

The **Red** Rose



Gullapalli Saroja



THE RED ROSE

***Spiritual Journey of a
Working Mother***

By

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*Dedicated to my parents who
helped me to be who I am*

PROLOGUE

“Madam! You should write a book” instructed Patriji, “you may want to call it THE RED ROSE”.

It was a winter evening in Melbourne. We were all sitting with Patriji that evening at Siva’s place in his lounge room. We went over to his place to visit Patriji. That was Patriji’s second visit to Melbourne.

“What”? A book and me! I wasn't prepared for this.

I looked at my husband Harish who smiled back at me as usual, not giving me any clue of what he was thinking about.

Patriji asked again “How about writing a book Madam?” I looked back at him expressionless and asked, “about what”?

“About your experiences Madam, your life and spiritual experiences; there are lot of people out there who can benefit from your book.”

I nodded my head blankly and was still in shock. I knew the decision had been made for me. Now it was just a question of ‘when’ and ‘how?’

Writing to me wasn't anything new. In fact, I have always enjoyed writing. Most of my regular social emails always go over a couple of paragraphs! I have written several short stories and skits in the past. However, to write a book and that too an autobiography ...I had never given any thought to it.

Next time when Patriji raised this subject again, I knew the time had come and I was ready for it.

Patriji said “Madam! 'Autobiography of a Yogi' book has been an inspirational book from the past. Your autobiography will be an inspiration to all the coming generations to show how one can be a caring daughter, loving wife, a devoted mother, a successful corporate professional, a contented spiritual practitioner and a peaceful soul”.

My excitement knew no bounds! Such words coming from my guide Patriji gave new meaning to my next few months which shaped into this book.

If this book can be of any help in the spiritual development of even a single soul out there in this vast universe, I would think that one of my main purposes of this incarnation has been fulfilled. I

sincerely wish a spiritually peaceful life to
all my beloved readers in their journey of
self-realization.

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My Childhood

I was born in India in Madhya Pradesh state, in a city called “Gwalior”. I chose my birth in Garikapaty family as the seventh child of the most wonderful beings as my parents.

My father late Sivarama Lakshmi Narasimha Somayajulu and my mother Lakshmi Somidevamma both originally belong to Andhra Pradesh state. My father came from Guntur town and my mother from Ammanabrolu,, a village in Ongole district in Andhra Pradesh state.

My father was well educated, a Chartered Accountant, who had a respectable position in Indian Central Government and moved around India through his job. Dad got transferred to Gwalior a year prior to my birth. It appears as if I was waiting for my parents to move to Gwalior before I could take this incarnation.

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I came into this world as their seventh daughter. I started my life under the loving care and supervision of six beloved elder sisters who have always loved me dearly.

I have always been told that I was a very cute child of the family and that my sisters were always happy to look after me and meet my needs. Mum had enough on her plate with a big family so most of my time was spent with my sisters. I spoke at a very early age and turned out to be a very talkative child. Mum had enough of me by the time I was a little over two and decided to join me in the nearby Catholic school. I clearly remember my father taking me to St. Paul school on his push bike while I was dressed in my best outfit; a moonlight pink frock. This was the dress my dad bought for my second birthday. Pink was his favourite colour. I had dresses in various shades of pink by then that he had bought for me.

When we reached school, dad was very disappointed to learn that there was no vacancy and the admissions were closed. To make me understand, dad explained that there was no place for me to sit

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in the class and hence we would have to come back next year. However, the Principal offered a school tour in case we would like to come back the following year.

When we reached my classroom, Principal took us inside and introduced us to the class teacher. I looked around and saw some room on the bench in the corner of the class. I fearlessly went up to the Principal and showed him that place saying, "I can squeeze in and sit there in that corner if you would allow me." That act of mine impressed the Principal so much. Seeing my perseverance to start in the school immediately, he said to my father "I have decided to make an exception and will give admission to your daughter in my school. I haven't come across anyone so far with such determination at such an early age." Little did I know that this quality of mine will become a major part of my developing personality!

Those were the days when Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India. One day in the school assembly, the Principal was talking about the Prime Minister and asked, "who among you will be our

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future Prime Minister?" It didn't take me long to put up my hand. When I looked around, I was the only one with raised hand. The Principal admired my courage and invited me onto the stage appreciating my initiative. I had just turned three then! That attitude of fearlessness continued in my life.

Making new friends was never an issue with my talkative nature. At home, I had my sisters who were more than friends to me.

I had a particular sense of humour and kept the family environment always lively through my occasional stand - up comedy shows at home to make them laugh. I was the family joker. Every evening at dinner table, my family would be around me as I imitated some one or the other from school or performed an act of mimicry. Our dinner times were fun-filled and most of the times the ordeal went for over an hour. That hasn't changed even today with my husband and children.

My intent has always been to keep people around me happy. I could never see anyone in pain including animals to the extent that I would not let anyone misbehave or ill treat our family dog. I was teased by

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the name of “dog advocate”: title given by my family members.

I could never stand injustice or unfair treatment and always voiced my opinion against it whether it was a family-feud among the sisters or with one with the friends. Because of this nature, I had a very few good close friends, only the ones that could handle my openness and support my values. But nothing mattered to me.

Right from my childhood I always did what I felt was right not worrying much about the consequences.

Our home was filled with happiness when my little brother joined us when I was five. Now I had someone younger to me who I could take care of. He was the apple of our eyes.

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Passion for Dance

With my keenness to learn anything new, I soon became very popular with my teachers. There was nothing that I was not interested in. Very soon I was excelling in studies along with all other extracurricular activities including sports.

With the reasonably good voice, I carried I was mostly leading the music group on the stage. My first public speaking performance happened at the age of eight when I was asked to address the school in the assembly on the Independence Day. Since then I have never stopped.

However, nothing could beat my interest in dance which very soon turned into a passion for me.

I loved dancing and I was crazy about it. I still do. I can't remember exactly when I first started dancing

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but my first stage performance was in the school concert at the age of three. I still remember the stage and the song that we danced to, which went along the following lines....

*Here we go loopy loo..
Here we go loopy li.....
Here we go loopy loo..
All on a Saturday night.*

I was wearing the same pink moonlight silk dress on the stage. I am sure I made my family sitting in the audience very proud that night.

From that night onwards I would use our four-post bed as a pretend stage at home, use my mother's *saree* as the stage curtain and give pretend dance performances. I would get so involved in my performance that I required no audience.

The staff at the school soon recognised my dance skills and interest and gave me more opportunities to perform on the stage at every occasion.

When I was in grade three, our school organised *Bharatnatyam* dance lessons. I expressed my

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interest in taking up *Bharatnatyam* lessons to my dad. Dad was not too impressed. He came from the old school thinking and he was not in favour of girls from noble families learning dance. So I got nowhere with him.

