central nervous system, so God can descend deeper into each cell of my body. It is the creation of the light body. By now it is possible to experience several incarnations in one lifetime. I feel that I am born for the third time, this time in spirit.

We are spiritual beings with a physical body. We experience this life to learn how to remove our limitations. We are going through an expanding consciousness, in which we leave the limits of the material dimension behind. We cross the borders of the next dimension. Manifesting the Christ within, we take a huge step forward, back to Unity.

I feel a deep joy and an intense gratitude for all the support I received from the cosmos during those years. Since I placed my Self in the hands of the Almighty, my life is escorted in a miraculous way. Each step to recovery is presented to me. I live by the grace of God. Joy is a result of the connection with the Source, my Source. I feel embraced with this intense feeling of unity and joy.

Limits no longer exist. Finally after much pain and desolation, I was cast out of the protective boundaries of my tribe, in order to experience the feeling of deep liberty and to discover that the world is my home. My family will change according to the way my consciousness expands! Time and space become increasingly more relative. Since we create illness and age by putting ourselves within time, I have replaced it in a way that my body constantly renews and rejuvenates. Immortality and eternal youth is a divine heirloom, and I claim it.

It is time to let go of these new achievements and to trust the power of the heart. Working with guides and other outside forces is past. The only thing that is important in these times is the connection to the 'I Am presence', our true Self, the activating of the Christ-consciousness within each of us. Christ is not only for the Christians, it is simply a consciousness which is becoming available to everyone. 'Let love speak for itself'.

The gate we are going through is a gate through which we have never gone before. Nobody

knows exactly what this process will look like, it remains a gamble. To me it is completely clear that ascension is a process that is happening inside my body, and not somewhere in a space shuttle. What you believe will surely manifest itself. We have the potential to make this a dramatic period. If we accept our divine essence, we are powerful enough to let this revolution happen in a loving and joyful way. Let us manifest this together.

Universal truth is never old-fashioned and is in essence pure simplicity! Universal truth originates from unity and not out of diversity. There are no privileged ones and no one is doomed. So, do not let anyone frighten you.

Keep working on your inner light, the Christ within. Make your inner sun so powerful that your light will radiate and transform your surroundings. We do not know how powerful we are, how far the reach of our radiation is. Our thoughts create our world, positive or negative.

There is nothing wrong with creation. Gods' creation is divine perfection. There is something wrong with the way, the material way in which we look at creation and deal with it. If we do not respect ourselves, respect our divinity, how can we see the divine in everything and everyone, how can we see unity behind all of this? That is simply not possible. Respect your own divinity and trust your own wisdom. Do not take over other people's beliefs without criticism. As long as it does not resonate in your heart, it is not your truth and you can easily let go of it. There is no master who would want to make his pupils dependent on him. On the contrary, every real master will let you discover the master within yourself.

Enjoy the lightness of your existence. Get rid of all the words like difficult, heavy and I cannot do that from your dictionary forever. Accept everything that crosses your path. The one cannot do without the other. Even the heaviest suffering will become bearable, when you connect to your inner Source. You are no longer a victim you have become a spectator.

We are the creators of our own lives.

FORGIVENESS

When you are able to forgive the past and are willing to drop your attachments to old pain, you are not only liberating yourself and others from ancient old patterns, you will become truly free.

I start the day with exercises and meditation and invariably the theme is forgiving: 'lovingly I forgive all negative experiences and resistance from the past and the present, I let go my fears, I am free and healthy'.

I forgive myself for all those times I was not positive or loving and I let go of it, without feeling guilty any longer. Today is a new day.

Why giving so much attention to this theme? I think complete forgiveness is necessary to free myself from all ballast from the past and the present. Although I have let go, and forgiven a lot of things, there are regularly small things in which it goes wrong again, so...

It is amazing how difficult it is for us to forgive. I wonder why? Why do we feel hurt so quickly? Ego, nothing but ego. What we are, our true essence, cannot be hurt. Yet we, our physical manifestation, is so sensitive, so afraid of being rejected, so afraid of getting hurt. That is one part. The other part is that we really like to cherish our anger and our resentment. We have a remarkable memory when it comes to the point, and remember faultlessly the pain the other person 'did to us'. That we ourselves are not completely without faults is something we would rather forget.

How strange this may sound, in the end I cannot hurt anyone in his or her essence. It is our earthbound personality, our ego that feels hurt.

Look for yourself

During a lecture I make a remark, and someone feels hurt. I ask the rest of the listeners if they also feel hurt. The answer is no. It is just the ego. Something within you has been hurt as a child. For instance: as a child you were abandoned by your mother and you did not process it. Your boyfriend wants to go to a party on his own, and you feel abandoned again. You get angry and sad. You consider rejection and feel resentment because he is not able to understand you. How for God's sake can he understand when he did not go through this experience himself? He is the mirror that brings you in contact with this hidden pain, in order to recognize it and let go of it.

Do not forget to forgive your mother. Believe me, she is unconscious of this, and in this sense she has nothing to do with this fact anymore. By forgiving her you have liberated yourself a bit more, because resentment keeps you captivated.

You sit opposite me and although you are not a youngster anymore, you are bubbling with energy. Colourful, you tell me the story of your cousin and his wife. That 'woman' has a job as a post-woman. She should be lucky to get such a job, she did not have much education, and she was too stupid... You are not aware of the fact you have touched a sore spot. How could you know? You are born purple. It has no use to proclaim that wisdom has nothing to do with this kind of knowledge. You would not understand, maybe later. I breathe deeply and let go of the old pain that arose subtly for a brief moment. This has nothing to do with me! I forgive you silently and am grateful you helped me to let go of another piece...

You and I do a drawing-exercise in complete silence. I draw a circle and each of us makes his own centre at her side of the circle. Yours is an open spiral. It is difficult to make a connection from my centre towards your spiral. I try to do it with tact and respect. To my amazement, as if you were mad, you bluntly go right through the middle

of the circle and without any respect you enter my centre. I am shocked. It feels as though someone has put a knife into my heart. I feel anger and sadness. I am completely open and not prepared to this. I breathe deeply and let go of my hurt feelings. I know you did not intend to hurt me.

Then I calmly share my feelings. It is not necessary; you already felt my pain in all your cells. You encountered resistance with this same pattern quite often in the past. This is a great exercise, now you know how to change it! After a good cry we start with a new piece of paper, new possibilities, and this time out of harmony, love and respect. A relaxed game of giving and receiving begins to unfold...

With your sensibility, you needed that protection in order not to be constantly hurt. Otherwise you simply could not have survived; you could never have done the work you did. It became clear to you what you evoked in others. After the initial shock and the letting go, forgiving follows and you can make a fresh new start. Literally, you peeled off a layer of your onion, of your ego; from now on you will encounter other people in a different way.

I feel good enough to close my retreat. I send out invitations for a Christmas celebration. There they are again, the few 'parasites', who do not want to understand. The first attempt is a two-paged letter. You write that phoning is too expensive. If it is possible to have herb-tea and sugar-free cakes and can we arrange transportation for you. Feeling angry I think: no way, you can arrange that yourself. I just do not phone! Stupid, I keep on thinking about it and regularly you take from my precious energy. I finally pick up the phone and tell you that I do not intend to play this game with you. If you want to be a victim, that is fine, but no longer with me. I do not tolerate this behaviour from a whopper like you. I hope you will awake at my last remark. I mean it, you are a whopper, yet your behaviour, bah, look at it! You and I, we can both learn from this. I feel relieved and clean. Next time I will phone immediately. I forgive you and thank you for the lesson.

The mail brings a letter from one of my advanced students. In the past she often used me to sharpen herself, yet I did not feel this personally. The letter starts with a lot of reproach. Then the tone changes and she takes up responsibility for her own process. Why did she send this letter? My first impulse is to send it back, including the lovely wrapper. Then I step into my old pitfall: sending it back would be painful for the sender. The next morning I put the letter into the envelope with a short note: 'No longer would I let myself be used as a trash-bin for other people's garbage, however nicely wrapped. My energy starts flowing again. I let this happen too often and that is patronising, it has nothing to do with love. As if I do not have feelings! This way the person involved could learn something from this and I was allowed to learn another lesson in forgiving. We grow constantly through loving confrontation!'

Forgiving. It becomes much easier the better I get to know myself. The more I know that in essence I am a sparkling light. Everything and everyone is connected to the same source of life. Out of this connection, it is much easier to look right through the outer form. Then I will understand that you only try to hurt me out of your own fear, but behind this fear is you, behind this behaviour is your impersonal true Self, your eternal source of light.

Exercise 9. Forgiveness

Sit or lie down in a relaxed way. Imagine that you are standing on a mountain with your face towards a gate. Have a close look at all the details of your gate. Now turn your back towards the gate. Have a look at the beautiful valley. You can see your past go by like in a film. You are a spectator, you forgive your past and you bless it in gratitude for all the lessons you were allowed to learn, to get to the point where you are now.

Then consciously turn your back on your past and in full awareness step through the gate to your renewed Self.

IMPROVE THE WORLD

*The Kingdom of God is behind the darkness of your closed eyes
and your inner peace opens the gate to it*

- Paramahansa Yagananda -

If you like to improve the world, start improving yourself. It is so simple and yet so difficult. It is much easier to wait for the changes outside of you. It is much easier to think that your little I is insignificant, and of no importance to all that happens in the world.

In fact, I always tell my students, there is only one thing to do, just work on you. I can hear you think: well that is easy and egoistic. The world is going to ruins and must be saved. If I do not do it, who will?

We are constantly using this slogan the other way around: *improve yourself and start with the outside world.*

We are standing at the barricades and demand equal rights for men and women. We fight for the preservation of the rain forests. We are on the breach for the whales. If necessary, we even do not avoid violence. Of course, you can say that we have won a few cases, or maybe even the war, but has something changed in the consciousness of humanity? That is the actual point...

I constantly keep on saying, feeling and working: improve the world and start with yourself. Knowing that we are a part of a big body called humanity, by now you and I surely know that it is of great importance to work on our own consciousness. By raising our consciousness, we improve the consciousness in the human-body. We have to drop the conviction that we are separate from others. Increasingly I experience that I am a true part of everything and everyone around me. I am part of the mineral-world, the plants and the animal-world, and not to forget the human world. By acknowledging the essence of the plant and attuning to it, again I learn to communicate with the plants. By bringing myself in harmony with the forest, the deer start to show up without any fear. I sense I am exchanging something with them, I feel I am communicating with them. It is an ability I have always had, we have always had, and this skill is manifesting again. How can I get to know the needs of the plants and the animals better, than through inner adjustment? If I want to change something in my outer world, this has to happen within my inner world first.

There is no real difference between you and me. Everything, including you and me originates from the one, ever present, infinite, eternal Source.

When you picture the divine or the universe as consciousness, light or energy, then you can also imagine this energy penetrating everything; yes everything is immersed with this energy. You see the different realms as independent bodies and you could imagine that we are all cells of this one realm, this big body, named *humanity*. Your own body consists of different cells which are connected to each other: so inside, so outside. The more you and I work on our consciousness, the more the world-consciousness will change. It is as simple as that.

A great teacher in the material form is capable of changing the consciousness of humanity. Look at Jesus, Buddha or in our times Sai Baba and many others.

I can hear you say: yes but... This is your ego, you can let go of that. You may now stand up for your own unique divine centre.

When you withdraw within and welcome yourself in all your different facets, your light as well as your dark side, then you are transforming the darkness. You are not destroying it, you are not denying it, no, you are reforming it to useful fertile compost, your compost for inner growth and development.

Light is always stronger than the darkness. Do not pay any attention to the dark, but focus on the light. The stronger your inner light begins to shine, the more it will radiate into your entire world and anyone who enters your aura will be touched by your light. This will be your contribution. This will be our contribution to a new world, to a new earth.

WISDOM, INSPIRATION AND SIMPLICITY

*No sooner will you be able to reject the physical world,
than the moment you master the material...*

I receive an invitation to come to St. Maarten. 'We know you are ill and need some care. You are welcome; we would love to take care of you and the sun and the sea will heal you. I am ready, ready for my mastership and I know with inner security that you are the one who has to initiate me. It was revealed to me during my meditation'!

Emotions come up and the tears flow. You, who had such a lot of resistance! It is true: the more resistance, the more power.

I take notice of all well-meant advice, but self-willed as I am, I decide I have to go anyway. It is time to terminate my work at the Antilles and although I still have to take care of myself, the sun and the sea would be great sources for my recovery.

We had a great time together, full of love, peace, harmony, sun, sea, warmth, and lots of inspiration, yoga, meditation and Reiki.

After spending three lovely weeks with you, I flew to Curacao to conclude things with my students. I stayed for ten days at a little fisher bay and went on with my health program. This time my own space was very important, so I did not sleep in the house of my Antillean sister. It was not at all an easy time on Curacao; there were quite some confrontations. All this had to do with letting go. Confrontations usually precede a period of changes, a period of growth. The willingness to encounter each other was strong and the completion was good. Healed and satisfied I left for Aruba.

Wisdom and simplicity

On Aruba my angels welcomed me. It was great to see each other again. A special surprise was waiting for me; I was going to meet you. The first time on this Island, I met your daughter: she became the bridge to this encounter. After working in the Netherlands for a while, she chooses to come back to Aruba to look after you during your last journey.

While asking about your condition, I had an inspiring thought: would it not be great to initiate you as a support on your way back to the light. Your daughter thought it was a good idea and you accepted this gift with open hands.

I still see myself entering your house. There you were, eighty-five years young and beautiful, I have seldom seen a person with such a radiation as you had. You were a beautiful coloured person with a bronze skin and extremely white curly hair. I loved you from the first moment I saw you and luckily for me this was mutual! It was as though I had always known you and on soul-level this was certainly true. We understood each other completely without words.

Your 'vehicle' was at the point to give up, your heart was having a difficult time and your body started to retain water. However, there was nothing wrong with your mind; it was as lively as it must have always been.

We talked about energy, I did not have to tell you anything, you already knew. You had the innocence, the purity, the simplicity and the mischief of a child. I asked you if you believed in the continuation of our existence. With radiating eyes you looked at me and said you had to believe in it since your wife suddenly appeared at your bedside, a year after she had passed away. You could feel her presence and her love.

The two of you must have been a lovely couple, an example of unselfishness and love, clearly visible in your beautiful daughter, whom I call my sister.

I could see you were still struggling with something. Although in every aspect you were ready to surrender to this dying process, something was holding you back. You were busy with a carpenter's assignment, which would not be ready in time and it was difficult for you not to keep your promises. While talking about it, you understood that some situations are out of control. In addition, you did not want to be a nuisance to your daughter, who had to combine her intense job with the care for you, so you felt it difficult to ask things. I put the two of you together and made sure you talked about your worries. She told you it would be easier if you clearly asked for things and accepted the help you needed. She was willing to look after you with all her love. At that moment you could surrender yourself and this was the last time I saw you dressed. Now you could give in to your physical needs, your body was tired and just wanted to lie down.

The first initiation was an emotional moment. Gratitude filled my being because God had allowed me to be in the presence of such a beauty. Afterwards we sat together at ease, we ate something and I left with the intention to return that same evening. The next day the other initiations took place. This made you even more beautiful. Sometimes we would sit on the porch for a while. I loved to touch you and to caress your arm, nothing else was necessary. There were only a few words said, yet your eyes were full of love.

When I said goodbye, you asked when I would return to Aruba. I said I did not know, if God were willing, it would certainly happen. You said you would love to see me again. I knew you understood we would not see each other again in the material world. I remained in your heart and you in mine. To express the connection between us, I gave you a special stone and asked you to carry it on you and you did so. Almost two months later, I had just returned from the deathbed of my brother Everhard, when your daughter phoned me. She told me you had passed away in a beautiful way. How else could it be? As far as possible, the process between the two of you had even intensified. You found peace within and could fully surrender. At nights, my little stone was in your bed and when you were up it was in your pyjamas. Your funeral was celebrated in an appropriate way, with a colourful service. All the people who loved you were present. Afterwards there was a festive Aruban dinner in your house.

A year later, I was permitted to initiate your beautiful daughter. All the time the two of you, you and Everhard, were almost tangibly present...

I hope all goes well for you, I know things are fine, and I thank you for your guidance and your wisdom, but especially for your simplicity and your source of inspiration on my path.

Exercise 10. Giving and receiving.

- Stand firmly with your feet rooted in the earth, your knees slightly bent. Allow your energy in your stomach, your hara. Imagine a silver thread, coming out of your crown-chakra, going towards heaven.
- While inhaling, bring your hands to your heart, and while exhaling, open them wide in a gesture of giving. In doing so let the space between your hands show the amount you are able to give. When you are giving more than you really have to give, you will feel pain between your shoulder blades. Listen to this, do not force anything and accept your limits.
- Go on for about ten minutes. Sense a few minutes with closed eyes and your hands on your heart. Then continue to receive. Inhaling spread both arms as far as you feel you are able to receive. Exhaling bring your hands with the hand-palms towards your heart. Feel what you are enable to receive and do not force anything.
- Go on for about ten minutes. Sense with your hands on your heart if giving and receiving are in harmony...

WITHOUT EGO

'The fruit falls from the tree, when it is fully ripened...'

It was a long time since I chose the path of yoga. Hatha Yoga: the path of enlightenment through the body. One of the things I learned, besides intensive breathing- and body exercises, was that I should let go of my ego. Ego, to be honest I did not even *know* what it was, let alone knowing what I had to let go...

By now one thing is clear to me. Yoga is a great way. It is an Eastern way, like many philosophies and methods that have slowly dripped into our cultures these past few years. Letting go the ego still leaves me with questions.

Next to our personal karma, what we built up in the past, and the goal our soul wishes to reach, there is also something like group karma; the karma of the country, the place where you choose to incarnate. In the West we choose a different lesson from people in the East. Somehow, we are in the process of individualisation, the process of discovering who we are, the process of disconnection. It is difficult, if not impossible, to let go of something you have never possessed, you have never felt right into every cell of your being.

Everything you drop too soon, everything you swear off before you live and work through it, will constantly rise up again. No matter in what way, your ego wants to be seen, if not for the good, than for the bad.

Since we have given our responsibility out of hands to churches and teachers, we are obsessed with the fact that we have to banish all 'evil'. Think of the story of St. Joris and the dragon. St. Joris ultimately destroys the dragon. That is a pity because not only is this dragon a divine animal, it also represents the compost for our growth. It is our ego, our personality that constantly rises up and wants to be seen. It is our firepower, our need to create. We can experience this power through sexuality, through creativity, through manifesting ourselves. However, we cannot deny this power.

