



## The Opening of the Door

I had a secret yearning as I lay in bed on the night before my journey to New Delhi to meet this *yogi*. I had never felt this way before, it was as if something within my body was stretching and pushing outwards. The closest I can come to explain this yearning in words, is that it was like the feeling experienced by a lover waiting impatiently to meet the paramour. The reason for this trip was a vision I had of Yogiraj Gurunath Siddhanath, as this Himalayan master was called.

This vision occurred during a seminar in Chandigarh, North India, where twenty-five of us were sitting shoulder to shoulder in a stuffy room. In our avatar as new-age spiritual seekers, we were smiling and bearing up with the heat and claustrophobia. I remember wishing the ordeal was over and thinking to myself, "God, I have learnt enough to last me a lifetime." Then we were asked to get ready for a guided meditation. Our Reiki teacher had brought a cassette from Delhi, which he played, asking us to follow the technique. I tried to relax and loosen up but ended up doing just the opposite. From somewhere in the room a cassette player came on. The quality of the tape was poor, it dragged, and the directions for the meditation seemed to be in Hindi.

I tried to concentrate on the instructions, but all I could hear was a hissing sound and some reference to a lotus. So of course, at this cue, the lotuses in my *chakra* body started doing a jig; they were flying out on all sides. The lotus from my navel shot out like the lotus from *Vishnu's* navel and waved about in front of my face as I struggled to get it back in. Then, all of a sudden, my body felt light and weightless. The people beside me seemed to drift far away and the immense space around me

filled with light. I saw myself walking up a path towards a bare-bodied person, who was standing a little distance away. He had a white beard and his silver hair framed his face like the mane of a lion; he was looking back as if beckoning me to follow him. I was to find out later that this path and location was in the forest *ashram* in Pune, Maharashtra, and the person was the Himalayan master Yogiraj Gurunath Siddhanath, whose guided meditation technique we were practicing at that moment.



All too soon, the picture faded and I was left feeling groggy and disoriented. I was most excited with this vision and could not wait to share it with others. Novitiates have a habit of collecting visions, experiences, miracles, healings, real or imagined, and a feeling of superiority sets in when one has all these. I was no different.

As I described the experience, my Reiki teacher and his assistant, who had met this yogi and recorded the technique that we had just followed, pointed out the similarity in appearance. There was general consensus that I must meet the master who had so definitely summoned me.

The feeling of weightlessness stayed for a couple of days. I was literally 'floating' while going about doing my daily chores at home. This was amazing, because during my regular practice

of various new-age techniques in the recent past, even what I had thought of as my most intense experiences were naught compared to the after-effects of this vision of a few seconds.

I had to wait for a few months, though, before the desired meeting with this master could take place. Finally, I got a call from Delhi informing me of the visit of Yogiraj Gurunath Siddhanath to the centre and the programme of initiation into a practice called *Kriya Yoga*. Yogiraj was a disciple of *Babaji Gorakshanath*, who is said to be an ever-living immortal still inhabiting the Himalayan ranges. As to what *Kriya Yoga* was, I had no clue. Although I had read the book *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Yogananda a few years back, I had completely forgotten all about the *Kriya Yoga* or the *Babaji* mentioned in it.

By this time, the experience of the vision had faded somewhat and, along with it, my initial excitement. Therefore, I was in two minds about making the trip to Delhi, a city two hundred and fifty kilometres from where I lived. The fact was that I had learnt so many techniques in the past two years that I did not see how more time could be set aside for a new practice. I had done three levels of Reiki and was hoping to soon become a Sensei; I was a certified master of Kwan-Yin's Magnified Healing, I had taken part in Native American Shaman rites like sweat lodge and making prayer beads, fasting and dancing around the sacred fire, dabbling in crystal healing, and a course in reflexology from Australia concluded the list.