Every evening after school we had to wait for the school bus for half an hour. During that time, I would run to the dance hall and watch the girls learning *Bharatnatyam* through the window. I would get so involved standing there that I would feel as if I was dancing along with them. I would remember all the dance moves, come back home and practice on my own.

The dance teacher would see me standing at the window every evening and understood my passion for dance. One day he called me and said that I could sit inside the hall and watch the dance lessons. All the better; now I could sit down comfortably and watch the session in progress.

The school annual concert was approaching and the girls from *Bharatnatyam* dance group were planning on giving a performance in the concert. Three of their best dancers were preparing to perform the

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most popular item '*Siva Tandavam*'. I loved that dance as the three dancers moved so gracefully with their articulated moves. Most of all I liked the expressions that the dance teacher would emphasise on. The girls learnt the moves well but were struggling with the expression.

One week prior to the concert, I was sitting in the dance hall watching the girls practice the dance items. The school Principal walked in and informed the dance teacher that one of three girls performing the dance '*Siva Tandavam*' was very sick and will not be participating in the concert. The dance teacher was very upset with this last-minute crisis as all the formations that he had planned involved the three girls. With less than a week on hand it was going to be very difficult to modify the choreography.

Suddenly he looked at me and said "Saroja, can you take Srujana's place". Srujana was the girl who had to pull out of '*Siva Tandavam*' due to her ill-health. Without thinking twice, I quickly agreed to it. This was my best opportunity, like a dream come true for me. For the last few weeks, I had been dreaming

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every night of performing '*Siva Tandavam*' on the stage in the concert.

The other two girls looked in horror at me. They must be thinking that I was crazy to agree to participate in a dance that I knew nothing of and never learnt in the class. And with less than a week on hand they thought I had no hope to learn the item.

But the dance teacher knew me better. Seeing me sitting there every evening watching the girls dance would have made him realise my interest in dance. He would have certainly seen that passion for dance in my eyes.

The school Principal was very relieved. She knew me very well and was very happy for me to participate in '*Siva Tandavam*' in the school concert. She left saying "now that you have got Saroja I know this will be a great show". I was very pleased with her remark and her faith in me. After all I was only eight years old at that time.

I got up and joined the other two girls for rehearsal. As we danced, I had no problem with the dance flow

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as I remembered all the moves. My only test was to make sure I didn't forget the expressions that the dance teacher was after. When we finished practicing, the dance teacher was so impressed and happy with me. So were the other two girls as now that they knew I was not going to spoil their dance on the stage.

I was so happy to perform '*Siva Tandavam*' on the stage during the concert. I got involved in the performance; mind body and soul completely.

Our performance was a great success. After the concert the dance teacher taught me free dance lessons for the rest of the year. I thought I deserved that after all that happened.

In the next few years, I learnt *Manipuri*, *Kathak* and *Naga* style dances through the school and performed in various concerts.

Dance was never tiring or time consuming to me. It was a part of me that I always enjoyed. At home when I had nothing to do, I would make up dance to songs that would play on radio and perform in our drawing-room. My family got used to it and never

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really minded. But I always made sure that dad was not around.

Very soon I started choreographing dances along with my sister Valli to perform in the school concert. We would train girls and make sure their costumes were organised for the dance.

This continued throughout my primary and secondary schooling. I joined *Kendriya Vidyalaya* (Central school) when I was in Grade five. It was all the better because we always had interschool competitions amongst the various regional *Kendriya Vidyalayas* which gave me numerous opportunities to participate at interschool level in the field of dance, drama, sport and debating.

At the age of 21 when I took up my first job in Visakhapatnam, I now had the opportunity to learn dance properly from basics which I always wanted to do from my childhood. And at last I was in position to finance my dance lessons. So, I joined a *Kuchipudy* dance school that was close to our house. Every evening after coming back from work, I would go to the dance class and learn *Kuchipudy*. My other classmates in the dance school were all primary

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school students as I was learning from basics. But neither did that stop me from learning nor was I embarrassed of dancing with little ones. I enjoyed my *Kuchipudy* lessons for those couple of years prior to my marriage to Harish.

I again had the opportunity to fulfil my passion through our daughter Navya who has been learning *Bharatnatyam* from the age of five in Melbourne. Whenever I see her performing on the stage, I visualise myself in her and enjoy every concert thoroughly. I am so glad and fortunate that she is living my dream.

For the last twenty years I have choreographed numerous dances for children in Melbourne. I am so fortunate to have this opportunity to continue my association with dance which has been a part of me all my life.

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My Family

I come from a Hindu family. Both my parents were very religious. Our day began with praying to Lord Almighty before we started any of the daily chores. Mum made sure that the offerings were made to the God every day before we had our meal. When I was in primary school, temple of Lord *Hanuman* (“*Bajrangbali*” as they say in North India) was built across the road from where we lived. It became part of my daily routine to visit the temple before going to school. *Bajrangbali* soon became a part of our lives. I, along with my other siblings, considered him more as our elder brother as we didn’t have one. We all strongly believed that he was there for us at all times.

Mum was always very keen on celebrating all the Hindu festivals grandly. She had the energy and initiative to get the whole system going and making

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us all a part of every religious event that took place at our house. Lord *Ganesha's pooja* on *Vinayaka Chavithi* used to be a highlight at our place with all the ten of us sitting around the temple and performing the ceremony. We all had our share of chores starting from collecting various kinds of leaves for the ceremony to making sure we got the cow milk for the offerings. Best part would be my brother and father competing for bigger share of leaves for the ceremony, which I am sure they both looked forward to and enjoyed the childish competition. I, along with my sisters, would sit back and laugh at them quietly as this happened every year repeatedly during this ceremony.

Dussehra was another key festival celebrated at a grander scale at our place. The celebration was always accompanied by singing and dance performances which we sisters enjoyed thoroughly.

One thing my parents ensured that all eight of us were all involved in every event that happened in the family. When I later understood and acknowledged this, I realized that it played a key role in binding our family together which was a

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major learning for me when I had my own family eventually. It is so easy for the family members to drift away and children becoming directionless in the present times in the absence of this binding relationship.

My parents had lot of interest in spiritual books. Dad maintained his own library which mostly consisted of books from *Swami Vivekanada* , *Ram Krishna Paramhansa* , *Shankaracharya* teachings etc. After work, if he was not listening to the radio news, I could see him with the “*Viveka Choodamani*” book and a red highlighter in his hands most of the times! He had this habit of underlining quotes from the books that he liked very much and would like to revisit.

Mum came from a very spiritual family background. My grandfather was a very learned man and shared every spiritual book that he read with my mother. They had a very close bond as mum was his only child and she had lost her mother when she was three. Villagers came to my grandfather every evening to have spiritual discussions and take part

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in his spiritual discourses. My mum was always there next to my Grandfather.