There is no good and no evil, there is just experience. In essence, there is no wrongdoing. According to honour and decency, you simply proceed out of your mind of purity. We have come to earth to learn the lessons our soul chooses to learn. What is a better place than earth, where everything exists of duality? Where, for God's sake, can you experience more? How can you learn when you do not allow yourself to make mistakes? How can you learn when you are full of judgment towards yourself and towards the outer world?

No, we must not destroy our dragon. We must lovingly encounter him and tame him. We must tame him by listening and feeling honestly and openly what the fire-element within us needs. If it is necessary for you to manifest yourself, if it is necessary for you to be seen, then please prove yourself and make yourself be seen. It is important to be conscious of what you are doing. Look lovingly at yourself without criticism; otherwise you will not be able to grow. It is as simple as that. You can only let go of things, if you first owned them. You cannot leave your house behind if you never possessed your own place. You cannot give up your career if you have not had one. You cannot disconnect from matter if you have not fully identified with it, if you do not have completely pulled yourself through the matter. Then, and only then, will you see how relative everything is. Then, and only then, can you transform and tame your dragon without reins. Then, and only then, will you have reached the point at which you master your dragon, without rejecting him.

Then, and only then, can you feel what your divine destiny is. With every action you can ask yourself: is this for my highest good and the highest good of anyone or am I still satisfying my ego? If so, look at it and laugh at it. Do not make a drama of it. You can experience life as heavy, or as a challenge. This makes a big difference!

Believe me; the road you are travelling is more or less predestined. Your soul has chosen this before you incarnated in this life. The only choice you can make is whether you want to travel your road with or without springs. In the one case you will feel all the bumps; in the other case you will feel no bumps at all. The only choice you have is travelling your road with resistance or with joy. Joy because you know that pain and suffering will cleanse and purify you and will make you grow towards a higher consciousness, a consciousness in which pain and suffering will no longer determine your life, because you have become a spectator. You know all of this has no longer anything to do with you. From that moment on, you will be able to embrace everything that crosses your path, without any limitation.

You are spirit and you will return into spirit. You are eternal. Nothing, absolutely nothing of your consciousness will ever be lost. The only thing you leave behind is your earthly vehicle. That is just a temporary place for your soul, built out of clay or dust. This mortal vehicle will return to dust. You, your impersonal I, is eternal and omnipresent.

Sacrifice your ego into the fire of your true being, when the fruit is completely ripe. No sooner than that! You cannot skip any steps, not one...

DANCING TOWARDS GOD

God has never been seen incorporeal and his appearance in women is the most perfect of all.

- Muhyi-d-din Ibn Arabi -

While bending forward to give you a kiss I wonder: do you like dancing? You say: 'I have danced all week with you'. You get up, spread your arms and turn around like a proficient Sufi-dancer. I hold my breath.

It is almost two years ago that I last saw you. I will never forget that moment shortly after Christmas. Remember, I said goodbye to you all during that certain Christmas celebration? In my deepest essence, I also said goodbye to my earthly existence. It was during that celebration I initiated Everhard as a Reiki master, who now dwells in spirit. I shared with my students that I had nothing more to give, so I opened myself in order to receive. From that moment on, it became quiet around me...

Suddenly you stood on our friend's doorstep. I hesitated before I invited you in. I still see myself sitting there, I had just bought some kind of velvet creation with little mirrors on it and I was re-attaching those mirrors. My body was fragile and vulnerable, yet I myself, the inner heart of me, felt happy and satisfied.

You sat opposite of me and immediately my being raised all your nastiness. This was not the first time this happened to you, and believe me you are not the only one. If looks could kill, you would probably have instantly killed me. Lucky me, your anger did not affect me at all.

Finally you left. For a while you let me be at peace, and then you started sending postcards. After the second one, I sent the card back and asked you to leave me alone. Could I have known what I would bring about? No, absolutely not. It was a deed of unconditional love. It awakened the firepower in you. You needed this power to come back into life, to survive and to make the decisions you had to make. As you said; you and I, we both do not do anything by halves.

Nearly two years later, I found a forwarded card in my letterbox. Despite your maiden name I immediately knew you were the sender. My first thought was to throw the envelope away, unopened. While holding it, I allowed the intention to fill me. It feels good, so I decide to see what you want to share. I take a beautiful card out of the envelope with just one sentence on it: will you initiate me as a Reiki master?

My breath fails; I expected everything, except this. Confused I place the card in front of me while looking and feeling. It feels good, very good...

I ponder: 'At least I must phone her to make an appointment, after meeting her I can make a final decision'.

We had a short and clear phone call. You said: 'I knew it, I knew this card would reach you'. Still it felt good. It took another four days before I would see you yet each day you appeared to me and it felt like light, it felt like love, it felt like sisterhood.

I draw a medicine-card on your mastership. It is the greyhen. The greyhen is connected to the divine spiral, a symbol for the dancing Dervish. Their base is situated at Konya in Turkey.

Years ago I read a delightfully book called *The last barrier* by Reshad Field. I immediately signed up for a course of Sufi dancing. While dancing I experienced a state of ecstasy, a state of oneness with God.

And you, you brought the dance of the divine spiral back into my life...

There you were dancing like a born Dervish, and I told you the story of the greyhen. We talked about everything you had gone through these last years. The work you left and the husband you separated from. When the road you had to travel became clear to you, you just started to walk, taking all the pain and joy involved.

You shared your struggle with me. The mirror I kept holding up to you. The Christ you could see in me, was it about three years ago? No doubt that moment you opened your heart to this loving energy. Then you saw the devil in me. Of course, you were right. No doubt have I represented both aspects, haven't you? Remember the little statue I took along from Guatemala, instantly it brought out all your hidden aggression. Honestly, I could not dream this when I bought it for you, yet it was right to the point.

Smiling we recalled memories of your initiation in the second degree, some years ago. You saw us together in Peru, during the Inca period. I was at the stakes waiting to be sacrificed and you were the next. You get angry when I said that all those former lives were great, yet we had to live *here and now*. Later the *symbolism* of all this became clear to you: you saw me in the cleansing fire, and subconsciously you knew you had to go through the same. Now you knew why you were so angry during that certain celebration. I was symbolizing your suffering, the road you had to travel as well. How could I have gone so far? You did not want that!

When you finished this battle, the material one came up. My God, how could you combine money with such a God-given present? Again all the dirt arose. You cleansed it until there was nothing left for your ego to hide behind. That was the moment everything was present, the matter, the light and the love, all out of the same Source.

I did not expect anything anymore. What could I ask you who had travelled the road to the depth? It was just the way you looked at me: 'I am *ready* Yasmin'.

I felt slightly exited and said: 'Today we have something to celebrate, today I like coffee and a cigar'. 'That is alright,' you said, 'give me one as well'. You had never smoked before. It seemed as if it had always been that way...

Nowadays my impulses are fairly accurate and I had already said to Giri that I would probably initiate you this year.

Before filling in the details, I wanted to show you my forest, so ancient and suitable for initiations, with her deer and her special energetic places. You immediately stop talking and we walk mainly in silence. When you embrace 'my tree', the emotions become too much and tears start to flow. I leave you alone. Every person has the right to his own tears. You very much appreciated that.

We leave the inner light-circle and go to the hidden water-well. Squatted I ponder while studying the beetles, looking like little tortoises and I think: 'this would be a great place to initiate you'. You say: 'this would be a great place for the initiation...'

We go home to eat something. Okay girl, I feel it is all right. No doubt, you have thought about a date, so tell me what you have in mind. I close my eyes and think: 'Christmas is a great period for a new birth...'

Of course you thought about a date, your father and most important guide, died on the ninth of November. If convenient you would like to be initiated that day. My God, the ninth of November that is tomorrow, that would be too soon. Do not postpone until tomorrow... Okay, Friday, that will be fine. There is no time to prepare, so let us keep it

simple, just the initiation, nothing more and nothing less. We will care about the rest later. A deep peace remains inside.

The next day I pick you up from my friend's house. You have not seen her for a quite a while, yet she is part of this. Last night it was full moon and I did not sleep at all. I let go of my intention to drive home silently. I even let go of meditating, we just draw an angel card. It feels cosy with a cup of coffee and a cigar. Flexible that is what we have to be. I believe I am making progress with that!

Of course, I wear my creation with the small mirrors. The moment I lose one of them, I spontaneously give it to you. You will keep it as a treasure.

I gather some things to take to the forest and I place them in such a way that I cannot forget them. Five minutes later I stop the car while looking at you: I forgot, I forgot all those things. It is clear, they are just outer forms, and we no longer need them. It must be simple, so I do not turn around, just drive on.

Up to the sacred forest: three women, three old Indians, three wise women are entering the forest. That special silent moment there is connection, prayer and communication with God. Is there a place where you can feel the presence of this creative force better than here? Silently, our feet in boots and connected to the earth, we walk through the forest, conscious of every step and of everything around us. Although it is late autumn, there is still a great variety of colours. Here and there, we see a toadstool. Straight ahead the forest, I feel myself in the jungle.

The first option is my divine oak tree. Silently we sit against her trunk. After a while, I find myself in a different world. I ask you to offer some tobacco to my tree, our tree, to thank her for her energy. We greet her with the *Om Shanti* sound and continue in silence. A silence, which you and I do not want to break, not even by singing.

When we arrive in the open circle, we make twenty-one turns on our axis, the Dervish dance in her most simple form. It is a great exercise to attune all chakras and endocrine glands.

We arrive at the water well. I take off my jacket and spread it out for you. I connect myself to the centre of the earth while initiating you, and believe me it is an impressively deep and high experience, and of course, there is the rising spiral.

We break the silence and behave like three exited girls. Our sister likes to share our embrace, and she literally slides into the mud! We all laugh heartily. For this special occasion, I offer some tobacco to the well. I thank her for her life-giving energy. All life originates out of water....

We return home. It is time for a glass of wine and a cigar! You and I, we seldom drink, well we will know this! You go down just like that, but before you do, we dance the Dervish dance. Still you could learn a bit more in endurance, your posture is the perfect posture of a true Dervish. While you are resting on the couch, I take things over. Although it has been a long time, I am fully into it and dance the dance of the Dervish. It is not strange to me, not now and it has never been. Again, I experience a complete moment of being, of ecstasy. And Giri, Giri prepares a simple and highly delicious meal. Of course, the inner person needs to be strengthened too.

Exercise 11. Attuning your chakra's

- A. Stand with your arms stretched horizontally. The left palm is towards heaven and the right palm towards the earth. Rotate twenty-one times round your axis. Do it slowly and keep on looking at eye-height. When you stop, cross your arms in front of your heart and take time to let enter the energy.

This exercise helps to attune all the chakras and brings the endocrine glands in harmony.

- B. Stand with your feet firmly rooted into the earth. Imagine there is a rising spiral beginning at your feet and covering your entire aura, slowly moving to far above your head. Let the spiral circling back to the ground. Repeat this a few times.

A PLACE OF LIGHT

At the right moment vanity is a great virtue, at the wrong moment she is a big sin.

- Inayat Khan -

You are sitting opposite me and you say: 'Look, this is the place where I belong. Here is love and light. I no longer belong in an atmosphere like the one in my home. Do you understand that?' It takes a while before I fully understand what you mean. I answer: 'The moment you become light and love, every place will be light and love, because you created it. Don't you understand this place did not become a place of light by itself? It has to do with manifesting light within and by doing so it radiates and fills the place.'

A place full of love and light, yes, it begins to look like that. The inside as well as the outside of this house, our private home after years of travelling, became filled with more light and more loving after clearing away quite an amount of rubbish. The old atmosphere has disappeared, the darkness has gone and after this outer cleaning, I initiated the place to make it our own.

Being in my own place gives space to all kinds of symptoms to break through and once again, I am locked in for months. At first because there is no other way, later I do not feel the urge to break out of this sacred atmosphere. I have to prepare myself for a time in which I will be limited to my house. Where can I do this better than in the silence of my own sacred space?

Just a handful of people know that we returned home. Consciously or unconsciously, we created the space we needed. Although I seldom go outside, some people know where to find us. They dare to encounter and to share something. It is an interaction, a reloading, so all involved can continue their road renewed and strengthened. Little wonders and touching miracles happen in this loving place. Once a while a soul-mate drops in, I always recognise them. It feels familiar and they like to spoil me. I am able to accept it. At the same time I have to be careful to guard my own place. Regularly I have to be alone. Such a lot is happening inside of me, I need to protect my own space.

It is a revelation to increasingly feel the results of an inner change. No longer is it necessary to step outside to let the energy flow. It just happens in silence, far away from outer activity. The more Giri and I manifest love within ourselves, in our inner home and in our relationship, the more this love radiates through the walls of our little dwelling, and every now and then a passer-by catches a glimpse of it.

Every person, healthy or ill, physically well or handicapped, can be a light in his or her way. Energy is unlimited and will even flow through the walls. The more inner light, the more light there will be outside. Let your energy flow, your inner light. Enjoy your own stream, because all these little streams together will become a huge overpowering stream of love.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

The original people do not know fear. Fear is an emotion of the animal kingdom. If people know there is a divine unity, and understand that the universe is not originated by coincidence, they cannot have fear. You either have faith or fear, not both. Fear arises the moment we have possessions. To the original people gratitude is a native quality. Gratefully they get up in the mornings. Gratefully they honour the earth and thank for the food and all the experiences the earth is giving. Death through illness or an accident is experienced as unnatural. The soul is eternal and cannot be killed. When they feel their time has come to return to eternity, they ask the unity permission and make it a joyful happening. At the time of birth every soul hears: 'We love you and we will assist you on your journey'. When celebrating the end, the leaving person is embraced by everyone and receives this same message. Then he places himself in the sand and closes his bodily functions. Within a few minutes, he flies away, back to the light.

- Marlo Morgan -

We, in our small country, are the most privileged people on earth. Have you ever thought about that? There is no threat of war. There is nobody who gets hungry. We are free to express our opinion without being cast out or put behind bars.

We have become a real *nursing* country. Within a radius of ten kilometres, you can buy anything regarding food and drinks, clothes, furniture and all the luxury you can imagine.

We pay attention to everything, and by now everything has been taken care of. Care concerning a new birth, the young adult, the sick, the handicapped, the elderly person and the dying. Nowhere in the world is the care system as optimal as here in the Netherlands, not even in the United States.

We actually seem to have the right to decide on life and death. Freely we can choose an abortion when something is wrong with the foetus. It is even reimbursed. All arranged by law!

In my opinion, decisions about life and death are decisions which can never be prescribed by law. Any such a decision has to be a conscientious decision. Every situation is different. Each soul has to make a well considered decision in every situation, and to take full responsibility for it. Having a handicapped child can be a punishment to one person, yet to another it can be a gift; a possibility to learn a self-chosen lesson. Each of us has the right to decide when he wants to leave his body. Everyone has also the right to refuse to co-operate with this decision!

You came in, tense and full of resistance. You wanted only one thing and that was peace. I ask what is happening around your mother. You tell me that she is terminally ill, and probably she will die soon. According to her she has suffered enough and she wants to end it. Her decision presents you with great difficulties: in your view nobody has the right to end his own life!

I take a step backward and look at you: 'When you and I lived with the Aborigines, we withdrew into the desert when we felt that our time had come. When you and I lived with the Indians, we would withdraw within our tipi to die, remember? In this society everything is focussed on keeping our vehicle alive against all oppression. No

longer can we speak of a natural transition. Your mother is absolutely right. Enough is enough and full is full. Only she can decide when the moment to die is right for her and nobody else. And she has the right that you at least respect her decision!

Astonished you look at me. 'You mean that...' 'Yes that is what I mean'. An enormous weight is lifted from your shoulders. At the end of the weekend, when you return home, you feel reborn.

The health-and care system in our society is impressive. Everything is extremely well attuned. That is creativity at its best. There is a perfect brain behind all of this; that is for sure.

Let's have a look at all the small daily matters. How many people are busy to make it possible for us to live as comfortable as we do? For instance the garbage; how many people are busy clearing and processing our garbage? Who keeps the streets clean, the villages and the cities?

What to think of all those mothers, who are constantly guiding our children to cross the road safely? The mail, have you ever thought about all that happens before the post arrives at your house? Can you image through how many hands your letters have passed? The way your bunch of flowers has travelled, before it is in your room. The way your daily groceries have gone before they are in your house: sugar peas from Egypt, kiwis from New Zealand. All the facilities to make shopping as comfortable as possible: the teahouses, the restaurants, and the attractions for the children?

What to think about facilities such as welfare, national health, disability insurance, and old age pension. Everybody in the Netherlands, who is unable to work, is taken care of. Isn't that great?

At the beginning of every new season, the trade unions are trying to create new jobs, meanwhile negotiating about shorter working days and higher wages. We claim the right to work while our spendings must remain the same. Simply said, we have to keep our factories running. Although nowadays the product is not as important as it used to be, what to do with all the unemployed when we close all the factories? So we produce unnecessary things to keep people at work, and we figure out the most ridiculous propaganda to convince people they need all these superfluous products to be happy. Everything is permitted, as long as it makes money.

What to think of all the people who are constantly busy entertaining us in a nice way. Yes, the ones that make sure we will not get bored. I do admire all the things they think of, sometimes I even fall over backwards in amazement. One of these phenomena is the laser-quest. They give you an army uniform and a gun. On a screen, you give free reign to your aggression by killing as many people as possible. Great fun! It is shameful but true; we will die of all the oppressed aggression, if we do not get rid of it somehow...

Anyway, if you look at all this luxury and prosperity, you probably think that we, as the most privileged nation, also are the most satisfied people. That we should radiate from joy and gratitude. Or is it not like that?

Well believe me or not, this is not real. Wrong, completely wrong! Instead of being grateful and seeing it as a privilege to be so fortunate, we think we deserve everything. For we do pay for it, don't we? We think it is natural. We somehow command it. This is a shame because in doing so we degenerate all of it to the level of eagerness. We expect others to clean our mess. Even if there is a dustbin every ten metres, we simply throw our rubbish on the streets or dirty the forest. For we do pay tax for it, don't we?

What about our collective care for our mutual home: our mother earth? This is not the way we treat our own house, is it?

We have even sunk so low, that it is possible to smash other people's belongings without having to pay for them. Because we are insured, aren't we? In addition, if you are not insured and you do not have any money, our community will pay for it. At the worst you will be rewarded free board and lodging, have a colour television and still keep your payment.