Therefore, I decided to give it a miss, just stick to what I had learnt, and not add anything more to my already overflowing repertoire of practices. Still, as the day of the visit came closer, I began to get restless, irritable and distracted. Compelled by an inner urge, I called the centre and registered for the course, little knowing how it was about to change me in such intense ways.

### **The first meeting**

I arrived in Delhi and reached the centre in the evening, filled with excitement and expectancy. As I read the information booklet, I saw that Gurunath had received his education at Sherwood College in Nainital, Uttarakhand. Since my husband was from the very same school, the first thought that came to

my mind was, "Oh no, I don't need a *guru* from Sherwood, I have enough on my plate dealing with a husband and all his friends from there." But, even as I sat silently thinking these thoughts, waiting for a guru who was already an hour late for the seminar, I could not help feeling a warm glow of happiness.

When he walked in, he seemed so ordinary, dressed simply in a white *kurta pyjama* and *kolhapuri chappals*. He strode faster than the people accompanying him, who had trouble keeping up. One look at him and I recognised the face from my vision, the same demeanour and the flowing hair. Before starting the programme, he moved around the audience, halting by each one and exchanging a few words.

I especially remember him stopping in front of an old man and asking him if he had recently undergone a heart surgery. When this person assented with surprise, Gurunath told him that the operation had not been performed properly and that there seemed to be complications. Though his manner was gentle and kind, I was shocked because I felt such insensitive behaviour was unbecoming on the part of a 'realised' master. Steeped as I was in recently-learnt techniques that constantly promoted love and compassion, I felt mortified to see a master behave like this, apparently without sympathy.

After that, the old man attended the rest of the seminar lying on his back, as if unable to deal with this alarming revelation. Since we were all seated on the ground, as is customary during yoga seminars in India, the prostrate figure went unnoticed by many. Nevertheless, even though I was irritated at such conduct, deep within me, I wondered if this is how it felt to be exposed to the proverbial fire that burns all ignorance.

This incident rankled in my mind, and on a subsequent visit, I took the opportunity to check up on this person with whom, I felt, Gurunath had been unduly short. He surprised me by confessing that because of the timely warning by Gurunath, he had consulted with another specialist the next morning, and a tragedy was averted after a minor surgery. With my limited perception, all the time that I had thought him to be lying down, disheartened, during the seminar, he had actually been receiving *Shaktipat* transmission from Gurunath. My attitude of indignation at Gurunath's behaviour had been

dictated by a preconceived understanding of how masters are supposed to behave.

However, on that day, I was unsure and nervous as this Himalayan master walked towards me, wondering what sordid secret from my past would be aired in public.

He stopped in front of me and said, "You are connected with Sherwood College, aren't you?"

My mouth fell open in amazement, because I had shared this information with no one. "Yes, my husband studied there," I replied.

"What's his name?" he went on to ask.

"Jujhar," I said, concerned at the turn this conversation was taking. My husband being totally non-committal about spirituality, I felt we should waste no time on him.

"Do you know what it means?" he asked and, without waiting for me to answer, continued, "It means, *Jhunjhar*, a warrior. Tell him the war to be fought is within and not without."

The preciseness of the message stunned me, for my husband was always agitating against injustice in his surroundings, the family, as well as society. He is a visionary and is often thwarted by those who are short-sighted. I was a little put out, though, that the subject of the conversation was not me or my spiritual ambitions.

This is how I met Gurunath – as Yogiraj Siddhanath is called affectionately – the first time.

### **Experience of Shaktipat, Pranpat and Shivapat**

Gurunath then went on to give the transmissions of Shaktipat, *Pranpat* and *Shivapat* as mentioned in the leaflet. I did not have any intellectual comprehension of these words, unschooled as I was in *yogic* terminology. So, there I was, sitting expectantly, not knowing what was about to happen. During Shaktipat, Gurunath explained, the *satguru* is capable of transmitting the evolutionary *Kundalini* energy into the chakras of the disciples. In a manner, sharing the energy accumulated by the master through personal practice, with the disciples. The master, to