Every night, before going to bed, my mother shared with us the spiritual teachings which she got from her father. I always wanted to know more but almost all our discussions ended with the thought that it is the Great Creator behind everything.

My academic life was very successful. I excelled in my studies throughout my school life. I was always busy and fully occupied throughout my school life as I had a raft of extra-curricular activities that never left me any spare time. My hobbies included singing, dancing, drama, debating, sports etc.

When I finished high school, Dad was very keen that I should pursue Engineering course and so I did. I completed my Bachelors in Electronics & Telecommunications Engineering with a gold medal for topping the class!

All these years of my life were spent in the company of my six amazing elder sisters and a lovely younger brother. I always looked forward to coming back home from college as home was always full of fun as

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we sisters were more like friends. Even my mother would join our gang and have fun with us. When we were together, we lost track of time. Our dinner time lasted for over an hour where we all would share with each other the experiences of the day. In short, our house resembled the environment of a women's hostel with eight out of ten members being females.

Dad was very strict and loved maintaining discipline at home. We had a lot of respect for him but didn't socialise much with him.

I am indeed blessed to share the love of six elder sisters. They are all special to me and are unique in their own way.

My eldest sister Girija is a doctor and is a very charming and beautiful lady. She has always been a role model to me. I looked up to her when I was young. She always had a way about her and was very popular in our family and friend's circle. She got married when I was ten, so I didn't have the privilege of her company as I was growing up.

My second sister Kameswari was very talented. She made all our dresses when I was young. She would

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look around for special pattern to make my dress. She is very good at cooking.

My third sister Prasuna would always make sure that my school uniform was organised throughout my schooling days. She was the one who got my shoes mended on time for big events at school. She has a heart of gold.

My fourth sister Sarada would sit with me all night giving me company while I prepared for my Engineering exams that happened every three months. She would prepare cups of tea to help me keep awake. She would pray for me if I was in trouble. She would fast for me if I wished anything. I had lot of faith in her. She was our Oracle lady at home who I thought had all the answers to my issues at that time.

My fifth sister Bharati would help me with my Organic Chemistry tutoring as she was a Chemistry guru and Chemistry was her favourite subject. Her priority was looks and she was always well dressed.

My sixth sister Valli went to the same school as me. Everyone at the school thought we were more

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friends than sisters. They all envied us and our relationship. We shared everything between us. Though she is only two years older to me she was always generous to me.

My little brother Phani Kishore was adorable and we all loved him dearly. He had to put up with eight mothers and sometimes could not handle the abundance and love that we showered upon him from time to time.

After completing my masters in Electronic Instrumentation, I secured my first employment in HPCL refinery in *Visakhapatnam*.

Dad was against my taking up job in *Visakhapatnam* as none of my family members resided there and he didn't want me to be by myself in a big city. But the strong-willed person I was, I started my career in Visakhapatnam convincing my parents.

How could it be anywhere else in the world, when I was destined to meet the most precious person of my life in that city; my would-be life partner!

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Loving Partnership

I met my husband Harish at work when I took up my first employment at the refinery. He was senior to me, and we worked in the same department.

I knew him as a very soft spoken and a laid-back person who hardly stressed on anything. He had an excellent reputation at work. I always had lots on my plate and didn't have much time to socialize at work. It took me more than a few years to realize that I would be sharing the rest of my life with him.

In January 1988, we decided to get married. Not much time was wasted after that. With the blessings of our family members we got married in March 1988.

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It has been twenty-four years of our married partnership of which I have never regretted even a single day. He is the most generous, kind, understanding and the most wonderful being I have ever met. He is a very calm and balanced person; quite complimentary to my chatty and energy filled personality.

In the last twenty-four years of our marriage I have never heard him speaking ill of anyone which always surprised me. I have never seen him retaliating if anyone has misbehaved with him. I could never understand how a person can be this forgiving. In fact, it used to irritate me initially and I always fought back for him on his behalf when I thought he was being taken for granted. But that's how I am. If I see injustice I can never accept it.

With the addition of children in the family, life turned out to be more challenging with both of us having full time professional careers. But we were always there for each other. Living away from our families in India, we had no one else to rely on. This brought us both further closer to each other.

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Since we have been married, we have been commuting together to and from work. It worked very well because initially we worked for the same employer and later when we didn't work at the same place our workplaces have been close. There is nothing that we do not share including work issues. Even during lunch time, we are together most of the times. My friends often ask me "Don't you get bored of spending this much time together with your husband?" And my answer would be "Not at all". He is a good mentor and a friend to me. We have stood by each other supporting each other at the time of hardships and shared each other's joys.

Having a full-time professional career with two young children and trying to settle in a new country would have been close to impossible without his loving support. He has been a silent supporter behind every major decision and achievement in my life.

Our common interest is watching movies. We both love watching movies which our children picked from us naturally. We have our own interests that we

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pursue separately. I love my music and dance choreography. He adores his sport.

Harish has a younger sister and a younger brother. They are a small close-knit family. My in-laws are amazing people who welcomed me in their family with open arms.

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Moving Overseas

Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think of going overseas. During University days, when my peers were applying to overseas University for further education, I always wanted to be in India close to my family. I did not even have a passport as I never needed one.

Two years after our marriage, one evening, a yellow envelope arrived in the post. I was taken by surprise to find a letter addressed to Harish from the Australian embassy informing him that his migration application to Australia has been successful and to forward his passport in the next three months for stamping Permanent Residency.

Later that evening, Harish told me that he had applied for skilled migration to Australia two years ago along with his friend Raju and had totally

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forgotten about it as there was no further communication with the Australian embassy. He had not informed his family members then as he was not very serious about his application. I did not discuss the matter further with Harish and it was left aside.

A few weeks later, while going through the paperwork we again came across the yellow envelope and its contents. This time we had to talk about it as that was our chance to bin the envelope or move forward with it as there were only three weeks left for the deadline.

The phase of life we were in; young couple with no responsibility, the idea of going overseas for a year or two didn't seem bad at all. The next few weeks we were busy corresponding with Australian Embassy with all the required paperwork processing for both of us. In another month, we received our passports stamped with Australian permanent residency status.

We were excited with the idea of going overseas as neither of us had left India in the past. It appeared

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as a long holiday to us. But the question was how to break the news to the family?

We both had strong ties with our respective families and very well knew that it would not be easy for them to accept this. But finally, we did it in our own way. It was very important for us to have our parents consent to move ahead.

Dad was not too happy, so was my mother-in-law. None in my family or Harish's family were living abroad at that time. It took a great deal of effort to convince them. With their blessings we finally moved ahead.

A month later, Harish left for Australia. The plan was he would go first, settle down and I would join him subsequently in a few months time. We all went to see Harish off at Chennai airport. I never imagined parting would be so difficult. As I saw Harish going out of my sight into customs, I felt as if he had taken with him a big part of me. The last two years of married life in Harish's company had been so wonderful. We were like soul mates, always there for each other.