What about our own responsibility? Would it not be logical to restore the things we demolish? Would it not be natural to respect the energy and creativity of others? Would it not be natural we support our self-chosen government, and a reflection of all of us, so they can do their task with more love and light?

Why have we become so intolerant? Because we lack another enemy, we suddenly declare war on all smokers. Once fanatic smokers ourselves, we reveal ourselves as modern with-hunters. Why is there suddenly no place for all of us, even not by making some clear and mature agreements? Why we are so paternalistic that we want to arrange everything, out of so-called protection?

What to think of all the pollution we create with our negative thoughts. Pollution hanging over our earth as a huge veil of poison? Is this negativity not a perfect enemy to declare war on?

We have the right to study. We can become anything we want to, and the government pays enormous amounts for our education. Knowledge is power! Handwork is only for the stupid. Craftsmanship is something from olden days. The concept of a student with a part-time job is old-fashioned. Student's life is hard enough as it is! After finishing your studies, you have the right of employment, a job at a high level of course. After all, engineers do not stand behind an assembly line, that is not what they studied for, is it?

*Funny stupid society, funny you and me!
Every job, all the work is of equal importance in the eyes of God.*

Would it not be logical to start at the first step of the ladder, so we can go through all life experiences on our way to the top? When we reach the top this way, we have gained understanding and empathy for those who are standing on the first steps...

What is the reason that we are so ungrateful, so dissatisfied with all this care? Could it be possible that there is too much care? That there is no space left for personal initiative and we become suffocated by all this care?

Is it possible we have too much spare time? Is it possible we plan such a lot of things out of fear for emptiness, the emptiness within? Why do we have such a need for security? Why do we try to ban out every uncertain factor in our lives?

Certainly one day our life in the physical form will come to an end, and we cannot take anything with us to the other reality.

Possession brings along fear. The more you possess, the greater your fear of loss. In addition, the greater your fear that someone else has more than you do. Instead of rejoicing others prosperity, we get jealous. Our creative abilities get degenerated and we feel the need to destroy.

Work should mainly be joyful. We should feel connected with our employer and the product we are producing. We should feel that it is meaningful what we are doing, that we are an important link in the chain. Then we work with joy. We take common

responsibility and do not complain about the few minutes working overtime we are not paid for. We know that when things are good or bad for the company, they have their consequences for us.

I can imagine that a lot of work at an assembly line is so meaningless, that it is hard to feel involved. The energy is deadly for our growing-process and we create a lot of noise in order not to experience what we are doing. Why for God's sake do we hold on to these things? We stack our house full with all kinds of timesaving equipment, and instead of celebrating this time together; we feel bored and watch television. Why we are so afraid of communicating?

We translate our emptiness with the need for more money, and more consumption. In order not to let our children get annoyed, we fill them with surrogate love, with sweets and toys. Then we discover they are more annoyed and unsatisfied than we were at that age. A bell must start ringing right now. Apparently, our children are longing for different things than we think they need.

Sexuality has become a commercial article, with which we try to fill up our emptiness. We have forgotten that sexuality is the highest form of creation. Therefore, we should guard it with care. It is a way of expressing our love and certainly not only given to us to satisfy our ego needs. It is sad that so many young people are afraid not to belong to the group if they refuse sexual intercourse.

Let us realise that we are creators. Every thought, every word and every deed creates something positive or negative. How else will we deal with this gift, when we aim for the highest purity in all our creations. How differently we would pass it on to our children. You cannot commit love. It is either there or not. When love is there, there will be mutual respect.

Let us talk about excitement. What to think of our sportily hunters who keep the game population to its level. In doing so, they get rid of their aggression and we, the spoilt public, can choose countless kinds of meat and poultry on our menu. Merry Christmas! We can start to condemn this, yet it would not exist if we did not make use of it. As long as we keep on wanting more things while paying less for it, there will be battery-chickens, boxed in calves and scared pigs on their way to the abattoir.

It looks as if we are more or less deadly bored. As if nothing is mad enough to amuse ourselves, to keep busy, so we do not really have to feel and to think. I understand we have to get rid of our surplus of energy, because there is no space to express our creativity and power on a natural way. Our ability to create is destroyed by oppression. Surely there must be a new, a different way to express ourselves; one we have to find out yet.

Meanwhile I realize how special it is the dustman collects my garbage. Once a while, I take a moment to put all those people, who take care for all my needs, into the light. I thank God and the dustman that they are serving me so well...

Boredom is no doubt the other side of a caring society. Out of boredom we eat too much, and we think ourselves ill. We find it old-fashioned to enjoy our daily business, and have forgotten the joy of cooking and cleaning, or doing the dishes. We fail to remember it can be a sport to manage with just a little. Surely it will lift up our creativity and liberate us from a lot of boredom and unnecessary ballast. We are afraid of responsibility and put everything away labelled and in systems. We do not teach our children that milk comes from the cows instead of the factory. They have no notion what it is to be aged or handicapped in our society. All those people all neatly tucked up.

A lot of confusion comes from boredom. Creativity has to flow; it starts from our sacral chakra, our KI-point. This is the centre of our life-force. Not flowing means not living. Not flowing means destruction instead of creation. As we start to destroy ourselves, destroy our singularity, we may even start to scatter destruction around.

In western society, people are discarded of their job at an age, at which they may no longer be up to physical things, yet at other levels they are functioning at the top of their knowledge. Beyond fifty we start to obtain wisdom and we could be of great value to an efficient and loving society. Regularly I met aged people in the East, radiating such vitality, we could only dream of. Skinny and tawny and without using vitamins, they share their wisdom with children and grandchildren and are respected by the community.

Having rights also means we have duties. Even if we pay tax for it, there is still such a thing as respect and ethics. Maybe it is good to realise that it is not common that someone else is clearing our mess. Maybe we could give the toilet lady a real meant 'thank you', together with the compulsory coin. There is nothing wrong with payments. We can show our gratitude by doing something back for the well-being of all; let us radiate our inner light. It is not so natural that we get provided for all our needs. It is a privilege, we should be grateful for. So let us be thankful, and willing to share our abundance with others.

I fully understand it is a challenge to live with so many people in such a small space. This makes us less willing to open our doors to people who are less fortunate. I understand that the reason behind all of this is fear.

We do not solve this fear by shifting our responsibility onto society. We solve this fear by being willing to feel it to the full, into each cell of our being. We cannot skip the fact that increasingly more people of different cultures live together in this tiny space. When we embrace our own inner space, we can accept others with an open heart, and we open ourselves to the gift of a colourful society.

Our greatest fear is to be confronted with ourselves, and to feel our own emptiness. Therefore, we flee into all kinds of activity. Especially in our free time we are so busy, that we need to make appointments weeks in advance, if we like to meet each other. We have built so many protecting layers around us, that it is almost impossible to have a spontaneous encounter.

Also on the spiritual level, there is a lot to consume. That is fantastic, never before have we lived in such an exiting time with so many possibilities. Let us be grateful for all of this. As long as the tools do not become the aim, we will certainly find a way to integrate all this knowledge.

We are on earth to get to know ourselves. To discover our love and inner light, we have to go through a lot of darkness. Otherwise, we would not be able to recognise the light in everyone and everything around us.

No, I am not pessimistic. We must first experience the beast within, before we can tame it. Like the inside, like the outside. We have sunk deep, and maybe we have to sink even deeper before we can make the necessary transition. We will make this transition, consciously or unconsciously. We will lift ourselves up from earthly material beings to divine light beings. All cells in our body start to get ready for it. We evolve from a time of deep darkness into a time of divine light. That is why so many of us are working through a lot of karma in a short period. There is no time to waste. We have to prepare ourselves. Nobody knows exactly what will happen, it is a matter of faith and trust. All that

happens, in and around us, is a necessary learning process. Maybe we have to lose some outer securities. Instead of this our inner security; the knowing that we are divine and in that sense immortal, will unshakably be anchored within our being.

We start transforming our energy, so we can give back a more perfect body when we leave this earth. It should be clear that we do not mention our mortal body. This does not mean we must not care for our earthly body. It is our temple, in which our soul can manifest itself. This process may bring forward deep physical suffering. If we become more and more spectators, we no longer identify with our physical vehicle and we understand that this suffering has nothing to do with our divine and immortal essence. As a preparation, let us keep on practising. Let us be grateful for all we have. Let us embrace everything within and around us, even if it is not understandable. May we see the ever-present spark of light in everything and may we start to recognise the divine spark in ourselves and in others.

The sun always shines, even when we cannot see her...

Exercise 12. Retrospection

- *Before you go to sleep: go through the past day from back to front. Thank God or the universe for this day, with everything that came along with it. Although there may have been negative experiences, you will notice that these experiences were the right lessons for your soul. Send out your inner light across the earth and bless all those who are worse off than you are.*
- *When you wake up, welcome this new day that lies in front of you, with joy and gratitude.*
- *Open yourself to cosmic abundance and love that is waiting for you today. Whatever happened yesterday; let go of it completely. Live in the here and now and open yourself to this new day. Bless this new day and this new earth.*

You cannot change the circumstances, yet you can change your way of looking at it.

BIRTH

Sexual energy is our divine creative power, which we can manifest in several ways. The highest form is conceiving a child out of unconditional love. The divine male power and the divine female wisdom melt together as an honour to our Creator.

Conceiving a child is something we cannot always control, although we may think we can. There are many souls waiting for the right moment to incarnate, and there is constantly a higher power that creates itself through us. If we listen to the voice of our heart, we use this divine creation with respect. When we are not able to conceive children, then probably we have to use our creativity in a different way, in another form. We can save ourselves a lot of pain and suffering if we realise this. When we stop trying to manipulate life out of willpower, no doubt our soul will reveal her intention to us: the reason why we are on earth and the lesson we have to learn in this life. Coincidence does not exist!

Children are divine temples, the pillars of our future, and the fruits from the seeds we have sown. We must learn to see our children as divine creations and never ever use them for our own egoistic purposes. They need space and respect to grow up in their own way, free of expectations originated out of fear and insecurity. Children need loving guidance. It is very important they grow up in a loving environment where the masculine intelligence and the feminine intuition are present. Both aspects are necessary to create a balanced and harmonious climate in which a child feels safe and secure to discover its own characteristic, free from the expectations of their parents.

Our education should be suitable for this time. It is necessary to create proper conditions for a perfect balance between thinking and intuition. The current educational system is a result of our materialistic thinking pattern. It does not meet the needs of the souls who presently incarnate. Many souls do not link up with the current system. A certain degree of competition is healthy, but it should remain a game. We have to stop projecting our lost opportunities upon our children. It is our need to translate our fear and insecurity into increasingly material securities, not one child is asking for this. Children are the fruits of the seeds we have sown, seeds of our peace or dissatisfaction. In that way, the degeneration of today's youth is the seed we have sown. Creating in thought, word and deed is an extreme responsibility.

The feminine intuitive power is necessary to restore the balance, and to save our planet earth and her inhabitants from destruction. It is no use to change the results of our creations. By changing our consciousness, we are bringing forward new forms of creation. When we dare to realise we are not the creators, yet used by our Creator to manifest His perfect shape, then we will strive for divine perfection in all our creations.

A few days before Christmas the phone is ringing. A timid voice says: 'I am pregnant, did you know that?' Suddenly I am back in my morning meditation, in which I saw the image of Mother Mary and her baby; you. This morning in the forest, you suddenly appeared in my thoughts. I already knew that you were pregnant.

You say: 'My husband does not want another baby and I do not know what to do. If he does not want it then I do not want it either.' My dear girl, from now on it is your responsibility, because it is in your lap, not in his. Even your wish to receive this child together, you should let go. Maybe they have something else for you in store. You can think it is a mishap, you know that up there they do not make mistakes. This child wants

to incarnate, and could it have chosen a better mother than you? I fully understand that all your future plans fall into pieces. Yet the future is not tomorrow. It is now, today.

You with your pregnancy, you are the future. Turn inside and try to feel the meaning of this gift. Try to exchange your will for the universal will. If you feel worried, well let us be pregnant a bit together.

Is there a better period to be pregnant from the new and original, then in these dark days before Christmas? Certainly not!

RECEIVING AND CELEBRATING

For white people it is difficult to give a definition of God, because the mind can only think in forms. God is the unity of dimension, form and weight. Unity is essence, creativity, purity, love and unconditional unlimited energy.

- Marlo Morgan -

Celebrate, celebrate, celebrate. That was the message my invisible 'friend' gave me when I met him the first time. Receive, receive, receive. Until today, it is my intention to open myself to abundance. Here in the west we are far too serious. Therefore, I use every small occasion to celebrate life.

According to the book: 'Barefooted through Australia', the Aboriginals do not celebrate their birthday, they celebrate the day they became a better human. Getting older happens natural, it is not a privilege, and you do not have to go through any trouble to do so. If you want to become a better person, you must constantly be aware of your actions and reactions. When do you celebrate the fact that you have become a better person? Only you can decide this for yourself, no one else can. That is the moment everyone is willing to share your joy.

In western culture the one with most fortune has the most esteem. Many nations, especially the nations we call primitive, are not attached to possessions. They see it rather as a kind of egoism. For them it is strange people gather more products than they really need. In their culture it is an honour to share your possessions and you cannot acquire any status from it. On the contrary, land can never be a personal possession, because everything the Creator created is for the benefit of everyone. In these cultures, the one being honoured is the one who fulfils the needs of the group before he provides his own. The weak, the poor and the elderly are respected. No doubt, this was the ethical code in the cradle of our social provisions!

All life was respected, it was clear to everyone we could not live without the earth, the rocks, the water, the air, the sun, the moon and the stars. We cannot live without the food supply of the vegetable kingdom. The animals are offering themselves voluntary, when we handle them with respect.

This morning I feel glad and grateful. With all of you, I want to share my gratitude for life itself, for the love inside of me. For weeks, small presents have arrived in my house, which are intense, complete and special. Every day I wonder about all those small miracles taking place in my life. Is this the seed, which starts to germinate and bloom after a period of letting go, withdrawal, rest and patience? At the least I have plenty of time to see it, to receive it, and to intensely enjoy it.

Today I exuberantly want to celebrate the fact that I am a better person than I was yesterday. Slowly but surely, I learn what unconditional love is. I can give increasingly more out of my heart, without expecting something in return. To my amazement and joy, presents arrive from everywhere. I receive, receive, receive and celebrate, celebrate, and celebrate.

Today I feel strongly connected to the primitive nations. I would like to reverse this. Sometimes I think we, the westerners are the most primitive ones. We are miles away from our inner essence, our true nature. We lost our self-esteem and as a result, we seem to exist by the law of competition. We began to present ourselves for the sake of

appearances. No longer is our being important, yet our house, our car, our career, the amount of money we have at the bank and our old-age pension insurance.

The first step towards self-esteem is abolishing our modern caste-system. This means, an equal appreciation of the toilet-lady and the director of the Oil Company. Assessment is something else as being paid equally. It is the appreciation we should get from person to person. Status does not automatically mean you are a good person. On the contrary, when someone gets his identity out of his function, he has a long way to go to humanity. It is a strange habit to pigeon-hole each other. Like the baker cannot make bread without flour, the secretary is of priceless worth to her boss.

I do not plead that we return to the way it used to be, that we have to re-introduce the customs of the Aboriginals and the Indians. I am the last person to argue for this. We live in these times and in this society and there is nothing wrong with that. We should not go back to the past; we have to take a leap into a higher consciousness; to a new period, far beyond our imagination.

Everything is lent to us, so we can learn how to use it. Aeroplanes and computers belong to this new era. Ultimately, everything will speed up and distances and borders will disappear. Finally, and this will be literally, by the time we are able to use our wings again, we will not need an aeroplane anymore!

There is nothing wrong to use all these different forms of creativity and creation. When we do it with respect, we will harm nobody. In that way, we will know internally what we need. How we can use the products of this prosperous society for the wellbeing of everyone. Everything in the material world has its polarity. We decide if we use our energy to create or to destruct. Seen in this light, nuclear energy uncoupled from fear, is an energy we can use for the wellbeing of mankind or for the destruction of it.

Well, today I want to share that I have become a better person. I increasingly let go my fears, and respect myself. In doing so, I can see my brothers and sisters as they truly are. No longer I am afraid to lose anything. I sense that all this diversity adds something to me. It is fascinating to find myself increasingly surrounded by universal love; boundless and unconditional.

Gnomes, deva's and elves

Was it yesterday, my dear gnome, that you honoured me with your visit? For ages I had been looking forward to welcome you in my little gnome-house, and to explore the forest together. It was you, who gave me some information about this sacred place. I have known you for quite a few years. In the past you followed my workshops in bodywork. You were blessed with big powers. At the same time you were afraid of them, which was recognisable for me.

Being convinced that life consisted of loving and giving, you were unable to receive. You were a great and always present mother and a kind of a medicine-woman. You knew astoundingly much about herbs and passed on this knowledge to many people. Besides that, you were one of the few who unconditionally supported me in these challenging times. You took my doubts, my insecurities and my grief seriously. I appreciated that enormously, my dear gnome!

In return I was allowed to open you up to other dimensions. After learning it myself, I was allowed to teach you how to receive.

It was a few years ago you were initiated in the first degree of Reiki. A few times you decided to go for the second degree, yet always something seems to boycott it. You could not favour it yourself, you could not open up to it. The money you accumulated always had to be spent on something else. You felt an enormous resistance that you had to pay such a lot for something you already possessed. I did not deny this, in that sense you did not need the second degree. You had tools enough to support others. However, to accept yourself in your true essence, in all your beauty and your power, that was something different. From this point of view, a lot was lacking. You found it difficult to receive, difficult to give yourself such a gift.

After a loving confrontation this attitude changed, and you started to embrace the fact of being a special woman. When I gave you a compliment, I literally heard you inhale on the phone, carefully taking it in to every cell of your being. You increasingly allowed it. The energy between us started to flow more freely, now it did not have to pass through many layers of resistance.

In principle, I do not initiate people without an appropriate exchange of energy. In the West, this usually means money. Money is associated with energy, and letting go of it literally means going through all our shit, before we can open up to receive. The day before you arrived, I felt permission to initiate you, if you were able to receive this gift in all openness. I did not tell you before, I was sure you would refuse. I did not prepare myself; it would go the way it had to go. You, and not I, would decide if it was going to happen.

Beaming you stood in the doorway. In your eyes, I saw the twinkle of the mischievous child you once were. Your inner-child can fully wake up, now you have completely surrendered yourself to the cosmic game of giving and receiving. You are more beautiful than ever!