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Coming back from Chennai to Visakhapatnam, I felt a big empty space within me. The next three months were the longest and the most miserable time in my life. That made me realize how important Harish was to me in my life. Work kept me occupied during the day. My sister's family was of great support to me. My niece Sarada and nephew Santosh would keep me good company after work.

I finally joined Harish in Sydney after three months. Saying goodbye to my mother and my sister's family at Delhi airport was very difficult. But the thought of joining Harish at last was a good incentive to move on.

We spent around a year in Sydney before we moved to Melbourne. The time we spent in Sydney was memorable as we made some very good friends who had come from India like us around the same time. Better work opportunities made us head towards Melbourne: the land of spiritual destiny for me and my family. Little did we know at that time what was awaiting us in Melbourne in the coming years.

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Life in Melbourne

We moved to Melbourne in February 1992. Year 1992 will always be a pivotal year in my life. That's the year I moved to Melbourne with Harish, started my career in Melbourne with one of the world's leading oil and gas multinational organisation and had our first bundle of joy: our son "Nikhil".

I am blessed that the little spiritual master chose us to be his parents. He arrived in our lives on 10th December 1992 on a summer evening. We shared our joy with my mother who had come from India for my delivery.

Three years later, another spiritual master decided to bless us with her gracious presence. Our daughter "Navya" was born on 8th March 1996.

Life got very busy for both me and Harish with a full-time professional career and committed parenthood. We always ensured that children were

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not neglected due to our busy lifestyles. That meant I had to be more organized, both at work and home.

As if that was not enough, my passion for community work and interest in the Indian cultural events gave me no spare time. The big social network we maintained consumed our weekends.

We are lucky to be blessed with a big group of friends in Melbourne. Since the day we arrived in Melbourne, there is hardly a weekend that we have not been invited to a social gathering. With my strong participation in the Indian cultural events, most of the time I would be busy with my rehearsals for music band or choreographing dance for children.

Time has always come at a premium to me. Because of my passion and interests in and outside work I have always had to juggle my time efficiently to fit in everything.

From time to time we hosted quite a few migrant families at our home; families who had freshly arrived in Melbourne and had nowhere else to go. The Australian Government has very good systems for helping migrants, but it often takes some time for

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the migrants to access these resources. We helped the new migrants to settle in whatever way we could, through career advice and mentoring.

Finding work in early '90s wasn't easy for a fresh migrant as Australia was going through recession at that time. So, we helped out migrants to our best ability.

Despite all these activities going on in our lives, we both missed our families back in India very much. So we made our pilgrimage to India every December during school holidays. That way we wanted to keep our children close to our extended families and our culture.

This really worked out well as they really started to look forward to every India trip. For them India was a place where they would be loved by everyone, have nice food in restaurants and watch lots of movies. They would make list of movies that they would like to see in India two months in advance of our trip.

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Beginning of my Spiritual Journey

Those were the days I had a full-time professional career in a multinational organization which I was always keen on balancing well with my family; a loving husband and two young children Nikhil, ten years old and Navya, seven years old.

Work was always full on, officially starting from morning 8 am to 5 pm with occasional after work meetings. I had a good reputation at work. I took lot of pride in my work and never compromised on any official deadlines. In summary, it was a true competitive multinational corporate environment that I worked in, where most of the people didn't mind working late hours and where work was everything for them. I was one of the very few female professionals who had young children.

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For those who know me, understand very well what my children mean to me. Nothing stands ahead of my children when it comes to priorities in life. My commitment to work and my love for children always compelled me to make sure I did justice to both the fronts. As a result, I had always been on a run, trying to meet deadlines at work and at the same time ensuring my family was happy. I participated in every activity at my children's school that the parents were invited to. I helped our children with the weekly reading program when they started school for which I had to take a few hours time off from work every Wednesday. I never wanted my children to feel deprived of my involvement in their school activities just because they had a full-time working mum. I did not have the pleasure of having an extended family in Melbourne which made it tougher for me.

My day started with a 'To do' list for the day and finished with the list of the tasks I could not finish to transfer to the next day. Having very high expectations of myself, I was not expected to forget anything on my list. I had lists stuck on the refrigerator, lists in my calendar and lists coming

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out of my ears! I used to be my own critique and a very hard taskmaster. That was the only way at that time to achieve all that I wanted at work and home. As if that was not enough, I had very heavy involvement in community work and social networking on the weekends. So, basically, I was running a marathon at sprinting pace. My well being was the last thing I ever thought of because I always considered myself to be superwoman having high expectation of myself. My whole way of life had an impact on my personality. I became very unforgiving to myself and others around me. I never shared my feelings with anyone around me because I did not like the idea of people sympathizing with me as I was a very independent person. The only person who understood me well was Harish, who knew what was lying underneath that hard layer of mine – survival.

It all began when I felt as if my life came to a complete halt on one afternoon in October 2002. Suddenly, my mind went blank and the only question that stared at me was “Is this what life is all about”. I had been really working hard, working late almost every night in the last 2 to 3 months

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leading to this incident. I was physically and mentally exhausted. I experienced immense restlessness in me. I took time off from work immediately. Though it all started at work, but I knew it was much beyond that.

Then I went through a very strange phenomenon within myself. I didn't talk to my family members for the next few days. I would sit in our family room gazing through the window into the garden for hours. There was a big void within me. I had stopped thinking. I would sit alone most of the time. I had this big storm of restlessness within me which had totally taken control of me. Neither did I have the urge to fight it out.

I was just there experiencing this big silence within me. My family did not know how to handle me. They had never seen me like that before and were really worried about me. My husband thought it was best to give me some space and let me sort out my thoughts.

A few days later, I was taking a walk in our neighbourhood in the afternoon around 1 pm. I was so absorbed within myself: oblivious of my

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surroundings: when I heard someone calling me out. There was this lady who I had met briefly on a couple of occasions before at our friend's place. We addressed her as "Aunty" when we met before. "Aunty" was asking me where I was going and how I was. I don't think I ever replied to her then, as I was in my own world. She invited me to come over to her place and I followed her silently. She lived a few houses next to ours.

After reaching her place, Aunty took me to her room and asked me to sit down. We sat on the ground cross legged in front of each other. She asked me to clasp my hands together, close my eyes and observe my breath. Without questioning, I followed her instructions silently. I think I was aware of my surroundings for only a few minutes.....

I was in an ancient Hindu temple. The temple architecture reminded me of its era, must be around the fifth century. It was a small temple with high ceilings with metal oil lamps hanging from the ceiling. The floor felt very damp with water everywhere: must be the water coming from the nearby stream. There was no one around. There, in

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the middle of the temple, stood the Siva-Ling. I stood there in the temple, totally absorbing the peace and silence of the surrounding.