I wrap my arms around you, congratulate you on your birthday and share that I have an original gift for you: your initiation in the second degree. I explain that you owe me nothing; you can pass on your gift, your energy, in a way suitable for you. You held your breath, I felt you were allowing this gift completely, into each cell of your body.

That explained why all the signs this morning showed towards a special day. Moreover, it became a special day.

Today I limit myself to the initiation and take you to my special forest. We sit in silence, contemplating against my tree. There is increasingly less to do and increasingly more to be.

I initiate you near the pond. To my delight, deva's and gnomes surround us. They allow me to interpret their message for you: it is your assignment to work together with the deva's of the vegetable kingdom and in doing so you will support the healing of mother earth. It touches me deeply. This is the first time I experience their presence so clearly. I wonder if you previously had contact with deva's and gnomes. Yes, they came to your room when you were still a child...

Back home, you want to be in silence for a while, and I fix something to eat. While pondering you will be the first initiated one to go back home without a rose, Giri comes in with a particular one. You radiate like a bird that is ready to spread her wings...

Fly you beautiful bird, among the deva's and gnomes. Fly out of your own being, your way towards the light.

Before you left, I gave you the symbols and the mantras. It felt as if you did not want to take them. This morning you phoned. You told me you were pleased with the gift. You had accepted it to the full, and the love had touched you deeply. However, you could not do anything with the symbols and the mantras. They were unfamiliar to your soul, and now you knew clearly which way you had to travel. You could only do it your own way, with the symbols and mantras given to you during your catholic upbringing.

You were afraid that your decision would hurt me. On the contrary, I feel intense joy and deep respect. Joy for the fact you accepted the gift of the initiation. No doubt, this gift will bring out your strength even more. Peeling of layers of resistance will continue, now you are able to welcome it. What I see is already so beautiful, gnome! What is still slumbering inside of you, waiting to be explored, my God, you will be a gift to humanity!

So my dear gnome, today I celebrate the fact that I am a better person. I am more aware of this because of you. No longer do I have to convince people I am right. I can allow people to be themselves, in all freedom and totality. Without fear, I like to learn from you the way you opened yourself to learn from me.

Is that not a reason for celebration?

Exercise 13. Opening your heart.

- Lie down on your back and place your feet flat on the floor, making your knees bend. Stretch your arms to both sides and breathe calmly out of your base. Every time you exhale, allow the tension to flow back into the earth and be present in your body. While inhaling, bring your right hand-palm slowly towards your heart. Bring it back while exhaling. It is not a question of willpower. Your arm is moving through the energy itself, very slowly.
- Continue to do so about five minutes. Then change arms and do the same with your left arm. The last five minutes you bring your right arm above your heart and then the left one. Play with both hands above your heart and experience your inner space.
- Conclude the exercise by putting both hands on your heart-chakra and remain within this state of totality for at least ten minutes.

BREATH IS LIFE

What is darkness other than the absence of light?

I breathe in deeply. Every cell in my body fills itself with air, fills itself with oxygen, fills itself with life. I breathe in deeply: God's divine breath. I imagine that the complete potential of the creation, my Creator, is represented in the sun and I allow her beams to touch my skin one by one. Carefully, very carefully I allow each beam to enter and I fill myself with light, divine light. I imagine every cell filling itself, and the light chases away the darkness.

What else is light except transformed darkness?

Breath is nothing but the life-force breathing through me in an eternal rhythm, in and out, in and out. I open myself and receive, receive. The more I am able to open myself, the more I can give. Giving and receiving, giving and receiving... Ultimately giving becomes receiving and receiving becomes giving. Ultimately I will become one with the Source, I will be the Source.

The fact that I am on this earth, the fact that I am in a form, does not mean I am living. Maybe I am on earth, unconscious of the creature I truly am. Maybe I think I am my body that after a while no longer will exist. Maybe I forget to breathe because I am afraid to let life enter to the full. Breathing is living. Breathing is allowing, receiving, experiencing and ultimately it is being.

I breathe in my pain. I become my pain. I breathe through my pain and rise above my pain.

If I do not breathe then I do not have to feel pain, so why should I breathe? It is much safer not to breathe, so much safer...

If I do not want to feel pain, I cannot grow, I cannot expand. If I do not breathe, I would be better off dead. Is that what I truly want? Deep within there is a longing, a strong longing...

If I truly breathe, all the old will come to the surface. I have to let go of control and surrender myself fully to the flow. No longer can I control where I am, and where I am going. Is that what I want? Not breathing is much safer, much more secure. I know what I have...

Here in the West we usually only breathe 'above the girdle'. It is the masculine way of breathing, our conscious active side; the pole which creates and controls. To a certain extent it is functional for the way we manifested our society. It is the only possibility to manifest ourselves the way we do. Out of attachment to the material, we have forgotten we are spirit, infinite spirit.

Feeling is unpleasant. When I begin to feel what I am doing, then I might discover that I can no longer function the way I did. Then I might discover that the so carefully built up empire, would prove to be an empty card-house. Everything I thought was secure will turn out to be an illusion. To my dismay, everything that feels safe is disappearing under my feet. And the fear, the fear will literally squeeze my throat.

Breathing is living, breathing is feeling, breathing is knowing. Knowing we are one, that I am the Creator and the creation. Knowing that in my deepest essence I am a divine spark.

It is knowledge, a feeling and a willingness to take responsibility for that divine spark inside of me. To go for it, no matter what others will think of me. To stand up without fear, being convinced the only essential in life is that divine inner spark. That spark will expand and expand, as I dare to connect myself to that infinite spark through breathing...

I breathe. I breathe in deeply, and allow the divine breath to flow via my roots, through my feet, into my stomach. Each cell in my body fills itself with breath, divine breath. Via my stomach, my breath passes my midriff and fills each cell of my body. I feel it and experience, feel and experience... I feel my blockades, the places I still have some resistance. Little by little and lovingly I can allow more, I can allow increasingly more love. I can allow increasingly more pain, pain I was hiding away for so long out of fear. Fear of what? I do not know it anymore. The more I breathe, truly breathe into all cells of my body, the more my fear seems to disappear. My fear disappears like snow in summer. The sun breaks through the clouds, and I allow joy to enter, pure joy of knowing that you and I are one...

Exercise 14. Cleansing breathing

- Close your right nostril with your thumb and place your index finger on your third eye. Breathe in through your left nostril for eight seconds. Hold your breath briefly and close your left nostril with your middle finger – release your thumb and breathe out for another eight seconds. Take a short break and breathe in again. Do this exercise alternately left and right – three times.
- Extension: breathe in for four seconds, hold your breath for sixteen seconds and breathe out for eight seconds.

Exercise 15. Breathe consciously

- During the day try several times to feel consciously and to follow your breath. Start to breath in your stomach right up to the tips of your collarbones. Hold it briefly and then slowly breathe out again.
- Imagine that you receive all your body needs by breathing.

THE GODDESS UNDER MY FEET

*If there is love, no road is too steep,
no challenge too great and no trial too heavy...*

Whether they were Aboriginals, Indians or Druids, all ancient people owned a natural wisdom that we have forgotten. We ignored it. In its own way, each nation honoured the mother energy, the receiving and giving life-aspect in each of us. As a symbol for this honouring, they used the earth with all her aspects, like the holy oak. It was not just symbolic, they knew out of a natural connection that the earth gives life and feeds and protects us.

In tune and with respect, they used the abundance the earth was giving them in all her fertility. In doing so, they never forgot the fact that their descendants will need this planet to work out their learning processes. Only the necessary bit was taken. They never took out a plant with roots and all; they left behind what was necessary to ensure the propagation. Animals were carefully selected, so the species would not become extinct. Nothing was wasted: they ate the meat, used the skin for clothing and the bones for weapons.

All of this happened completely in tune, out of their natural instincts. Through rituals, they asked the plants and animals if they were willing to offer themselves for their growth. By doing so, the vegetable- and the animal kingdom admitted us as caretakers of mother earth.

During harvest festivals and moon-rituals, the mother's fertility was exuberantly celebrated and honoured. They gave grace to the earth for her life-giving energy, with respectful rituals. Not long ago we lived in harmony with the tides in and around us. We were conscious of the fact that the earth could only serve us out of equality and respect. We really knew we were dependent on mother earth, because without her material life would be impossible.

When Christianity came, these rituals were condemned and seen as heathen and barbaric. Many churches were built on ritual places to ban the heathen services. Often these churches are built on ancient power-places. Our ancestors used those power-places to inspire their rituals. They recognised them out of an inner connection. They asked the earth permission to build their lodgings and they never built them on negative energy lines. Now that we are willing to bear responsibility for our existence, this old knowledge is coming back to our disposal. We start to understand that we can no longer go on exploiting our earth without respect.

With the denial of mother earth, the goddess within each of us, we began to consider the feminine aspect as being inferior to the masculine one. In the past two thousand years, we banned our female intuition, our feminine wisdom and started overrating our ratio. Being a mother degraded to a second-rate occupation. In the West women who choose to become mothers without keeping their job, are seen as old-fashioned and dull. A short time ago being a mother was the highest status a woman could ever possess. Each of us knew that women were goddesses, the bearers of new life as an honouring to our divine Father.

Due to this process of denial, we started to realise we cannot go on this way. Creation gave us guardianship of mother earth. Mother earth, the goddess under our feet, gives us space to learn the lessons for our inner growth and development. As a loving mother, and with

an endlessly patience, she is watching how we learn our lessons.

People are waking up. By descending so deeply into matter, slowly but surely a deeper inner longing is being touched. Our womanhood, our need to care for, our intuition and our feelings, they no longer like to be swept underneath the carpet. After a period of overestimating our male qualities, it is time our renewed womanhood gets her place in creation. No power through oppression, no power by bossing over others, no, real feminine power. Not by wanting to control others, yet by being our own master. This will no longer be a process outside of us, in which we get appreciation by oppressing others, yet it will be an inner process. Sooner or later the result of it, undoubtedly, will flow out. Harmony between heaven and earth, between the masculine and the feminine and respect for our own being. Honouring our fertility, our creative force, no matter in which way that might be expressed. Honouring the mother, the goddess within, the goddess in each of us; in men as well as in women.

There have been many wake-up calls to save the earth. Believe me, it gives me the nerves. They originate out of fear and fear has never been a good adviser. Such arrogance to think we must save the earth! With the same haughtiness we thought we had to save the poor, we made them inferior to our power, and we converted their souls in exchange for some food.

As if we are the caretakers of all the abundance, mother earth gives to us. As if God would make a difference between black and white, catholic or atheist. As if mother earth would not give her food unconditionally to all of her children.

If mother earth decides that it has been enough, we are helpless with all our pride. She will never allow us to destroy her. If we do not learn our lessons voluntarily, she will intervene, increasingly more root-based. To progress the development of the earth, it is her ultimate goal to evolve.

No, it is not out of guilt and sense of duty we have to 'save' the earth. It is out of a mutual responsibility, out of love, unconditional love. It is out of respect and gratitude for her infinite, never ceasing service. Respect can only start within each of us. We may get to know ourselves in all our aspects, male as well as female. If we become conscious of the tides we are flowing through, we will understand that our personality is united to mother earth in all her fibres. United to the different realms we may rein, which we are a part of. Recognising our own rhythm, we start to recognise the rhythms around us and to respect them. Then we know giving and receiving have to be in complete harmony.

From that moment, we encounter the earth out of love and respect. From that moment, we will align ourselves again and, in love, give back what we took from her out of ignorance. For God's sake, not out of guilt. Sense of quilt will create new karma, so let us do it out of love and respect.

Then we will create heaven on earth. We let the immortal part of us, our soul, our divine Father and our creating male-principle, the sun, descend into matter; mother earth, our receiving fertile principle. By celebrating this sacred marriage the divine child, the Christ in us, will be born as a symbol for unconditional love and eternal life. This is not something God intended only for us Christians. It is a privilege that each person, sooner or later, will achieve on his way back to his true origin, on his way back to the light.

THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

*The more the heart expands, the broader the horizon becomes,
man will find increasingly more space for building the Kingdom of God.*

- Inayat Khan -

This morning while I was meditating, I suddenly found myself at the centre of the earth. I realised this when I was walking through my sacred and consecrated forest.

While walking, I connected myself to the earth under my feet. I completely allowed the energy to enter. The energy in this place feels ancient, very ancient. No wonder, once there was a Celtic initiation-place and the connected energy-lines had offshoots in this area. It is a remarkable power, a seldom-found phenomenon.

Suddenly it was back, the experience I had had during the meditation and a deep emotion came over me. The centre, yes I am the centre of the earth and connected to everything and everyone around me. Although it is impossible to travel over the world, I often explore this place. The moment I enter the forest another consciousness rises within me. I begin to walk differently, feel differently, and observe differently.

Green, I experienced the centre of the earth as green, the beautiful green of springtime, of the grass in the meadow. From this centre, I felt different streams and veins around me. It is a natural and amazing experience.

I have always felt that we turn the things opposite, back to front, upside down. I have always felt it is not good to change things on the outside. This feeling has increased over these last few years. How for God's sake can we save nature if we do not dare to connect ourselves to it, if we are not conscious of the fact that we are part of it, part of every tiny piece of mineral, every plant, every tree, and every animal? The moment we fully understand that nothing exists outside, that the outside is the inside of us, when we feel this in every cell, then we are ready to change the situation we created out of ignorance. Out of respect for myself, I will respect everything I experience externally.

Who takes care of the oxygen in the air? Who makes sure I have food to eat, clothes to wear? What material is the table made of I am writing on? If this is only in your mind, it will not affect you. Then you will unconsciously eat your meal. You will not realise there is an offer from the plants and the animal kingdom on your plate. You will forget to give grace for all of this. You will unconsciously pass through and return to the dust without being transformed.

The more you connect yourself to nature, the more you start to realise and feel that everything is breathing, has consciousness, is feeling and experiencing pain. No sooner have we truly felt this within, than we will be able to save the earth of all the injustice we caused to her.

Do not think that we are mighty enough to destroy the earth. Our goddess, our mother earth will never allow this. Lovingly she has allowed us to learn our lessons on her soil. Lovingly and without judgement, she watches us torturing and disturbing the harmony. She regularly gives a warning. Suddenly she will spit out fire or her waters will overflow our shores. Not to punish us but more wake us up and to show us what we are doing. Consciously or unconsciously, all of us know this cannot go on.

I walk through the forest and through the ditch with my sceptre. Is it a shaman sceptre or one of a shepherd? The night before I had a dream, I placed my sceptre on the ground and

it turned into a snake; transmutation, changing of the old. Each day I experience new intense adventures, since I fully started to connect myself with the earth, the forest, the plants and the animals. Now I can attune to the deer and regularly they show themselves to me. The deer represent the Indian-medicine for kindness. Undauntedly they go their way to Great Spirit and let themselves not be scared by the monsters they encounter on their road. They transform the bad into love, not into violence. No evil is able to resist love; no darkness can bear the light.

Carefully it began with one deer. To my amazement, I know by now, there are at least nine deer living in this area. Nine deer have shown themselves to me, yes made a complete performance. Can you imagine what I feel at such a moment?

Every day I visit my oak, give him my love and open myself to his strength and wisdom. It is an exchange of love, without expectations. Simply being, nothing more and nothing less. 'Pull your energy inside' I hear her say when I have to go into town for a short period. I am too open to walk through town without any protection. Yet why should I walk through town if there is a magical place where I can refresh and reload myself, where I can get new energy and a deeper kind of consciousness? No doubt, there will be a time I will be able to mingle with the people. Then this will happen with more richness than before, with even more connection.

Until that time I enjoy my hermit existence every day. I enjoy my connection to the centre of the earth, to nature and to all the beautiful things within and around me.

Knowing that the only way to heal nature and our dear earth mother is to stop exploiting her and to start giving her back everything I took from her, I will send my love into this place and restore the old energy with honour. It is a joy to be able to experience this every time again. Out of her loving presence, without any conditions, she enthusiastically continuous the cycle of giving and receiving.

MEDITATION 2

MEETING YOUR INNER CHILD

You can record the words from this meditation on a tape or ask someone to read it out to you. Take at least twenty-thirty minutes for the complete meditation. You can also first read the text and then go through the meditation step by step. If you like you can play some suitable background music.

- Sit down quietly and close your eyes. Breathe deeply in and out a few times and hand over in complete trust to mother earth all those things you no longer need. Allow this process to take place in complete tranquillity.
- Imagine a silver thread going out of your crown into heaven and allow the divine energy to fill your body completely, every cell in your body.
- When you feel your attention is completely drawn within you, go to your heart chakra. Imagine entering there...
- Now you enter a room. This room can have any shape. It can be round or square. It can be a building or somewhere in nature. Have a nice and quiet look at 'your' room and especially let the atmosphere penetrate you. The colours; what colours does your room have?
- Have a stroll around your room... Suddenly in a small corner - somewhere along the side you see a child... This child is you. Full of openness and attention you focus on this child and you allow her/his needs to penetrate you.
- Now take the time to put this into shape and let nothing limit you. Everything is possible and nothing is stupid. You could play or hug. Just have a look at what you both need. Allow yourself to experience it completely...
- Now sit in the centre of 'your' room. Pull your 'child' in between your knees and hold it firmly. Imagine a slide going from your heart to your root along your spine. Together you glide down this slide. Make the slide as long as you need in your fantasy. You land on a trampoline and together with your 'child' you completely live it up. Take all the time you need...
- Take a last jump together and you land back in the space in your heart. Before saying goodbye to your 'child' you both walk through this space. Have a look at what is changed in form, in the atmosphere and in the colours. Let this sink in.
- Give your 'child' a place of honour in the middle of the room and tell him/her that you will always be there when he/she needs you. Now say goodbye, knowing there will never be a farewell again...
- Take all the time you need to return into your body. Slowly start breathing consciously again and when you are fully present stretch out to all sides and try to yawn.

This meditation is a healing one, but your experiences can be very emotional.

If possible, share your experiences with your partner or a friend. If not, write them down in a diary.

Whenever you do not know what you really want, go inside the space in your heart and make contact with your inner child. The child within always knows what it needs and is not too modest to ask for it!

Allow yourself the space to play. It is healing for your soul!

At the end of the meditation, no doubt the room will have changed. Especially regarding colour and atmosphere. Usually it is lighter and more pleasant. Through this meditation, you clear up deep feelings of separation. Do the meditation as often as you need. The child within will become strong and healthy.

Try to forgive your parents and your past. We have all had our share of set-backs. Your parents did everything they could within their possibilities. Before forgiving, allow yourself all those other feelings. You can only really begin to forgive when you have fully lived through the pain, the anger and the fear. It is not possible to change the situation, try to look at the situation in a different way. This alone brings freedom.

PART 3
STRUGGLE AND SURRENDER

STRUGGLE AND SURRENDER

Only in the stillness and emptiness, initially flooded with all human shortcomings, you will finally encounter the 'I am' presence within.

When you are torn up by doubts and insecurity, know that you are close to the source, close to your own source.

By the time we have to leave Spain there is not even an indication of a suitable accommodation waiting for us in the Netherlands. I feel strong and healthy, reloaded by the sun and the love I received, and fully recovered from my hernia. Even my partner Giri radiates light and confidence. He has been a great nurse. Naturally, he took upon the care I needed and all the daily affairs, so I had plenty of time to fast, to meditate and to draw. I have drawn for hours, what a gift this renewed stimulant. After I get an unexpected hernia, our stay at the centre in the middle of France was no longer wise, and I feel grateful I followed the inner impulse to call an old friend in Spain. Lovingly my friend and her husband took us up in their house until we found our own little place. It was a blessed time for the four of us. Together we went through a lot and I learnt new drawing-techniques that greatly supported my process.

It was the mildest winter in years, so daily we were able to cherish the healing powers of the sun, an excellent healer. We felt renewed and reloaded by the sunlight and the sea! The people in Spain seem so much lighter and happier than those in France and at home. Their way of living, their family ties, the street life and the cosiness almost feels Eastern. Although I was not so mobile, because of my physical condition, we really felt at home. This period is now behind us, and we are ready for the feast of Easter, the new birth in the light.

I tried to spend this beautiful period as positive as possible and every day I used my imagination to create our own place in the Netherlands. I am disappointed and can hardly believe that it is still not there.

Was I too busy to create out of my personality, out of my willpower? Did I forget that it no longer works like that? I do not want to allow my disappointment in. No doubt, there will be a good reason why our own place is not yet there. Maybe it was not the right time or maybe I have not been clear enough in what I want, in what would be good for both of us.

This last statement could be true, because in all honesty I do not know what I really want. Even I do not know if we stay in the Netherlands or not, nothing is clear anymore. It is difficult to create out of so much insecurity. Anyhow, whether we will find a place in the Netherlands or not, at this moment a private spot is a necessity. On the way home such a place starts more clearly to shape itself. It does not necessarily have to be comparable with our little place on the estate, where we lived before we left for France. It may even be a small house somewhere in a village. I drop the practical objections coming along with having a private dwelling. They will be solved in due time.

We spend Easter with my boys in a rented caravan, situated in a lovely spot of nature. We can even rent the caravan for a longer period. My sensitivity speaks volumes. After a few days I know that my body absolutely does not appreciate the fact of being locked up in an airtight container. Yes, through my enlarged sensitivity I have become an increasingly difficult person.

There is no other option but to go back to our friends-stay. I need to prepare for the planned course and for the trainings-week I will spend with my upcoming Reiki master in Drenthe. A few days before I have to take up this master-week we get a letter from the housing association. I can hardly believe my eyes: they offer us a house!

I phone the housing association to get more information. No, it is not a house at a corner, it is in a row but it has a big garden. It is in a small village close to a forest. Completely overjoyed we get into the car. This time I will not leave this up to others, I want to feel the place myself. That is something I have lived and learnt before!

Anyway, as usual the folks upstairs have arranged everything in a great way. Everything comes at the right moment and at the right place. How often have I already experienced that? If I can let go my will and hand over my problems, I know everything that is good for me will be there at the right moment. How true this will be, is something I can only suspect later!

When we drive into the concerned street, I see three cute little blocks of two houses, each with red roofing tiles; they look just like gnome houses. I certainly would like one of those. Regrettably it cannot be one of them because the man on the phone said it was a house within a row. The number seems right; we must be in the wrong street. No, at the end of the street the sign shows the name we are looking for.

Excited we drive back. What a shame, nobody answers the doorbell. Maybe the gate is open. Yes, it is open and when I look through it the first thing I see are two cherry-trees in full bloom. No doubt a hammock should be in between those! I am absolutely over the moon!

I am completely lyrical and cannot wait to go and live there. It is a shame we have to wait at least six more weeks before they will hand over the key, because there are a few things that need to be renovated first. Yet with such a prospect we will manage to wait. Immediately we let go of our plans to leave the Netherlands.

Our friends happen to go on holiday during that six-week waiting period and so we can use their whole house. Did I not say everything is perfectly arranged?

We take up the privilege to work in our future garden as often as possible. The former residents have left an enormous mess, both inside and outside. Lucky us, by now we are used to clearing up messes.

A short while ago I had an acute hernia, now I have an infection in my left arm. I am joking about it to my housemates. Although these last few years I had enough practise in letting go, I probably still have to learn to delegate more. Well, that is only the way I feel, is it not? Maybe I am not humble enough yet. Maybe I should learn to ask you to peel my fruit in the morning. Oh well, as long as I can still do it myself...

My master-candidate Ilse cannot drive a car. That particular morning Giri drives me to her house. At that point we are halfway and, with interruptions, I can drive by myself the rest of the distance. Within a week's time I have to give a second degree Reiki-course, the group consists half of newcomers and the rest exists of repeaters. Nearly twenty people have signed up so far. The place in Brabant is two hundred and fifty kilometres away from the cottage where Ilse and I will stay this week. By now, I feel completely confident that I will be able to get there. If it was not meant, this Reiki class would not continue. I know through countless experiences, that the laws of the universe work this way.

During this week, I start to call Ilse my Kenyan sister. We agree that I will care for her in the practical way, giving her the necessary space to go through her own processes. If I cannot cope with it, I will let her know. After this agreement, she can at least let go her

worries about me. Ilse is an ever-busy woman, so the first assignment she gets is to drop the need of being in a hurry. Silently and in a meditative state we walk through the forest, and allow ourselves to experience things on all different levels. It is a revelation for her and takes her out of many years of routine.

Before we are able to give birth to the new inside of us, it is unavoidable that we have to break down old habits. You cannot pour water into a full bucket.

It is lovely to be together. We like our own space and we easily take in the space we need. In doing so, none of us feels restricted for a moment. We have a fantastic week and the weather is radiating. The nearer the evening of initiating approaches, the more obstacles have to be removed. There is plenty of time for pleasure, we sing together, hard and completely out of tune and sometimes even nicely, and we set up a cabaret for the coming course. All is well with my arm until the day after the initiation.

That afternoon we clean the house according to her Antillean customs; we start at the corners, bring the dust towards the centre of the room and remove it. Afterwards we do a ritual cleaning. When that job has also been done we take a bath and smudge each other with a mixture of sage and lavender. We use a sober meal and I start the actual ceremony. For this particular celebration, I have chosen for a ceremony representing the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether. It is touching to feel the presence of our friends in the other realm: my soul brother Everhard, and Ilse's dear father. Last year in Aruba, I was allowed to initiate this beautiful soul on his deathbed.

During that evening, I notice constant changes in Ilse's face. She suddenly looks like a Negro from Kenya and the next moment she is completely feminine. Whatever way, she becomes increasingly beautiful, increasingly mild.

The next day I cannot even peel any fruit or cook a meal anymore. As usual the Reiki-energy strengthens everything. It has accelerated the healing process. Without quilt feelings the tables are turned, from that moment on she takes care of me.

Within two days I have to drive two hundred and fifty kilometres and not only this, during that particular weekend I have to initiate new people. When I let go my thinking and bring my energy to the sacred space inside my heart, there is full confidence and no doubt the course will continue.

Regularly Ilse treats my arm and I constantly visualise that I can effortlessly move it. I could phone Giri to fetch us, but I do not use this option.

At this particular morning, we leave early. My arm feels much better. We take time for a few stops on the road and arrive in time at our destination.

The moment the course starts, my energy immediately begins to flow. In the same way as I do, everyone accepts the situation with my arm without complaining. Two beautiful young people, former kids of my children groups, are present to repeat the course. The last few years I initiated both of them in the second degree. They introduce a fresh wind of innocent wisdom.

This time my arm improves the more I focus on the initiations. All goes perfectly well. In every way this is a special weekend, the closure of a period of nearly six years of mastery. This is the moment I draw the final line under a period of working within a foundation. We closed it last Christmas, three months after ending my membership with the Reiki Alliance.

There is something new inside of me. A new expression of my mastership wants to manifest itself. First the old shape has to be released. Inside I feel with a deep inner security that completely different layers are asking to be peeled off. I cannot express this

feeling in words so it is difficult to explain it to others. For many it is threatening to see that what I am honoured for, the work I love so dearly and in which I am so successful, I voluntarily seem to give up.

People, students, brothers and sisters who have been so close to me in these years are now withdrawing. I can only guess for the reason. Does my 'being' subconsciously bring out too many fears? Believe me it hurts. At the same time it is a part of a process. It finds her origin in an inner knowledge; it is a deep longing of the soul to follow her destiny. The only way towards this soul-commitment is the willingness to release everything I am attached to. All old ideas and structures, everything I once learnt as being truth. It is the willingness to clear away all the obstacles within, and on my path.

It is the willingness to follow the inner impulses. Even though it may seem absurd, and even though I do not know what I am going through. I feel that the things that happened until now were only some kind of a prologue. From the point where I am standing now, there is nobody who can advise me what to do and where to go. Although sometimes I really feel the need of a good advisor who could 'acknowledge' the fact that I am not completely crazy. Unfortunately, things do not work out that way. From this moment on, it is simply a matter of strengthening my belief system and trusting the laws of the universe. Knowing that it is no longer me who rules everything, I have to connect myself unshakeably with my divine centre, my true Self. I try to let myself be guided. It is a matter of complete surrender. Of course, this process does not happen without struggle. True growth comes with pain and resistance. This does not mean I act as a victim, by thinking everything just happens to me. That is how I used to act in the past and that is why I experienced my life as a suffering.

Now I associate myself less with my physical reality and open up increasingly to live out of my soul-consciousness, life is usually good to me, even if my body goes through physical pains. Although I experience this pain to the full, I am no longer attached to it; I stand aside and increasingly become a spectator.

I have to be ready at each given moment, so when the time is right for the next step, I will not only hear the inner impulses, I will even have the space to respond to them. Letting go, time after time again. It starts to become quiet around me, very quiet. I probably need this silence now, and thank God I am no longer afraid of it. On the contrary, I love the silence as much as I love myself.

Do I have to continue with Reiki, and if so in which way? Questions I cannot answer yet. Deep inside I know that I must release all outer appearances. You cannot limit energy, you cannot structure energy, love has no form and at the same time love embraces all visible and invisible forms. Although it still feels as our next step, plans to go to South Africa are momentarily tucked away. Apparently, it is not the right moment yet.

Creating a home-base from where we can set out and where we can return to is much more important now. We need a kind of an anchor-point, so we do not always have to live out of a backpack. An ever so essential spot to recharge and to take the rest my body and soul need so bitterly.

What apparently seems to be a period of wasting time and laziness to the unsuspecting spectator, is the ideal climate to be able to evolve at great speed for the soul...

However absurd it may look to a society in which we hold on to all kinds of securities, somehow it does not seem right for me to cling to this kind of safety anymore. Stronger, I am forced to learn to live without any outer securities, not an easy challenge, but certainly a fascinating one.

Before our world tour, I was a successful Reiki master. I had a 'safe' disability pension and Giri had a great job with the prospect of a good pension. We had our own place with even more things than we really needed. Nothing has been left of all of this. Once again, we are empty-handed, probably even emptier than before.

No doubt to the outside world it must seem as though we made a huge step backwards. Believe me, it may seem that way, yet deep in my heart is this huge richness. A new strength is present, waiting for the moment to unfold. Now the time seems right. Many of us are awakening and preparing to be at service in all the initial work, which is necessary to evolve the earth and her inhabitants to a higher level. This means there must first be an enormous cleansing on a personal level and around us. As always, like the inside, like the outside...

Out of the celestial spheres for decades, this plan has been prepared. We were not conscious of this, we were still asleep, and we associated ourselves with the material world. Yes, we had completely forgotten our descent. This was not good or bad, it was just the path we had to travel at that moment. We had to go through all kinds of light and dark, to learn that every experience is equally precious. The aim was to prepare ourselves to become strong and willing to fulfil our destiny.

Now is the time to work together with our higher aspects, so while still in the material world, we can become cosmic instruments. Yes, we will once again become aware of the fact that we are little sparks, divine sparks and co-creators of that One creative principle. In doing so, we give our friends in the other realm the opportunity to continue their path of evolution. God's creation is an eternal changing movement.

Believe me; you do not have to worry what for God's sake you will have to 'do'. Slowly but surely, the period of 'doing' is over. The time of 'being' starts right now. What you are is mirrored in your surroundings. What you radiate will touch other souls and give these souls the opportunity to find their own light and let it shine clearly.

At the beginning of June, later than expected, we get the key of our house. We are determined to live in our own place by the time our friends returned from their holiday. Really, we somehow choose for a stressful situation. My inner voice tells me it is of vital importance to move into our own small house as soon as possible, and with good reason!

We come across an enormous mess. Immediately small miracles start to manifest. We receive help from everywhere, loving support in the manner of many helping hands, what more could I wish for? It is as though a white tornado goes through the house. There is some hard work to do: walls, ceilings and doors are thoroughly cleansed, the woodwork is sandpapered, and bags full of dust are vacuumed. Wallpapering, painting, and in particular lots of laughing. The atmosphere is positive and with childish amazement I notice how healing physical work can be when it is done in a lovingly atmosphere.

I still have serious problems with my leg. When I take a shower a few days later, I get frightened; my leg is almost twice the normal size. The next day I decide to go to the doctor. He diagnoses an infection of the veins and prescribes complete rest. So this poor man thinks I will rest on my laurels while being in the midst of chaos! No way. I cheat a bit with 'up there', ask for support, and continue to work to the full.

Giri loses himself completely and asks the utmost of our patience. Shiva is present in all

his fullness; creation and destruction take turns. Where are the peace and the harmony we both had when we lived in Spain?

A few confrontations happened in the garden. A few times I lost myself completely and shouted at him like a fishmonger. I could not stop it and shouted in despair: 'Are you just challenging me so I can give you a proper dressing down? Are you really that clumsy or do you want me to believe you are clumsy?' Then this clear insight quietens me down: 'I cannot believe you are this clumsy! The ultimate conclusion is asking for help when you are not able to do certain things by yourself'. Giri is an all-round man when he has insight in how certain things has to be done. To put it simply, he has to put aside his pride, and ask the help he needs. This week he tries to relieve me in every way but this fact increases his clumsiness. This asks the utmost of my patience and understanding!

Later on, and able again to look at you in love, I thank you for being such an important teacher. How could I overcome my biggest pitfall in this life, and how could I practise understanding and patience without you?

Pouring rain, a week full of disasters and yet, slowly but surely the work is done; we even do not give ourselves the chance to lose courage. A week later we close the door at our fiends' place and for the first time we will sleep in our own house. Yet, even at the threshold we are fully tested. Then suddenly two rescue angels are coming in, view the situation in one glance, and do everything to remove these last obstacles. They save no effort or expenses to equalize the floor, so the carpet can be put in the room that same day. It is far after working hours when those guys finish their job.

Intensely grateful I take a nice warm bath and put myself into bed. That weekend I keep on working to get our few belongings in the right places. Then I can hardly stand on my feet anymore. All right, although it is not easy to give things out of hands, the time is ready to give in, now I have set up the conditions necessary for surrendering. One part of me likes to do all things by myself. The other side of the medallion is that I like to have the things the way I want them to be. What a great learning process!

It turns out to be not just my leg. A few weeks later, I have to face the fact that the cause is a serious prolapse of my womb. On the way to the doctor, I know with inner security that this time I cannot prevent an operation. Possessing our own house is of vital importance to have the necessary space to go through this whole process.

It is difficult to relax, especially when there is so much work to do. For my peace of mind it has to be ready so I can be in a clean environment when I come back from the hospital.

The garden is a real blessing for me. There are many weeds and although I can hardly stand on my feet, I simply place myself on mother earth. Mother earth, goddess of wisdom, life-giving and forcing me to feel all the misery within me and I sure feel it! An enormous struggle rises, of the calibre I have not experienced for years.

My God, how many stains are still sticking on my soul!

Why on earth did I give up my disability pension? Must I truly prove myself, no matter what? Now we could really use the money. For two years I have hardly been able to work. Giri has not managed to find a job, not a steady one, nor a temporary one. We have no income and cannot participate in the national health security, because we do not want a benefit. We have private insurance with quite a high own risk.

All this thinking drives me crazy. Why I am suddenly worried about securities? Have I not been nourished for years? Have I not had food and drink all this time? What about the small miracles appearing on my path all the time? Are we not provided with everything we need?

Suddenly there is a relieving insight. We are back in western society. Here life seems to ask for securities. Even more, everything on this spot is based on so called securities. We have got our own front door so we are back in the system. Okay, that is clear now. I can always choose to ask for my disability pension again. Nobody will tell me that it is a luxury. The more the days and the process pass by, the more my fears are flowing away, into the earth. What will happen to my inner source of strength, faith and trust if I decide to choose for security? Do I not have enough to eat and to drink, and do I not have a roof above my head at this moment? Am I not extremely well taken care of? Why should I give in to the fear that this care comes to an end? Today I have enough to eat, and tomorrow, well we will see about that tomorrow.

What is fear otherwise than a lack of faith and trust?

Am I not the one to encourage Giri not to go back into his old job? To take time for his process, so something new can manifest itself. At the same time there is this eternal duality, the hope and the longing he will take care of me, so I can continue the process of letting go. When I get angry after another failed job application, I even start to release this irrelevant longing. What gives me the right to ask Giri to take responsibility for me? I can only ask him to bear his own responsibility.

This is not all. With all physical pains and insecurities, our relationship finds itself in a crisis. There is a moment I realise that I am permitted to stop understanding, to stop wanting to protect and to nurse. Lovingly I make my limits clear, and I realise that I still have some attachments towards you. I start releasing these attachments, and live through a kind of a grieving-process, similar to the one I went through when my friend Everhard died. I go into the forest and sing the liberating 'A-sound'; I feel the pain and the loneliness of an imaginary divorce. In the end of this process I give everything out of hands, I give you back to the universe and let go of my fear completely. It is no longer important what I would like, I am ready, no matter what they will ask of me. I realise, that truly unconditional love signifies that, by no means, I must claim you or try to change you. When I let go, the result is not important anymore, and both ways are possible, going alone or together. Whatever will happen, inside there is still this power, this all-penetrating love, this unshakable connection to the divine through which I can never be lonely.