Somewhere in the distance, I could hear Aunt's voice "Saroja! it is 3:45pm: you may have to pick your children from school". I came back to this world with a jolt. It took me sometime to become aware of my surroundings. On opening my eyes, I saw Aunt sitting there in front of me. I felt so rested and I experienced immense peace within myself! All that restlessness I suffered in the past week had suddenly vanished! With tears of joy I asked her what I had been doing all this time. She said I had been sitting in meditation for a long time. I looked at the clock and could not believe that I was sitting there for more than two hours! It felt like only a couple of minutes.

"So, this is meditation..." I thought. It felt as if my insides had been washed out thoroughly. I shared my experience with Aunt who smiled back with happiness. Aunt explained me that this was '*Anapanasati*' meditation which Lord Buddha had practiced himself. Meditation seemed very simple to

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me as all I had to do was to observe my breath. I said goodbye and headed off to pick my children from the school.

Something happened to me in the last few hours in meditation. I felt like a different person. I had this rush of energy within me. All that despair and helplessness that I was experiencing in the last week had vanished. Everything within me and around me looked different. All of a sudden, the world looked harmonious and beautiful. I clearly remember humming my favourite song as I drove to pick my children.

Little did I know at that time that this was a start of a new life to me, a new life that gave a new meaning and a new purpose to my existence! This was the beginning of my spiritual journey and I had no second thought as I progressed on this path fearlessly.

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Engulfed by the Spiritual Tide

The next few weeks went by like a beautiful dream. I arranged with Aunty to meditate together every morning and evening. Meditating in her company was giving me solace and enthusiasm.

The day would start with my morning meditation with Aunty for an hour. Once Harish and children left home for work and school, I would sit down in meditation again, sometimes two to three hours at a stretch. In the evening, I would go with Aunty to the newly constructed Vietnamese Buddha temple on Springvale Road and meditate in their Meditation Hall. This became my favourite place for meditation as the temple has a great ambience and peace within its surroundings. The moment you set your step in the compound, you feel like you are in a different

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world. I always looked forward to go to this place in the evening.

My family was very relieved to see me back as my old self. Though they knew very well that something was going on in my life but all that mattered to them was I was back in action. My husband was a great support during these times and looked after the household and children to give me space and time to pursue the path that I had just explored.

One of these days Aunty gave me two audio cassettes named “Atma –Vigyan” and “Mukti-Marg” and said, “I am sure you will enjoy listening to them”. I came home and without further delay played the two cassettes. As I was listening to the cassettes tears of joy rolled from my eyes. Every word touched my soul! Everything fell in to place for me! It was as if that audio narration was specially recorded for me! The meaning of life unfolded in front of my eyes making me realize the complete essence of life. I recapped the last thirty odd years of my life and its melodrama and laughed at myself for the part that I played in it. The two narrations

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changed my life further for good in my spiritual journey.

The chain of events in the past couple of weeks began to make sense. Things were becoming crystal clear to me. I understood now why I went through such a turmoil and restlessness in the last few weeks.

This was my call for spiritual awakening. My spiritual alarm clock that I had set before I departed for this incarnation was at work! The plan that I had made before I came to this world for my spiritual progress was in action! The initiation of the events at work were just a means to kick start the whole process for me to stop and retrospect my life which I exactly did.

I looked at the cassette cover for the details of the narrator. On the cover was a picture of a grey bearded man 'BRAHMARSHI PATRIJI' and there I found him: my soul mate, my guide, my friend.....

Next day, when I caught up with Aunty, I was so eager to know about this man on the cassette cover that I had seen the other day. Aunty told me that

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Patriji is the founder of Pyramid Spiritual Societies Movement which started in India and is bringing a major spiritual revolution around the world by spreading Anapanasati meditation.

That evening I again listened to those two audios and made a list of several books referred to in the cassette. I immediately went to the local library and there it was waiting for me: my first spiritual book “Autobiography of a Yogi”. With no further delay I sat down to read the book. I could not put the book down till I finished reading with it! A totally new world within me was revealing itself slowly. I was overwhelmed by the wonderful feeling that I was undergoing. Nothing external to me mattered any longer! Everything around me started to have its own meaning and purpose in life! I felt like I had the keys to this new magical world from where I did not want to return.

My love for my family wanted me to share these new experiences with them. I wanted them to be a part of all this. That evening when I went for a walk with Harish, I discussed for the first time this new world that I had found. I shared with him my meditation

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experiences in the past week and the wonderful feeling that I was going through. From that day onwards every evening I would share with him everything that I had learned, read or experience through meditation. He would be a silent listener without commenting or expressing his feelings. Sometimes I would see concern in his eyes not sure of what I was doing, but he was happy that I was happy and back in my form. I was however enjoying every minute of my new life.

Then I came across the two most valuable books that changed my life for good: “You Forever” by Lobsang Rampa and “The White Book” by Ramtha. These books changed my way of thinking forever! I started seeing immense potential within myself. It was like I had found a treasure within me. I would spend hours talking to my children about what I had learnt through these books.

I was always a voracious reader of fiction books. But now suddenly my taste in books changed dramatically. Those fiction books could not satisfy my appetite anymore. In the subsequent months, I read many books written by OSHO. Strange things

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started to happen. I would go to the local library looking for a good spiritual book to read. There it would be waiting for me! I would never have to look for a book. My hand would invariably reach for a book and that would be the book for me to read. Initially I termed it as a coincidence. But when it started to happen repeatedly, I understood it was my intention at work.

Then I came across the wonderful books by Dr. Wayne Dyer: “Manifest Your Destiny” and “The Power of Intention”. What a great book is “Manifest Your Destiny”. I have given it as present to my near and dear friends.

Soon my thirst for books began to grow more. I would read the same books repeatedly. Borrowing books from library was good but sometimes I would like to read a specific book without delay. I slowly started building up my own spiritual library at home.

That summer, we went to Gold Coast for a vacation. We were in a beautiful apartment facing the sea. Every morning I would walk to the beach, sit on the beautiful sand and meditate for hours. On the fourth

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day: when I was sitting in meditation on the beach: I had the most wonderful experience. One second, I was in my body and in the next instant I was in a different place. I was still cross legged in my meditation posture but not on the Gold coast beach anymore. Instead I was just there in the void. Around me were billions of stars, planets, galaxies.... bright and beautiful! It was a great sight! I did not know how long I spent my time there taking in all that beauty around me. When I came back to my physical awareness, it took me some time to come to terms with it.