Still, a fulfilling relationship is just that bit extra, the cherry on the cake. And then the miracle unfolds! Through letting go of my expectations and attachments, and by lovingly and clearly setting my limits, I give you back your responsibility and the space you need. This makes you stand up for yourself. You receive more clarity about the road you have to travel and we renew our love and our relationship. Increasingly we grow towards a spiritual partnership. It has hardly anything to do with a sexual relationship, more than this we have a sensual relationship. It is as simple: Love is not something you can commit, love is there or not. Our love is there, no doubt about that. I enjoy, we enjoy, even more intense and more equal than we used to.

Loving confrontations are necessary to go to deeper layers of peace and inner harmony. It doesn't matter if all my attempts founder. The here and now is the only thing that matters.

Today we continue together. It is lovely to watch you. By daring to stop living up to my expectations and by stopping demanding all those crazy things from yourself, your inner beauty start unfolding. When you start breathing, and allow life to enter into all the cells of your body, your heart will triumph over your mind. The rest, including a suitable job, will

follow when the time is ready for it.

By being honest, by expressing things that disturb me, I give myself the space I need. Luckily this happens increasingly faster. When there is insight and understanding, I can instantly drop what happened yesterday and start 'a new day' afresh.

Then I get to reach my deepest pain. I have failed! I, who decided so long ago not to allow a knife in my body again, have failed. Where for God's sake did I go wrong? I step in an old pitfall, torture myself beyond measure and feel extremely guilty. All at once, it does not help anymore that I can feel completely whole with even a hernia, an infection of the veins, etceteras. I feel powerless, and a loser.

Suddenly there is this enlightened answer: Ego Yasmin, it is all ego. You thought you could arrange everything your way. You made a distinction and thought the one was better than the other. Well, it is not, you do not arrange anything. You can continue to be pessimistic and see all of this as a punishment of God or you can see it as a renewed possibility. You can surrender, and accept the situation or you can continue to fight like you used to, remember? 'Yes, but for God's sake why is all of this happening to me, have I not already had enough...!'

No, I do not want to travel that road anymore. No doubt, there must be a reason why I am given this challenge. The only important thing is the way in which I wish to handle all this. What can I learn from it? Maybe in the way I handle this I can be an example to others. It is as simple as that. Growing brings along pain and resistance. Bringing the inner conflict into harmony is our way to growth. My soul already made these choices before she incarnated on earth. No time to waste, work needs to be done.

Then my inner voice is whispering: use pain and suffering to transform yourself into love. In every defeat lies the seed of transformation. Embrace your defeats and celebrate your victory. That is the art of living!

I suddenly get an insight. 'Of course, this is how I have simply lived for years'. However negative something may seem to be, I always look for the positive side of it. If that is not the real art of living! So let me once more step inside this process, take it as a challenge, and make a nice experience out of it! Now the time is ripe to let go the old, it has served you long enough. Years ago you travelled this lonely path and felt misunderstood, however, deep inside, you knew with an unshakable inner security you had to travel it. Firstly, if you had had this operation that time, the festering no doubt would have found another way out. Secondly, you still had to learn to embrace yourself lovingly, to honour your womanhood and to respect it, so you could fully live the goddess within. After neglecting your vehicle for such a long time, you allowed yourself to listen to it in order to give it all the love and support it needed so badly. This process made you incredibly strong. You learned to enjoy the phenomenon of life. The child within you was waking up, the playful and mischievous child. At that moment you made a choice, you fully said yes to life, yes to everything that comes along with it.

You will never experience the intense joy of being completely at inner peace, if you are not willing to experience pain in your life. If you are excluding one part, you are not living at all. Instinctively you are dead.

This time, the situation seems to be the same but the festering has gone, the process has been lived through and has been completed, and it is time for the new to be born. The time is right to say goodbye to your womb and to let it go in love. See it as a new birth Yasmin. A new birth, this means crackers with candy-coated aniseed. They must be pink this time; I have always wanted a girl!

Positively I begin to prepare myself for the operation. I am outdoors as much as I can and constantly walk barefoot. This gives many wasp-stings, but the urge to feel the soil under my feet is bigger than ever. Regularly I lie on the lawn and breathe the energy of mother earth into every cell of my body.

Mother earth, out of which all the material life originates and to which it will return. It is a huge miracle to realise how great her power is and how far her range. The least I can do is encounter her with love and respect.

I give myself a treatment regularly. I start a thanksgiving ritual to my womb, she allowed me to give birth to two beautiful sons. What a privilege, how many will envy me for this. I try to give my womb's energy a place in my system, so her energy will still be there after the operation. I am grateful for the fact I gave birth to my children, that I could feel so feminine, especially these last few years.

I start to let go of those people around me, who somehow still seem to need something. Lovingly and without expectation I send them energy, they can determine what they want to do with it. I demand them nicely to get out of my aura and to rely on their own strength. I try to let go the expectations towards all those I felt so connected to and who are not here at the moment I need them so badly. I free myself from all the ballast that asks too much energy, valuable energy so necessary for my healing process. I let go my concern towards others. I hand it all over to Him who can handle this much better and without suffering.

How much pain and suffering from others have I consciously and unconsciously taken upon myself? How arrogant to think I could take the burden of the world upon my shoulders! Every soul chooses her own learning process. Every soul has the right to fulfil her own karma. I may feel compassion and sympathy, yet it is not necessary to suffer together.

Peace of mind comes over me, deep and intense. Yet deeper layers of fear seem to be peeled off and I feel stronger and even more carefree than I used to. Giri gets a job in a factory for twenty hours. It leaves him enough space to take care for me as well. Even if he earns less than the benefit pays, it does not seem important anymore.

Just for today I will not worry.

I undergo several examinations. Without exceptions, all the people I meet are special. I am able to show my appreciation immediately and I feel grateful for all this loving care. Luckily it is still the same gynaecologist I used to have before. I build up an open and honest relationship with him. It is going to be a complicated and big operation, so my wish to be operated without anaesthesia is something I have to let go. At least I can prepare myself optimal to make sure the poison leaves my body as soon as possible. I ask my surgeon to be as positive as he can during the operation, and I like to listen to a tape with Mantra music on it. He gives me all the space I need.

Fourteen days before the operation I start to bring my energy into the hospital by filling the entire building with healing and loving energy. I imagine the situation as lively as possible.

It is time to quit smoking and to eat as healthy as possible, so my body can regain strength. During this period I meditate a lot.

I spend many hours philosophising in my dear hammock. I glance over the pond, which surprisingly enough looks like a womb, and time and again I feel the energy of my own womb. It feels good. I feel ready and I am no longer afraid of losing anything.

Then suddenly the moment is there. I pack my suitcase and Giri takes me to the hospital.

On the first day there is not much to do, except hanging around. The intake is followed by a few shortly examinations and a talk with the anaesthetist, that is all. They put me in a four-person room. This department is linked with the maternity unit; this means there are visitors and telephone-calls constantly, so it is anything but quiet.

Yet deep inside I feel this quietness and I would like to keep it that way. The lady opposite me likes drama and constantly tells her juicy story. Something I used to be afraid of before, I am doing now, I ask her to leave me alone. That feels incredibly good! I hand out herb cigarettes in the smoking area. It leaves an enormous smell and the nurse curiously asks if we are blowing drugs. A young mother of a newborn baby friendly asks me to take her back to her room. Without reason she starts to talk about Reiki. Amazed I tell her about my first book, and she really would love to read it.

Much later she will tell me that our encounter meant a breakthrough for her. That night she has a vision and the next day she decides to go home with her baby, no matter what the specialist might say. How brave! When she gets back into my life, I am allowed to give her and some of her friends the gift of a Reiki initiation.

The staff has decided it will be good for me to take a sleeping pill, so I do not have to worry about anything - and they will not be bothered by me! I feel what I really want. I am not worrying, yet because there is such unrest in this room, I choose for a good night sleep, I will surely need my reserves.

From midnight I am not allowed to eat or drink anything, so they will operate on me at eleven o'clock in the morning. That is late; still it is the way it is. I stay in bed as much as possible and listen to my music. Some dear friends will send me energy. Around nine o'clock I feel waves of light and love coming towards me, it gives me a blissful feeling. Meanwhile I listen to Mantra music. To the people around me it may seem I am asleep. Certainly the reason why nobody tells me that the schedule is delayed until one o'clock in the afternoon, I am still calm. Later they will tell me my heart rate was fifty-five beats a minute, this seems extremely low and happens normally with sportsmen or people who meditate a lot.

When I arrive at the operating room, my Walkman is playing Om Nama Shivaya. My surgeon tells the anaesthetist to let it play until the operation is over. I feel his positive attitude, and surprisingly I realise that I still do not feel a trace of tension. There is an entire trust and a complete surrender. How different I feel compared to the first time, years ago, when I thought I would never wake up from the anaesthesia!

After the operation, I regain consciousness before I am back in my room. I am wide-awake and feel incredibly clear. No doubt this is because all the small lights I received. The operation took a long time, which we knew in advance. It is lovely to see Giri. After a tender greeting, he puts one hand under my back and holds the other hand just above my heart-chakra. It helps a lot to bear the pain. It is almost half past ten when Giri goes home. Nobody remarks on this, how fantastic.

That night I remain wide-awake and have a lot of pain. The night nurse regularly comes to check my drip. Why does she not look at me, just come and sit next to me, hold my hand or whatever? Without any interest, she glances at me. What a shame, I need a caress over my head as much as I need the drip.

Luckily the operation is over and I can start to build up my health again. One-step forward each day that is my focus, pain or no pain. Of course there is this special angel, who makes me feel privileged. Not only is his physical care excellent, he also has that special something, which everyone in this position needs: pure inspiration! I enjoy the way he does his job. When he enters the room, every space fills with light. It makes no difference who he takes care of, young or old, beautiful or ugly. For everyone he has this loving

attention, which makes you forget you are in a hospital.

This does not mean the others do not do their job fairly well. Each of them offers his or her special contribution. Regrettably, the emphasis is on the physical care.

Only a few people know I am here so I do not get many visitors. Especially the first days this feels fine, for I actually need my rest. I love Giri or someone else to sit next to me, just holding my hand, without doing anything. Unfortunately, I do not get much rest. Shortly after my operation, things turn mad with some new admissions and an emergency. The telephone keeps on ringing; it is even too crazy for words. Peace and quietness are the most necessary elements in a healing process.

I brought my homeopathic medicines and a special ointment for the wound. I have my own herbal tea and there is a candle on my side-table. Every day I take a little stone out of my stone-bag. I place it on my altar together with an angel-card for that day. I listen to meditative music and treat myself as often as possible. It is a great way to create my own energy and to shut myself off from the outside world. I particularly enjoy all the mail I receive.

However healthy I was before the operation, when I look into the mirror two days later, I feel eighty years old, and look like sixty-five. Oh well, that can only improve. After four days I am allowed to eat everything. I do believe it is sensible to keep this within limits. I make my own herbal tea. There is a big choice on the menu; even unpolished rice and vegetarian food are on the list. Things certainly have changed in all those years!

The reactions I get on my bedside table are usually positive. Sometimes somebody wants to know exactly what it means and this brings about great talks. My 'angel' has heard about my book. I promise him to send a copy when I get home. He felt amazed how peacefully I entered the operating theatre and he is curious about the way I undergo this whole process, it is something he would like to learn. I tell him that I think he is already a sparkling light and how much I enjoy the way he does his job.

The fifth day he comes in to say goodbye. I give him a big hug and thank him for his great care. I feel privileged he was here during these first difficult days and I fully grant him his free days, however I regret he is off duty.

There are more lights around me. The girls who serve the food, nothing is too much for them. Whether they raise the head of my bed or get the desired teabag out of my cupboard, it all happens with this same joy. I constantly tell them how much I appreciate all of this and I never forget to thank. As usual, I only encounter kindness.

Nearly almost, the nurse who was being in service during my first night is working now at day shifts, and does not seem to like me. Although we have hardly spoken a word since that night, I feel her resistance every time she enters the room.

Shortly before I leave, I have my 'crying day'. I have constipation, it is painful and a nuisance. I am sitting on the toilet the way I would do when I am at home. I show my displeasure audibly! About twenty minutes later, I enter the room with a beaming face. You should have seen all those staring faces!

A friend sent me a tape with beautiful Mantra music on it, and I get ecstatic while listening to it. Then suddenly I feel the need to cry. The nurses immediately drop everything and come closer to hold my hand, I have never before had so much attention! I make clear I feel fine, so they can continue with their work. I draw the bed curtains, carry on singing and have a good cry. Certainly it is not only grief that comes out.

Feeling relieved I go to the toilet. They look at me compassionately. Believe it or not, I really feel excellent.

Although I try to make my stay as positive as possible, I would still like to go home as soon as possible. Hospitals, you should not be there if you want to get better. As soon as the stitches come out, Yasmin will leave. Giri already made his hours for this week, so he is free to fetch me that afternoon. He brought Barend, my cuddly bear, so right there and then, I start crying. I do not say goodbye to my roommates, I had already done this in my own way. When we arrive home the gate opens and the car is driven into a decorated garden. I start crying again! After a few chilly days it suddenly becomes a bit warmer and that same afternoon I am lying in a special chair in the garden. Before doing so I thrust my body onto mother earth, so I can feel her healing energy flowing through all my body cells. I cannot tell you how it feels, the lovely sun on my face and the fresh grass under my hands.

What a present this garden is. Thank you, thank you so much. How great everything has been arranged, once again perfectly on time. You always know exactly what I need. Why should I ever doubt this?

How nice for our friends to be present, who accommodated us so lovingly during our world-trip. The first crackers with candy-coated aniseed are consumed. What a nice tradition this is. It is just how it feels. Something new has been born and no doubt, it will bear fruit. How is something that will remain hidden for the time being. The next day it is cold and damp, so I have to stay indoors. I realize what an outdoors person I have become. I feel boxed in these days, it almost makes me feel as though I am suffocating. Our dwelling is very tiny. I long so much for the sun, God, please send me some more sun.

Does He know how much I need it? A few days later the sun is shining again. Sometimes I can only be outside for half an hour and sometimes I can stay out all day. I absorb them, all those rays of sunshine. Dear sun, source of energy and strength, you charge my battery a bit and I really need it.

*Thou, the source of all strength,
whose beams light up the world
Light up my heart
so I may do your work.
Celtic sun-prayer*

It surprises me how supple I am already. I can easily get into my hammock. It becomes my favourite place to rest, to meditate, to muse and to treat myself. I enjoy the progress I make. Even all the inconveniences do not counterbalance that. As a matter of fact, they are becoming increasingly less every day. I do not experience it as a problem that I have been 'locked up' in this place for almost four months. At this moment, I cannot think of a better place to be. The only thing I have to get used to is all the street-noise, the cars and the mopeds, and in sunny weekends the radios outside in the gardens. Luckily me, this last noise becomes less penetrating, and the first one I am already used to by now. During the week, especially during the day, there is also lots of silence.

I love the silence so much.

As soon as my body is up to it, Giri takes me to the forest. I intensely enjoy the first autumn colours and especially the toadstools. Every new day I enjoy the fact I can bridge more distance. Although the circulation in my legs is not good at all, for the first time in four months I can walk quite easily. This is a great improvement.

I only have a few visitors, so that too is perfect. After a week, Giri goes back to work for half days, and I particularly enjoy those solitaire hours. Outside in the garden I

communicate with the plants and the birds. Sometimes a butterfly lands on my hand and that gives me a heavenly feeling. How wonderful, the butterfly fits perfectly in the process I am going through.

The butterfly is the symbol of the eternal cycle of self-transformation. The egg symbolises the start of a new birth, the beginning of every deed of creation. The larva is the stage in which we decide whether we will work out the thought or idea, whether we will manifest it in the matter. The cocoon-phase is the period of repentance in which we look at the best way to put this new thing into effect, how all of this will fit into our complete being. Then the new birth follows, the stage of the butterfly. We can share our new being with others.

I feel privileged that I am able to enjoy more than I did before. Joy gets a deeper dimension. This is only possible because everything gets naturally to a deeper dimension when you live consciously...

From the moment I am able to drive by myself, I go to the forest on my own. Experiences are more intense when I am alone, then I look and enjoy in a different way. I need these moments of silence and especially the strength of Mother Earth. The forest equates the hermit and the high priest within me. Never have I felt so connected to mother earth. I must feel her; I must touch her and smell her. No wonder, I need her energy so badly for my healing process.

BAD NEWS

It has been six weeks since the operation and I seem to heal well. Each day I enjoy the progress I make and I inhale each ray of sunshine in my garden. Whenever possible I lay daydreaming in my hammock and I feel I am returning into the great womb. I feel whole and satisfied.

Consequently, I meditate twice a day. Not only does this feel good, I also need it. In the mornings I start with breathing and body-exercises, in order to give my body as much support as necessary. I treat myself each day and since Giri feels in harmony again, he also regularly gives me a treatment. His loving support is touching and works both ways!

Going to the forest alone, I am able to walk quite a distance. Today, for the first time, I go by bike. What a blessing the forest is so nearby! I made up my mind to find my own special tree and to initiate it. I almost seem to know where it is and now I am able to bridge that distance.

I feel whole and complete when I walk through the forest. It is a gift to be able to walk again after such a long time! I dare my limits. I feel it is important to increase my condition.

Autumn is one of the seasons I endlessly love. The weather is extremely beautiful and it seems to remain that way because during the last full moon the sky was bright and clear.

It is for the first time in years that I am in the Netherlands during autumn. No doubt, that is why I enjoy it more intensely than I used to do. The colours are so beautiful, like a painter's-palette. I feel that I have never seen so many different kinds of toadstools. It is touching to see that ultimately everything that dies is living on in a different form. You find most of the toadstools on or around sown-off trees, or on the apparently dead piece of wood. The light in this period is special as well. I enjoy the quietening of nature. The energy is withdrawing before winter starts, before the dying-process begins.

I intensely feel the process of stillness and repentance within myself. Even after this four-month retreat, I like to be alone and feel little need for company.

I am looking for paths that normally are not on my route. There is more quietness, and the energy feels different. After a while, the path continues right in between the pines and the broad-leaved forest. It gives a perfect image. To the right there is the pinewood, the female and receiving part, the mystical and the dark. To the left there is the broad-leaved forest, the male aspect of creation. It is pure strength, with his open character upwards to where the sunlight falls through the beautiful autumn roof of leaves, just perfect! At this moment, feeling quite good in harmony with the light and the darkness within, I walk right in the middle of it. It is a shame it is too cold to walk bare-foot, I would love to feel the earth under my feet.

I experience the principle of the Holy Trinity; the principle of the three-fold power expressing itself in perfect strength, perfect wisdom and perfect love, also known as light, warmth and energy.

When I come to my tree, I wrap my arms around her. I cannot quite manage, because she is too big. I think she is about sixty years old. I feel her strength flowing into my stomach. Then I surrender to her breathing. Funny, it feels different to mine; she exhales longer than she inhales. She is a real giver. It is a healthy and strong tree. There is a carpet of moss on her roots. While I sit down, I let my back, which feels so painful, rest

against her trunk. I completely recharge myself. When it is enough, I thank the oak tree for her life-giving energy.

Back home, I treat myself for the last time to a cracker with sugar-coated aniseed. I have had enough of this. It is time to face reality. Although in essence I feel good, I know all too well that inside my body there is still something wrong. I can keep on making myself believe that it has to do with the operation, yet deep inside I know better.

The next day Giri and I go to the doctor's again. He confirms what I already suspected, there is more going on, and this probably means a second operation. I am glad I am not alone!

Before this will happen my body has to heal, and to gain strength to deal with the next operation.

I allow my sadness to be. In between there are many good moments. The next day I get up with an intense inner feeling of unrest. I know I will have to go through this alone and I am determined to do this as positive as possible. I do my exercises and after my meditation, I go to the forest. I look for a place where I can surrender myself completely, and I start to breathe and to sing. Crying, breathing, singing and yet remaining fully present. Repeatedly I breathe into my stomach, I sing the A-sound and consciously I follow my process. At this moment, this is the best therapy I can think of. I feel deep despair and beg for support. God, help me, what is the meaning of all this? Suddenly I hear a rustle and I open my eyes. I stop singing and surprised I look around. Tens of leaves in beautiful autumn colours float down in the bright morning light, it gives a fairy-tale view.

I feel much lighter now. For the first time in months, I allow myself to fully experience the presence of Everhard, my dear soul brother Everhard, who lovingly looks upon me from the other realm. I sing our special song for him. I feel vulnerable, yet strong enough to continue walking to my tree.

My dear oak tree, it feels so good to lean against your trunk, to breathe with you and to sense your energy within me; to feel you are in me and I am in you. This time I do not have much to give, but that does not bother you. For you there is no condition to exchange your energy: like I give this to you only if you do something back for me. You give out of abundance and your giving never ends. The more you give, the more there is to give. The more I allow it to flow, the more is flowing towards me. Thank you tree, tomorrow I will see you again.

Tomorrow I will bring you some tobacco in my small pouch, because I feel an intense need to show my gratitude and like to do that in a way, I probably did so in the past. Past and present continue to melt together. What a shame I do not smoke anymore, the need to smoke sometimes arises; yet I think it is not such a suitable time. It seems appropriate, once in a while, to smoke a small cigar, we will see. By now, the most important thing is that I enjoy. Every day I want to go into the forest. It feels necessarily to be outdoors and just to experience the relative quietness of the forest.

I have remarkable meetings. I walk down a lonely path when I see a man approaching on a sledge, pulled by at least twelve dogs. I hesitate and withhold my pace. Do I want this encounter or shall I go back? I am not such a hero when it comes to dogs, or at least not so many dogs. I choose to walk on. The man immediately stops his sledge and starts to talk to his dogs. When I come closer, he takes up his place on the sledge again and commands the dogs to leave. When they pass me the man looks at me with the proud look of a Norwegian God. Wow what a team! Not only the man, also the huskies are very beautiful.

A few days later, I cycle to the forest and fall asleep in a small meadow next to the cows. Later, cuddled up against my tree I nod off again. It is late when I return to my bike. There a young man, making an African drum, happily greets me. We engage in an interesting conversation about music and drums. We argue about this special forest, in which the biggest variety of trees, plants, birds and toadstools of this area are be found. I ask him to play something for me and he does so with great pleasure.

I feel elated when I cycle home. There is a reason why I live here in this lovely little dwelling, so close to this beautiful forest with her wonderful atmosphere, so near to the ancient initiation place for women. Maybe I have been here before. Oh well, it does not matter. It is so symbolical now another layer within me is being touched and released. While cycling, the message of a friend slowly dawns to me. The name of this place and of the forest means sacred forest. In the past, in my street, there was an initiation place for women. I immediately knew which place she meant. Together we went there to have a look. Unfortunately the farmhouse has been broken down, yet the slate-line is still present and will continue to attract positive things. I immediately knew it must be an old Celtic place and from that moment I just look at this street through different eyes. In whatever way, it is a lovely street.

The weekend is not too bad, still deep inside it keeps on gnawing; could the gynaecologist have known this, has he been too careless? I hope not, but I do think so. When I want to share my grief over this situation, they advise me immediately 'to do something about it'. That is an easy and emotionless solution and this suggestion really irritates me. I was not even thinking in that direction and I am certainly not planning to walk that way. Things happen the way they happen. Although I do not quite understand the meaning behind all of this, no doubt this does not happen to me by coincidence.

I do not feel the need to play for judge. I would rather leave that up to God. He is the most loving judge there is!

Apparently, the job is not over yet. Not that it will ever be over, yet I did not expect this development. Upstairs they always have a few unexpected surprises.

In a dream, it becomes clear to me that an operation is necessary. This makes me profoundly sad and I notice that a few of my friends find it difficult when I show this sadness. I have to be positive, that is what I always am. It concerns me people seem to have forgotten that I never allowed myself to push away true sadness, and I have also stimulated this attitude in my workshops.

I react in a ferocious way. I realise it is an illusion that these contacts have to do with equality. I am not allowed to be human: I still have to be God. Of course, I am a divine human being, just like everybody else, but this goes too far for me!

A moment later Jonathan's body is floating in the air, it got hazy and started to become invisible. 'Do not let them tell funny things about me or make a God out of me, okay Freek? I am a seagull. At the most I enjoy flying a bit more.'

Jonathan Livingston Seagull.

Well, I have expressed my mind and that was, together with my tears, balsam to my soul. I also say thank you for this experience. My firepower is touched and my energy has started to flow again. The next day I feel much better and realise that in the end it really does not matter. I have said that for years, I have felt that for years, I have lived that for years. Life consists only of experiences.

Like a magnet, every human draws those lessons towards him, which are important to

their soul. Freedom of choice allows the individual to deal with those lessons. Does he experience life as a suffering? Does he experience himself as a victim of the circumstances? Alternatively does he realise that the function of suffering is a process of evolution of every soul who descends into matter, a process which has been voluntarily chosen by the soul before her incarnation. With this insight it is possible to place ourselves in the role of spectators and by doing so, we rise above all suffering. It is all about being in this process without feeling guilty, without judging. Can I make something positive out of this humiliation, so a celebration is allowed to originate?

Now it starts to tickle inside of me. At a certain level I am full of energy. I must get rid of it in one way or another. I feel it is not the right moment to initiate people. A few months ago I suddenly had a full class of Reiki-students. Although I did not make myself known in any way, the people just seemed to drop out of the clear sky. The living room became too small, and suddenly we got another accommodation. It is a strange phenomenon because usually you have to plan those things long in advance. Although two days before I could hardly stand on my feet, everything showed that the weekend had to go on. Even if I had to take short breaks in between each initiation, it was a special event for everyone. As I accept my process naturally, nobody seems to have difficulties with my physical situation. Since that time another five people were waiting, who by all means wanted to be initiated by me. No more people were added, that was a clear sign. You cannot force energy; it has to find her own flow. That is something I have been convinced of since a long time. When Giri sends the invitations, two out of five cancelled the course, something that had previously never happened. Well, they cannot tell you more clearly that it is not the right time to initiate people, can they? Up there, they simply showed me to take some more time to withdraw. So there seems nothing left but to simply accept this. In fact, I do not get bored for a moment.

For a long time I have not slept much, but this night I hardly sleep a wink, I am full of energy. That morning I get up with a feeling of renewed strength. Yes, I feel as though I can cope with everything. It has been months since I had so much energy and yet it feels different!

I draw one of my medicine cards. It is the eagle, straight up. The eagle is the symbol for spirit. It means you have the ability to rise above everything and have a perfect overview. A gift you can only accustom when you have learnt to welcome the depths as well as the heights in life, without making a distinction between right and wrong. Both originate from the same source and are only a test case to see how strong you are in your faith towards Great Spirit.

More than before, I feel I am here to learn many, many lessons. More than before I feel I am learning! It is easy to have faith and trust when all is going well. Bearing in mind those last few years and despite all the trials, or rather thanks to all the trials, my faith and trust have become as big as they are now!

Thank you Great Spirit. I will go on, I will not give up. I want to fly like an eagle. It is not by coincidence you appeared in my dreams. Months ago, when I was just back in the Netherlands, I attended a Shaman meeting. Someone there sold drums. On one of these drums was the image of an eagle. I immediately knew this one was meant for me. Wherever I went, I felt the energy of the drum. When I finally decided to buy it, the owner asked if I did not want to hear the sounds of the other drums. No, that was not necessary. No doubt it has to be this one. I even did not feel the need to explain it!

Dear drum, you have been out of tune for a while. Today you are yourself again and your sound is deep and beautiful, it is the call of the heart.

The more the days are progressing, the more I continue to get back into balance, the

more the forest starts revealing itself to me. A few weeks later, I see my first deer. From that day on, the deer show themselves regularly to me, even during daytime. It is not just one deer, a few weeks later seven of them appear on my path. How can I describe the intense joy and richness of such a wonderful experience? How can I let you share this deep knowing that I am increasingly becoming a part of the world of miracles, everything and all around me?

SURRENDER

They take me into the operating room and there I look into the laughing eyes of my surgeon. We have known each other for quite some time. Years ago I chose the alternate route, and he was the only one who dared to support me on this path. Now this is no longer possible, the time is right to clear up the inheritance from the past. Our relationship is based on mutual respect. This has to do with the fact that I put myself on an equal base with him. In those days that would have been unthinkable to me.

It is the second time in a short period that I am here. Thank God, I could not imagine this to happen. Otherwise, I would not have had the courage to undergo all of this. Yet, now the moment has arrived, I am here with the same intention as a few weeks ago. Without a trace of fear, and completely prepared for all that will happen. Understandably, it feels different compared to the first time. Yet after the first fright when I heard I had to undergo another operation, there is absolutely no grudge and no blame left.

I have the same tape with music on my head and like the last time I am allowed to keep it on during the operation. Doctor Jansen wants to know what is on the tape. I answer: Om Nama Shivaya. He curiously likes to know what the meaning is of that. I fully smile back while saying: 'I surrender myself into the hands of doctor Jansen, in full faith that he will do a great job.'

He starts to laugh and while squeezing my hand, he reassures me that he will do his utmost best. I know he will do everything feasible to complete this job as good as possible.

The anaesthesia starts his work. I surrender myself to the hands of Doctor Jansen, as a symbol for God's hands. I am fully convinced that all the powers of the universe will work together to let happen what has to happen, in a most excellent way. Whether he is conscious of it or not, Doctor Jansen does not have to do this all alone.

A few weeks later, when I return to the hospital for a check-up, he proudly and slightly amazed tells me that he has never performed a similar operation in such a short time and with so much ease.

When I am back in my room, I quickly regain consciousness and immediately I am wide-awake. I feel grateful that this 'job' is finished. After all these months, after all these years, my body can finally begin its reconstruction, gaining a piece of new vitality. When I look at myself in the mirror two days later, I am amazed that the traces of pain and suffering, which were so visible to my jaw, especially after this awful operation, have vanished completely.

Yes, my jaw. That is a completely different story. How could I for God's sake have thought that this vulnerable body would simply accept implants? From the time I was a child, my body did not even accept silver earrings. Everything strange to my body was rejected by it, long before I consciously started to work with energy. Regarding my jaw, there was no other option. I could no longer postpone it, so I prepared myself as well as I could. No doubt, on a subconscious level there was this aversion, this resistance not to accept it, and the consequences were awful. I constantly had infections, and the pain in my head was awful. I could quite easily allow the pain, and no longer let myself be influenced by it. Yet, this was from a different calibre, which drove me to the edge of insanity. Constantly allowing the pain and despair, constantly trying to let go, to arise above it, and keep on believing that a miracle would happen. How optimistic I normally may be, sometimes I had to dig really deep for it. I simply could not take it anymore. Then I would call out in utter despair that the folks up there had tortured me enough, and once I got rid of it for a

while, I would continue with renewed courage.

The wonder I was hoping for eventually happened, even though with some outside help. After the operations and the awful surgery on my jaw, my body was full of poison and could no longer cope by itself. Through lovingly support an intense detoxification could take place and finally the healing of my leg could start, but that would take months...

This too was not yet the end of my suffering. When all of this was over and I felt heaven was opening itself again, the tics from my precious forest had already done their destroying work. Thank God, at this moment I knew nothing about all of this, that came much later...

'What do you mean by Lyme disease? They have just chopped you to bits so you could let go of everything you no longer need'. Patience, did I not say I had to learn patience in this life...?

In the here and now, something else demands my attention in such a way that the misery with my jaw momentarily moves to the background. At this moment I am again in the hospital and feel relieved that this operation is over. Lucky me, I do not know what lies ahead of me. That it will take months before I will somehow be able to go into the forest. At this moment, my eyes shine like stars and no doubt that is a good sign.

There is even new energy rising within me, a renewed strength, as if I feel the need to create something new. It feels as though the time for repentance is over and my energy needs to flow out. It is a great feeling and the only important thing by now is that I want to leave the hospital as soon as possible. Without any kind of privacy, I share this room with six persons. People apparently enjoy talking constantly about their illness. Not really helpful to my healing-process.

Yet, once again I have managed to create my own atmosphere by creating an invisible aura of white light around me. Of course there is my own altar with rose, stones, candles, angels, and a piece of my precious forest, because for the time being I cannot go there.

Going to the forest became a daily returning ritual. Increasingly I retrieved the medicine woman inside of me, the witch I have always been. She was roaming the forest, looking for herbs, talking to plants and trees, birds and the deer. During this time she remembers and renews her connection to the ancient energy of the divine earth mother. I needed her so strongly to prepare my body and soul for the trials of this next operation.

Somewhere between small pieces of living wood lies a small deer on my altar, as a symbol for my dear friends. Lucky me, while lying here in my bed, I can clearly attract the energy of my tree, the energy of the forest. I only have to close my eyes and I walk into the forest. I make a standstill near the power-places. I see sitting myself against my oak with my face towards the sun and feel her life-giving energy flow.

We have hardly had a winter like this so far. It is dry and cold, yet oh so good. I send love and light to my friends the deer and to the birds, and I hope they will find enough food to survive these inclement times. Those too are the laws of nature. Many birds and small animal species will not survive this cold and my friends will surely have a hard time.

Nothing is ever lost and all energy will return to the Source, sooner or later.

I nearly come in conflict with the ward doctor. He does not let me go home. In his opinion it is too soon and too risky, and there are too many complications. Who knows my body better than I do? I do not fit into these 'averages' and refuse to co-operate with tests that, to me, seem useless. At last, I get to speak to my own doctor and he gives his personal consent. I have to promise that, if something goes wrong, I will come back immediately. He respects my peculiarities and knows that I will take full responsibility for this decision,

without holding anyone responsible for it. Of course I could leave without permission, yet this feels as a victory. Where can I better recover than at home where my beloved ones want to help me?

With a painful body, yet with an intense feeling of joy and gratitude for all the care, I get ready to go home. Here I can continue working on the healing of my physical vehicle. I am fully conscious that now, so many years later I have made a connection with worlds, the traditional one as well as the alternative one. One no longer has to exclude the other. Both poles, if used consciously and lovingly, can be equally important. As soon as we recognise this we no longer have to criticise anything. Then we can open ourselves up to integrating both worlds. There is still a lot of work to do! First, we must be willing to let go of our fear for changes and renewal. First, we may discover that we will not lose anything by allowing different opinions. On the contrary! In doing so we open a new flow of energy.

Doctor Jansen has a healthy self-esteem and that is why he is prepared to look beyond the length of his scalpel. By now, I have learnt what my abilities and my limitations are and that is why I am more open than before. Who knows, together we may have made a start to a wider, to a more total vision on the mystery of human beings and healthcare, even if this is partly unconsciously. If this willingness contributes to a more lovingly support of other people, then there is hope for new considerations.

WITH AN OPEN HEART TOWARDS THE LIGHT

The light descended into the darkness. The darkness did not receive it. Finally the light became the darkness, to be able to enlighten the darkness from within. In the end the light cast out all darkness...

We live in a society in which the quality of the mind is preferred above the quality of the heart. We try to control everything and to create according to our vision. In our society no space seems to be left for being ill. Seen through the eyes of Christianity, illness was a punishment of God. Since we repudiated God, we ourselves like to play judges and so we accuse each other of creating all of this by ourselves. Serves you right! In order not to feel our own pain and the pain of others, we use these mediums to put ourselves on top of others. Daring to feel that pain, you have to feel safe and completely at home with yourself, and well rooted into the earth. Undoubtedly to get like that, you must have gone through a lot of suffering first.

Every person suffers in his own way. It is the way our soul has chosen to work out things and to refine itself. Suffering is the result of a deep wish to transform everything that lies between you and the inner Truth. It seems that suffering increases when people begin to live more consciously. It all has to do with allowing, with no longer oppressing and denying. From that moment on, there is a consciously made choice that we really want to learn our self-chosen lessons.

Every person suffers; rich or poor, young or old. That is the lesson that comes with duality. You cannot avoid suffering by denying it. You can rise above it by welcoming and connecting to it. In embracing and living-through our suffering lies the joy of being.

Pain is not a punishment, death is not a failure, and life is not a reward, as many of us seem to think.

Every person has to carry the burden he is capable of and what he has chosen, nothing more and nothing less. The more we associate ourselves with our body, the more we will associate ourselves with suffering. Then life becomes a burden. The more we realise that the outer shape is an illusion, that what we truly are, is immortal and invisible, the more we will become one with our true Self, and suffering gets a completely different attitude. This does not mean we must not take care of our body. On the contrary, this temporary vehicle gives us the possibility of learning our lessons, which are programmed in every cell of it. So let us respect our body and lovingly take care of it.