While I was going through spiritual revolution within myself, the world outside was struggling to understand me. I had been on leave from work for a couple of weeks. My management at work was desperately trying to get in touch with me. This was a newly found freedom and a new world that I had found, and I was in no rush to get back into the mad routine. Finally, a counsellor was arranged by work to come and talk to me on a weekly basis to make sure I would come back to work soon. The counselling sessions turned out to be very funny. The lady would come every week and we would talk

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for a couple of hours. Very soon she realized there was nothing to counsel me about! Meanwhile I had moved on miles ahead since I had left work on leave and everything looked promising and positive to me. I would talk to this lady about all these things that I was learning and discuss all the books that I was reading. In two weeks, we became good friends. Slowly she started opening-up and discussing her issues and challenges with me. As part of her job she would meet people who were going through difficult times and she had to be there to support and be a listening ear. All this was stressing her up and impacting her own family relations.

With the newly found meaning of life, nothing was a challenge any more to me. So, I would encourage her not to resist life but to live it fully, not to please anyone else but to live to one's own satisfaction. I would repeatedly tell her that life is not meant to be a pain or punishment. If one is experiencing so , then it is time to step back and consider the whole situation again.

Then, one day I got an email from her thanking me for my friendship and letting me know that she had

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quit her work and would do something new to fulfil her passion. She said she had grown a lot in the last few weeks due to the wonderful discussions we had every week. In the end she said “Saroja, thanks for your counselling, you have changed my life.” Thus, started my un-official career in counselling!

Finally, I went back to work in a few weeks time, not because I had to; but because I wanted to as I feared nothing now.

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Meeting the MASTER

Reading became an absolutely important part of my routine. Every night before going to bed I would read some spiritual book. Initially, Aunty gave me a couple of magazines and books published by “Pyramid Spiritual Societies (PSS)”. Later on it became a habit for me to visit PSS website and read articles from the magazine on line in my spare time.

Every time I opened the website, I would come across this man with the grey beard called “Subhash Patri” staring at me. Patriji, founder of ‘Pyramid Spiritual Societies Movement (PSSM)’, realized the power of meditation through his own profound experiences early in his life and attained enlightenment in the year 1979. Ever since, he has made as his life mission, the objective of teaching and promoting meditation and vegetarianism to people all over the world. His approach has been

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completely scientific and secular without invoking any religious symbolism.

As I read the PSS magazines, I got to know that he had been spending all his time in spreading Anapanasati meditation throughout the world. His sole aim is to make this world “Dhyanajagath”— a world full of meditation. There were articles published from many people in the PSS magazine whose lives had been touched by Patriji and his meditation. The audio cassettes that I borrowed from Auntie were always on my bedside and there again I would see this man on the cassette cover every morning by my bedside.

It was wonderful and exciting to read about his experiments with pyramids. I used to read his articles about the power of pyramids and how they can be helpful in meditation. The pyramid is the symbol of all-round development. They are four sides in a pyramid. They represent four kingdoms; the Mineral Kingdom, the Plant Kingdom, the Animal Kingdom, and the Human Kingdom. The four sides of pyramid unite there. They all become one. That is Spirituality.

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Inspired by Patriji's articles, I read the book "Pyramid Power" by Max Toth & Greg Nilson. This book is a comprehensive and fascinating guide to Pyramids, their origins, secret purposes and the many uses to which the mysterious energies they generate can be put. This book penetrates the secrets of pyramid structures that remain standing to this day, even though they were built thousands of years ago. It also investigates the power of the pyramid being researched in occult and scientific circles. The sharpening of razor blades, the preservation of food stuff, the pyramid as a generator of spiritual energies and other amazing powers were mentioned in this book which Patriji confirmed through his experiments once again.

Patriji established the first pyramid in KURNOOL (India), in the year 1991. In the year 1996, a second pyramid was built in URAVAKONDA. Subsequently, several pyramids were established throughout the state of Andhra Pradesh. Pyramid meditation, in the whole of the world, for the first time, was established by Patriji. Meditation when done inside a pyramid is thrice more powerful.

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His article on pyramid energy was an eye-opener to me. According to him, every pyramid is connected to every other pyramid, so it is an energy exchange mechanism, energy generation, energy preservation on this earth. So, more and more pyramids should be constructed everywhere, so that energy can be sent there and that energy will be useful for all the surroundings. People will come to the pyramids and do meditation and gain that energy.

The more I read about him: his articles and his relentless effort in spreading meditation: the more I became fond of the vast project he had undertaken. My day would begin hearing his audio cassette in the car to work and finish with reading his articles before going to bed. Soon, Patriji and the PSS website became an integral part of me and my life.

Then, one day I came across the following quote from this grey bearded man which changed my thought, my belief and my life totally.

"How many life-times will we watch simply others' greatness, others' enlightenment? How many lifetimes will we sing songs, praise others' meditation and others' enlightenment? If we sing

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songs praising others' meditation and others' enlightenment, will our personal problems be solved? Only our personal meditation, our personal enlightenment, can solve our personal problems.”

Now, I knew what to do from here on. “If Patriji can be enlightened, so can I”. I realised that enlightenment is not an action; it is a way of life. Every word said by him was changing my life continuously for better.

We planned our trip to India in December 2004. I came to know that PSS organises a seven days meditation camp in December every year. This time the camp was in Hyderabad, where I was planning to spend some time with my family during my holiday in India. I had heard a lot about this camp where thousands of people from all over India come to meditate under the guidance of Patriji. How wonderful it would be, to be a part of all that!

When we reached Hyderabad and arrived at my sister's place in Begumpet, I came to know from the local news paper that the meditation camp was starting that evening in Secunderabad grounds, which is very close to my sister's place. My family

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left me at Hyderabad for two days to attend the meditation camp and went to Visakhapatnam to spend time with my in-laws.

I went to the meditation camp with my niece Shilpa that evening. Shilpa is a lovely young girl who was very curious about meditation and the camp. On our way to the grounds, I explained Shilpa how to do meditation and the benefits of meditation. When we reached the grounds, we saw that the meditation had already commenced. There were thousands of people sitting in the ground, everyone with closed eyes in meditation. The whole area was engulfed with the beautiful music that was coming from the huge speakers. I was extremely thrilled to be there! It was like a dream come true!

As we were late, we could only get a seat in the last row. When we settled ourselves in the available chairs, I cast my eyes around. Far away on the stage there were people, who were playing the live meditation music. From the distance I could not properly see who was on the stage. I closed my eyes and went into meditation with the beautiful flute music that was reaching us from the stage. Someone

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was tapping me on the shoulder that brought me back to this world. It was Shilpa. She wanted to go back home as it was already 9 pm and my mother had clearly instructed us to be back home before 9pm as we were on our own. Meditation was still in progress and I was very disheartened to leave halfway. Reluctantly we left the grounds and headed back home.

After reaching home all I wanted to do was to continue meditating. So, I did not talk much to anyone and went quietly into the bedroom and meditated for the next two hours. Suddenly, the realization came to my mind. That beautiful flute musician in the meditation camp has to be Patriji! I have heard his flute music before. I felt disappointed that I did not have a chance to see him in person even after going to the camp. I went to bed thinking about the camp. I could not wait to be there.