Although suffering is never only physical, emotional, mental or spiritual, the accent is usually on one of these levels. Sometimes not-physical suffering is less visible, that does not mean it is less heavy to bear, on the contrary.

Someone who is ill usually does not feel any need for pity, yet for empathy. Empathy or compassion is a quality of the heart, and she takes situations the way they come. We allow other people's suffering to flow through us completely, without wanting to take it over or change it. This means that we, out of a deep respect for life itself, can be fully present without the need to act. It feels supporting to others instead of patronising or disparaging. Pity is an emotion in which you encounter the other person's pain out of your own fear. You do not want to experience the situation; you want to try to change it out of your own willpower.

Try to be present without judging. Judging has to do with fear and insecurity. It has to do with fear of death. By judging you can place pain and suffering outside of yourself. No

doubt I used to be guilty of doing this. I am sorry for that because it was without love, but I have learnt from it. I now have the courage to allow my fear to be there. I have the courage to sink into it, to be angry and to yell. I dare to feel pain, my feeling of being powerless, my impatience and my despair. Only when I am willing to go right through it, will I am able to transform it, and no sooner.

It is quite a task to liberate ourselves from old embedded feelings of guilt and imperfection. We are born with it or it is given to us through our upbringing. It is spoon-fed to us. I look at it, I feel it and I learn. We are raised with the feeling that we are not good enough. We are constantly busy wanting to be something, wanting to achieve something. That is why we have never lived in the here and now. We have simply never been happy with the thing we are, we have always looked at what is lacking, or at least what we think is lacking. Feelings of guilt are the opposite of love and they are deadly to the soul. It is very important to liberate ourselves from guilt and penance, which have been forced upon us by churches, educators, and people who always seems to know things better.

Our soul is eternal and perfect. The more we re-connect ourselves to our soul, our true being, the more we will radiate this perfection, whether our physical body is healthy or not. As a mirror of our soul, each of us has the perfect energetical body. I only have to think of my friend Everhard. Everhard was an example of wholeness. You could say the more his body deteriorated, the more wholeness he radiated. Each of us has similar experiences. Being in the presence of such a person has a healing effect if you allow yourself to open up to suffering, and the beauty of this person. It is lovely to be near such a person, it seems as though it makes you feel more complete. The love in such a being opens something within you, it touches something inside that rises above the visible reality. It seems as though such a person radiates light, and he actually does.

Being ill, in whatever way, is getting better. You will never be the same if you consciously go through the process of illness, which is also a process of detachment and letting go. Therefore, it has no use wishing people that they would soon be the 'old' again. Always, and especially during times of suffering, it helps to connect yourself to the suffering of whole humanity. If you consciously live through it, it becomes a process of purification and transformation for yourself and for others. It also helps to discover what more you can do despite your disabilities, instead of looking at the things you are not capable of. See how you can let your energy flow. How you can give your divine contribution to those who are maybe in a good physical health, but who suffer in a different way. Compared to others, I can always think of situations, showing me how happy and privileged I am.

Transformation is not banning out illness or suffering, it is accepting illness, suffering and death of the physical body. The more the vibration of light rises, everything that does not vibrate on that same level will become disconnected. This can be reflected in all kinds of diseases. Conscious souls choose to live a life of quality, instead of quantity. That is why some children only remain just a short while on this planet. Their souls have chosen to work out some affairs in a short, yet intense way. They incarnate usually not only for themselves, but for the benefit of the entire family. People, who consciously experience and embrace their own suffering, are allowed to transform some karma for all beings around them. Look at Christ's suffering. Maybe you start to understand what he took upon himself. Because He fully lived in the here and now, He was able to live completely and fearlessly. This means we are aware of our mortality and immortality at any moment.

The symbolism of the dying on the cross makes us aware of the temporality and mortality

of the physical body. At the same moment we become aware of a new birth, the immortality of the soul. We must be born again before we can enter the kingdom of heaven. Light descends into the darkness. The male principle, the soul, descends and is received by the female principle, the matter. We bring heaven to earth, just like Jesus did.

Even after our enlightenment, we will still experience pain and suffering. The difference is that pain and suffering no longer determine our lives. No longer will you identify yourself with pain and suffering. Working towards your own enlightenment makes space for working towards the enlightenment of complete humanity. Even striving for enlightenment is something we can let go. To have to 'achieve' enlightenment is no obligation. We only have to accept the fact that we are already living in the light.

During lifetime, we in fact do nothing else but free ourselves from excessive conditions. To unlearn what we have been taught and to become what we are in essence.

We thank God for all the good things that happen to us. We forget to thank him for all the so-called 'bad' things. That is where we make a big mistake, for the one cannot exist without the other.

Let us thank God for everything that comes our way, without any exceptions. From that moment on, we can begin to befriend everything that is. Then we will begin to identify ourselves to the All, to the Self. No longer do we feel victims, we become impartial observers. By befriending death, we befriend our greatest teacher and directly connect ourselves to the Source. Death in this 'reality' is nothing more than a new birth in the other realm.

It is an art to be positive, to think positive and not be attached to a goal. Welcome both the light and the darkness, both come from the same Source. Surrender has everything to do with letting go of the result. I let go, I let God. Not my will but Thine. That is difficult for us westerners, who want to control everything and by now seem to think we can control everything. It does not matter what we think, we will learn, God is extremely patient.

We cannot force a healing. Dying in the physical matter can also be healing, healing for our spiritual body, our own reality. We can strive to let go of our fear and control, and take things the way they are. Actively dealing with everything that comes our way and see it as a challenge to grow. Being a victim is identification with the physical body. We need confrontations to grow. Harmony is stagnation. Anyhow, deep inside of us, far beyond duality, there is an eternal state of peace and harmony. If we endeavour to reconnect ourselves to Spirit, then we will be able to experience this harmony right through all outer storms.

Feeling healthy has to do with a certain vitality and love of life, a phenomenon that really intrigued me when I was in India. For me this is the difference between living and surviving. Living is embracing life with all her challenges and risks. To constantly step into it, fresh and unprejudiced. You encounter this in countries like India, especially among the poor people. Survival is a typically western affair. It means we want to protect ourselves in advance from all possible risks. We do so by means of emotional defence systems, suppressing medicines, insurance and other forms of security systems we shield ourselves against things, instead of experiencing them.

To be completely human means that we accept everything, really everything, as a gift of God. Not passively but actively. I determine how I deal with my suffering, with a laugh and with humour, or angry and mutinous. Inner joy has nothing to do with the condition of our body. I would say, on the contrary. When we increasingly peel off our layers of fear, joy becomes as infectious as flue in the winter.

There is no surrender without struggle, no health without illness, no light without darkness. By standing actively in the process of each new day, I have discovered there is a God. I feel connected to my origin to the deepest of my soul. That is the only thing that is, what I AM and what I always will be. I enjoy life knowing that the quality of life determines the quality of death. When people are increasingly more able to die consciously, they are able to consciously flow to their original divine form.

My faith and trust are stronger than before. That is the process I originally lived through in India. Now this has been cyclically repeated and materialised on a deeper level. Fear of lack seems something out of a far past. There is abundance for everyone who dares to connect himself to his true descent. There is also abundance for me. I do not have to take care of the future. The future is today. Now!

This way I can compare the beauty of life to a human relationship. When I fall in love with somebody's appearance, and continue to linger on that, my love will soon evade. Feelings of being in love will not last forever. The outside is prone to deterioration and I will continue to look for a new romance, for another outside, another sensation.

Yet, when I fall in love with the essence of the love object, and willingly let go of my attachments and my fear of being abandoned, willingly undergo the challenges of the lessons this person mirrors to me, I learn to accept myself more and I just start to love this person in her/his true nature.

Then my relation begins where most others end. Then my relationship will become a constant new 'discovery' of the multilateral subject of my love. Together we form a unity in diversity and ultimately we will rise above duality. Then we will understand what is meant by: where two or more are gathered in my name, where male and female melt together in the heart, Christ is born. That is where God lives, that is where love lives, that is where peace is and the consciousness of your origin.

My dear friend Everhard. No longer is it necessary to talk about you. You are always present. In the end I have never missed you. You and I, we became one from the moment we met. Although you do your work up there and I do mine here, together we work for the same cause. Sometimes you clearly let me know that you are present. You taught me about unconditional love. Remember the difficulty I had in Spain allowing the multitude of your love? Now I can completely allow it, I can let myself be completely saturated by it. Your presence is increasingly subtler, yet sometimes you literally insist that I keep myself busy with you for a while. Then, of course I do. You make sure there is no initiation without your presence. You literally stick your big nose in! I do not mind, I really have to admit. On the contrary, it could not happen another way.

The moment you died, your soul freed itself from suffering and pain. That moment you stood face to face with your true Self, your divine origin. People with aids are forced consciously to face their mortality, and get the possibility to clear their Karma in a short period. They do not do this only for themselves; they do it for their environment. The way you were dealing with your illness made you a luminous example for many. Everyone who could drop his judgements and show up in complete vulnerability was deeply touched and enriched by you. In a short time you not only transformed your own suffering, you also transformed the suffering of many around you.

It is not only about what we choose to work out. It is about the way we work things out, the way we handle our processes. Dare I take full responsibility for my suffering, without blaming anyone else? Even if I took on the suffering of others, I did so unconsciously or voluntarily, as a learning process or as a free choice. It is useless blaming others for that, at the utmost I can learn what I wish to allow, or not.

In whatever way, when I welcome my dark sides, embrace the dragon within myself, reconcile with death, I transform darkness to light and will be a light for my direct environment. In my own suffering I recognise the suffering of humanity; I encounter the living Christ in each person.

The air is pregnant with hope and expectation. The winter period of repentance and dying is over and makes space for the spring. The birds, singing at the top of their voices, announce the birth of new life, and the lambs frolic in the meadows. Every day the sun becomes increasingly stronger and sends us lovingly her healing rays, so we can cherish our tired and afflicted bodies. Out of periods of deep darkness the most beautiful creations are born. Everything that was growing inside, during this period, will come out into full bloom. The seed bursts open and the young shoots playfully stick their heads above the earth. To announce the new fruit, the trees form their new buds. The days become longer. Slowly but surely the light chases away all the darkness. It becomes Easter; a feast of immortality, a feast of hope and expectation. We are preparing ourselves to be reborn into the light.

After many weeks I carefully place my first footsteps in the forest. Full of joy I allow all the new things to enter. I feel privileged to live in the middle of all changes taking place now at full speed, as a messenger of a new period.

Our physical vehicle is prepared, cleansed and raised to a level on which we are able to bear the vibration of our new light cells. Not an easy task. What many of us regard as a period of deep darkness, is only a forerunner of a time in which the light will be so strong, we cannot even imagine.

The veils between the visible and the invisible worlds will increasingly disappear. We are waking up and once again we become conscious of our true origin. We are all co-creators, brothers and sisters of Christ, children of God.

Om Shanti Om.

MEDITATION 3

SURRENDER TO YOUR HIGHER SELF

You can record the text of this meditation on a tape or ask somebody to read it out aloud. If this is not possible then carefully read the words a few times and try to follow the text step by step...

- Sit or lie down calmly and fully relax. Every time you exhale, let go some of your tension. Let go the awareness of your physical body... You are more than your body...
- Let go your emotions... You are more than your emotions...
- Let go your thoughts... You are more than your thoughts...
- Imagine lying in a green meadow in between the abundance of daisies. A field full of white daisies with yellow hearts... Maybe you want to make a garland for your hair...
- Slowly get up and walk through the meadow... You arrive at a stream... Take off your clothes and put them on the ground... Carefully you descend to the bottom of the stream, while submerging a few times in the lovely refreshing water... Your tiredness and emotions are flushing away by the water...
- On the opposite side you leave the water and climb onto the bank... Allow the sun to dry you. Feel each ray of sunshine on your body and fill each cell with the healing sun-energy...
- Walk calmly to the foot of the hill in front of you and begin to climb the hill...
- You pass many fields full of red poppies... Let the red colour enter each cell in your body...
- You come to the next field. Here you find an abundance of orange marigolds...
- Yellow. You view an enormous field of sunflowers and this time you fill yourself with the colour yellow...
- You pass the tender soft green of the grass and the leaves. Let green enter your being through each cell. Just drink it in...
- Look up to the beautiful blue sky and fill all of your cells with the colour sky-blue...
- Violet, more beautiful than you could ever imagine...
- Then you face a big fire. Without fear you step into it. The fire does not affect you, it cleanses you, purifies all your deep embedded emotions. Allow this to happen consciously...
- When you feel cleansed and purified, you step out of the fire and calmly walk the last part towards the top... Once you are up there, you will have the most beautiful view you could imagine... Sit down calmly... Maybe there is a small white chapel or something else where you can go inside... Feel connected from the heart and let all things happen that have to happen.
- Suddenly there is a vision of an angel. You feel filled with radiant white light. It is your higher Self, your true Self. The angel gives you a present in thought, word or gesture. Let it penetrate deep into your heart...
- Your angel disappears into the unseen and slowly but surely you return to your world. You stand up and descend the mountain. The fire has died down. You pass the different fields: violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red and then you are back at the foot of the mountain.
- You walk towards the stream and wade through it, to the other side. You clothes are still there and you get dressed before walking towards the meadow...
- Breathe in and out deeply until your consciousness is back in your body. Stretch yourself and return fully to the here and now.

- Share your experience with a friend or partner, or write it down in your diary.

This meditation helps you to clean your chakras, to reload yourself, and to get rid of your attachments of the moment. You pass through the energy of the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and ether.

No doubt, the present your angel gives you holds a key, which you can use in your process to surrender yourself to your inner source.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

'My life is my message'

- Ghandi -

Yasmin is guided by her inner impulses. During the past, she was a social worker and a natural body-therapist. Later she worked worldwide as a Reiki-teacher. After an intense inner transformation, she let go of visible labels and increasingly travelled the road of simplicity.

She carries out her message of wisdom and love in her way of living, in her books and in her sculptures.

People who visit her meetings and her workshops feel recognized and seen. Reborn and renewed they are going back home....

'I am who I Am'

YASMIN VERSCHURE HAS ALSO WRITTEN THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:

1. Way to the Light

Pilgrimage of a Reiki master.
An honest report explaining the universal life-force.

'Way to the Light' is in all humility a unique and inspiring testimony of a person surrendering herself in full confidence to the flow of Life. Yasmin describes in a sensitive, yet realistic way, all the radical changes in her consciousness that came along her path; the setbacks and the highlights accompanying her journey. The book has an intimate character, in which there is hardly any space for intellectual considerations. At the same time, she describes the path of inner transformation in a very subtle way; the awakening soul on his journey back to the light.

The book is in all simplicity a unique and inspiring testimony from a human being who experiences Reiki, or Love, in the deepest of her soul.

The book exists of four parts:

1. *Her own process of awakening.*
2. *The inner road of Reiki.*
3. *The life and death of Everhard.*
4. *Journey around the world.*

2. Love is 'All That Is'

The third book by Yasmin is about the power of unconditional love. Unconditional love remains after we have been through the fire of purification. We open our heart to the vibration of love, the Christ within. We throw away the robe of separation and wake up in our true reality. From that moment we experience ourselves and others as divine beings; there is no longer a separated I or a You.

We are constantly searching for fulfilment of this love outside, and forget that we are the source where everything originates from. When we wake up in this love, our soul's desire starts to fulfil. Material desires disappear to the background. Our compassion and our presence become the instruments through which miracles can unfold.

Our 'being' in South Africa with all its contrasts; its beauty and unprecedented possibilities, its suffering and its joy, have inspired me to write this universal story in which all of us can recognise ourselves.

3. Mastery beyond death

Life and death of Everhard....

We like to believe that health is only a manifestation of the physical body. Yet, the body is of minor position. A truly healthy person is vital, enthusiastic, creative, careless and joyful and never worried about tomorrow. A healthy person can be handicapped or even been affected by AIDS, but the brightness of its soul will radiate his true being, and his environment will experience him as a divine personality.

Since decades we have excluded death from our society. Although it is the only security we have, in a life based on matter, there seems to be no place to face and to embrace our mortality. Yet one day the moment will come that our physical vehicle has fulfilled its duty and will turn into ashes. The butterfly leaves the cocoon and flies the way back to the light.

We all have to die in the physical sense, yet our soul is eternal. It is very important to realize that the quality of death is determining the quality of the hereafter. Let us, like Everhard, become a Master in dying, Master beyond death.

*'And he spread his newly acquired wings
and flew along the way back to the light....'*

4. The Power of Being

'The saint and the hooker'

The transforming power, the feminine face of God, is the world-mother who is at the base of the visible creation. To become completely whole and to restore the balance on earth, we have to descend into our underworld and initiate this lacking part anew.

Our amputated counterpart, the power of the receiving and creating Mother in all of us, is yearning to be acknowledged. No longer can we ignore her cry for help. Integration is the only possibility to make the transition into the new world in which both, men and women, lovingly and respectfully will work together. God is male and female; light can only exist by grace of the darkness.

No doubt, Mary Magdalene was the only woman during Jesus' time representing the perfect balance between the saint and the hooker; the harmony between the upper-world and the under-world, between heaven and hell, the conscious and the subconscious. She descended into hell; she went through the seven gates of initiation. In doing so, she brought her dark powers in balance with her sacredness. She became the ultimate female, a primal woman; the primal mother who could be the cradle of spiritualism. Only when we restore the balance between light and dark, only when we integrate and embrace both poles inside of us, we humans will become full Human.

Yasmin's vision-quest in the safe closeness of lovely Sweden is the fertile soil to reinforce this inner process at the fullest.

5. Origin

The true spiritual traveller not let him/herself be fooled by ready-made concepts. He/She discovers that truth is a land without path, and starts – with childish awe – to search for his/her origin. When we dare to say 'I do not know', we are receptive to unfold our true nature. We rise above the identification with body and spirit and start to experience increasingly deeper layers of being...

Life is like the tides. Things appear and disappear constantly in our awareness. It is our attachment that wants to cling to the illusionary shape of appearances that we have become to see as reality. It is this same attachment that says 'I' that stops the infinite flow of evolution, the infinite flow of life. When we begin to remember our original nature and surrender to the rhythms of the seasons, we become like the tides. No longer will we associate with the wave, we become the water itself...

Twenty-four 'Pearls for the Soul' and 'Original' stories of journeys through Peru and Hawaii take you to the quiet waters of your heart...

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