Next day when I told my mother that I was going for meditation again to the camp, she was not very happy. She was upset that I did not accompany my husband to my in-law's place though I was planning to join them anyway in two days time. She tried to

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explain me that spirituality and meditation should be practiced at an age when you have fulfilled your responsibilities in life. She was under the impression that I was avoiding family and my responsibility in the name of meditation. I could not find fault with her. She was right in her place as a mother. But all that I had learnt in the last two years about the bigger picture of life was not going to change my mind. To me, spirituality and life were to go together. Only through spirituality can you enjoy your life better and live completely which I had learnt through experience. Nothing would stop me in the path that I had now chosen. My journey in this path was never meant to be a lonely journey. I had always shared all that I had learnt with my family. It was our family's spiritual journey. But how could I tell that to my mother? That would upset her further if she knew that I was coaching my children on meditation. So, without further discussion, I left to the meditation grounds to finish the business I had come for.

The scene at the meditation ground was no different to the day before. There were people everywhere. The visibility was better as it was daytime. I settled

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myself on a chair and looked at the stage. The gentleman on the stage was sharing his meditation experience. Then it was announced that Brahmarshi Patriji was going to address the crowd next. I sat there with expectation. I was finally going to see this great man in person who has guided me and been with me at every step in my spiritual revolution in the past twelve months. When he came on to the stage, I could hardly see him properly due to the distance. When the session finished, everyone was rushing towards him to greet him. I followed them. As he was walking from the stage towards the car park, I could see him slightly better this time. He was still around hundred meters away from me. I could not get to him any closer as there were thousands of people ahead of me eager to get closer to the Master. I stood there thinking, “Am I ever going to get a chance to meet this man?” I was sure there must be many in the crowd that day who had the same thought. As I gazed at him from a distance, I could see him talking to people lovingly, shaking their hands one after other. There were people embracing him, touching him and talking to

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him as he made his way towards the car park. I returned home feeling very disappointed.

Next day was my flight to Visakhapatnam in the afternoon, so I decided to go to the camp in the morning for a couple of hours and then return around twelve noon to catch my flight. I reached the camp by ten in the morning. Again, mother was not very happy as I had not spent much time with her due to the meditation camp. When I reached the camp, meditation was in progress. I joined them in meditation. That was followed by Patriji's speech. At 12 noon there was break and again everyone was rushing towards the stage to meet the Grand Master. I began to follow them as this was my last day in the camp and I had to leave soon due to my flight. Suddenly I stopped. If I had the strong intention to meet this great man, it would happen. So, I stood there. There was lot of uproar in the people standing next to me. Someone said that Patriji was coming our way walking through the crowd meeting and greeting people on his way. Before I could grasp the situation, there I saw him standing right in front of me, looking down at me. I could not believe. He was five feet away from me. I

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was looking at him with tears in my eyes. This was the same familiar figure I had seen every night on my cassette cover, who spoke to me every morning on my way to work. It took me five minutes to get hold of myself. Then I stepped forward to say “I have come all the way from Melbourne Sir.” He extended his hand to greet me and pulled two chairs, sat on one and asked me to sit on the other. We sat there quietly for the next half an hour looking at each other. I had nothing left to say. All that I had to share came out in the form of my tears and he understood it well. We were surrounded by hundreds of people who stood there quietly watching us. I was sitting there peacefully graced by the presence of this Great Master. Later, when I told him that I had to leave for my flight, he addressed me as “Master” and said to everyone around me “Meet this great master from Melbourne.” My respect for him increased multi-fold as I realized that, to him we are all Masters living through our experiences that we have come to this plane for. What a Great Being!

I have seen a lot of saints, Gurus, religious leaders who are all treated and worshipped as Gods by their followers. But this Master who was sitting in front of

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me would not allow anyone even to bow their head to him. To him, God prevails in all of us and hence we are all Gods. Here is a True Master who was leading by example walking the path to show we all are Gods and we all create our respective realities.

Patriji introduced me to another PSS Master Sivaprasad, who gave me a bag full of spiritual books to take with me. After bidding goodbye to the Master, I left the meditation ground. He asked Sivaprasad to drop me at my sister's place. My heart was overwhelmed with contentment and joy with the wonderful encounter I had with the Master and could not thank him enough for his kindness! Now I felt as the mission was successfully accomplished!

I will never forget this experience in my life.

In 2005, I came to know that Patriji was coming to Australia! That was the time I came to know that there were a few more people in Melbourne who knew of PSS and Patriji and were also practicing meditation for some time. This was going to be a good opportunity to meet all those people with Patriji's arrival in Melbourne. We were fortunate enough to have the opportunity of conducting the

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inaugural meditation session of PSS in Australia at our place!

Patriji came over to Melbourne with Sivaprasad and another PSS member Swarna. I had very little notice about this inaugural meditation session that was going to happen at our place. I was at work when we made this arrangement. It was around mid noon and the meditation session was planned to start around seven in the evening. That means I had to make the necessary arrangements after returning from work. Meanwhile I had to inform all my friends about this meditation so that they could be a part of it and also meet Patriji in person here in Melbourne. Meeting Patriji in India, as I said before is not an easy task as he would always be surrounded by people.

But everything went on smoothly and on time. For me personally, I was very thrilled as this great man was going to be at our place. Around seven in the evening, I and Harish picked Patriji and brought him over to our place. Our place was full of people, our family room, lounge was full of people and they were lining up in the hallway till the door. Patriji pulled out his flute and played this beautiful music

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to which we all meditated. We all meditated for over an hour. Our house was blessed with the presence of Patriji and the meditators. That's where my journey with Siva, Nath, Rao and Vijaya began as I met them at our place that day for the first time.

We spent the next few days with Patriji during his stay in Melbourne and had a great chance to get to know him better.

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The Divine Plan

It was Saturday morning when the phone rang. It was from my friend Raveendra who is a member the Pyramid Spiritual Society, Australia.

Raveendra wanted me to give a talk in two weeks' time on "Pyramid spiritual societies movement" and " the science of meditation for enlightened living " organized by Melbourne Theosophical Society.

I said "Why me? And in such a short time!!!!"

Raveendra apologized for the short notice and explained the events that had occurred over a period of time. He informed me that during the year 2006 itself, he had booked a session with the "Melbourne Theosophical Society" for Patriji to give a talk.

As per the original schedule "Pyramid Spiritual Society, Australia" was planning to bring Patriji to

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Australia in March 2007. Hence the session with Melbourne Theosophical Society was planned for March 4th.

As Patriji's trip had been postponed, he had asked Melbourne Theosophical Society to cancel the session in March. However, the President of the Theosophical Society, Ernest Wagner, did not want to cancel the session as the monthly program flyers had already gone out.

So, after a lot of discussion, the members of PSS Australia had decided to request me to fill in for Patriji for the talk!

Raveendra then said that he had discussed the issue with Patriji and he too had recommended me to go ahead with the talk!

On one hand I was thrilled to be blessed with such an opportunity of taking Patriji's place for the talk: but immediately my calendar reminded me that I had booked myself to leave for Malaysia on 4th March 2007 to attend a work related international conference to be held at Kuala Lumpur from 5th March 2007. All my travel arrangements

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and accommodation had been booked. This was an important conference that my management was keen for me to attend.

So, I apologized to Raveendra and explained him my work commitment. He was very disappointed and asked me if I could suggest anyone else who could deliver the talk. As a last remark, I do remember saying to Raveendra that I would have done the talk if I did not have to go ahead with my trip to Malaysia. I really meant what I said. Little did I realize at that time that intentions and thoughts have great power!

To my surprise, next morning, when I went to work, my management approached me and explained that something important had come up and they would like me to cancel my trip! He apologized for the inconvenience caused.

I quickly realized that this is all part of the “divine plan.”

So, as per my promise, I rang up Raveendra and told him that I am now available for the talk. The following weekend, I sat down to do a quick write up

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on my talk. The pressure of talking on Patriji's behalf was immense and it made me nervous as well as emotional.

What am I in comparison to the knowledge, wisdom and spirituality Patriji has? I am like a drop of water in comparison to the ocean that is Patriji! However, it is a rare opportunity that anyone could get. And, also, I knew that the members of the Melbourne Theosophical Society were no ordinary people! They are the hard-core spiritual beings who spent most of their time in spiritual discussion, reading and attending spiritual discourses on a very regular and dedicated basis.

Yet, I was not overly concerned as I have been closely in touch with Pyramid Spiritual Society Movement and their objective for the last three years. I have been a regular practitioner of Anapanasati meditation since the year 2003. The knowledge I gained from the number of spiritual books that I have read in the last three years has always been with me.

Preparing for the talk was really not much of a challenge to start with. As I put my pen on the

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paper, my pen danced for the next half an hour! I had no idea what I was writing about. The divine masters had taken over from there!

When I looked at what I had written at the end: I could not believe! It was all that I wanted to say! That evening when Raveendra, Rao and Vijaya came over to my place to go through what I intended to speak, it was another great experience we all went through. We were sitting in our lounge and I started talking on what I had prepared as a synopsis. Halfway through the talk we all experienced pretty high vibrations in the room. By the time I finished, Vijaya had gone into meditation and the others sat there mesmerized!

The event was scheduled for the next Sunday. The agenda that I had put forth had thirty minutes talk from me, followed by “Spiritual Reality” DVD part 1, fifteen minutes of group meditation and then finally sharing of experience, discussion and questions and answers.

The scheduled start time was 2:30 pm. I, Siva, Rao and Nikhil reached the Melbourne Theosophical Society auditorium by 2 pm. The President greeted

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us and took us inside. By 2:15 pm people started gathering. By then, the flyers that had Patriji's photo had already been distributed. People were looking for this person clad in kurta-pyjama – an Indian dress and with a grey beard.

Finally, some of them approached Ernest and asked why Patriji was not there. Ernest explained the change in program and pointed towards me as the fill in for Patriji. I could hear someone saying, "Oh but she is only a girl", another one said "Oh! she is young". I couldn't stop laughing at the looks they gave me. I thought in myself ..." Don't I look spiritual enough to you?" I said to myself "Well, Saroja, you have come this far, go ahead with it".

At the scheduled time, the President introduced me and invited me to come on to the stage. The first thing I did when I got on to the stage was to remove the wooden stand, flower vase and anything that was between me and my audience. I wanted their full attention, on this day, when I had this divine opportunity to spread the Science of Anapanasati Meditation on behalf of the divine master.

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The session started with my talk which went about for forty-five minutes which was very well received.

Once I went on the stage, I totally forgot who I was. I visualized myself as Patriji and went along. The slides which I prepared on energy cycle, cosmic energy concept and Anapanasati meditation greatly helped my talk.

There was pin drop silence in the audience. As I looked at them, they were sitting there listening to me with anticipation.

Then we played the Spiritual Reality DVD for around twenty minutes.

The group meditation was a total success! Though I held it for only ten minutes due to the schedule imitations, the most satisfying aspect was the feedback I got from the audience on group meditation.

One lady said that she had been relieved of back pain after doing the meditation. Another gentleman also gave similar feedback. I felt ... even if this session should help only one person ... all my effort is worthwhile. Some of them really enjoyed the group

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meditation and said that they would like to have more such group meditations. Siva gave them the website details of Pyramid Spiritual Society Australia, where the detail of group meditation is posted. Siva and Rao joined me on the stage for the discussion session.

We had very keen audience that day and all of them were spiritually well-informed people with the inclusion of some very highly evolved beings in the crowd.

The interaction we had at the end of the session was very lively with a variety of questions from the audience. It was wonderful to see that they all got themselves so much involved in what we gave them that day!

I was overwhelmed by the response I got from the audience at the end of the session. They were very appreciative of the talk. Almost everyone came to me and congratulated me for making the session so informative!

The President of Melbourne Theosophical Society came to me at the end and said that he was very

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happy with my talk. He also said that he would be glad to have more such talks from me in the future.

So, that is a very good opening for Pyramid Spiritual Society, Australia, in Melbourne. Here is a well-established spiritual society...which has received us so well and is looking forward to hearing more from us.

I know this is all part of the divine plan.

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Beyond my Belief

I have always been an all rounder and a high achiever throughout my life. But nothing came easy to me. I had to work hard at every step. So, I always believed that only hard work can bring success. With the quantum of various activities, I pursued in life, I had to always manage my time efficiently. But my line of thought changed dramatically after I really understood life in its completeness in December 2002.

The more I trusted the universe and the life energy around me, the more aligned I became with it. I started feeling the sense of contentment and abundance in me which made me feel always satisfied. There was nothing more for me to prove myself or achieve further. I was complete. Slowly things started to change around me. All the material

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achievements began to follow me. Without any great effort from my side, all the worldly pleasures were flooding my life. The irony is when I was in pursuit of these worldly pleasures: they always seemed very difficult to have.

The following episode in my life proved this further.

When I received a phone call from the office of the Governor of Victoria in December 2011, I was speechless. The call was to inform me that I was to be awarded a Victorian Multicultural Award for Excellence in recognition of my “Meritorious Service to the Community.”

I quite literally didn’t know what to say! I think I said a few words and then hung up. I had to ring them back after I regained my composure.

To me the award was a complete surprise. This recognition spoke much about my commitment to creating harmony and together in the multicultural community.

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From the moment I set foot in Australia in 1991, I was totally devoted to helping others wherever I saw a need. It started with our own Indian community.

When I arrived in Melbourne and I started meeting others who had migrated from India, I soon realized there was no established network or a proper community platform as such.

This type of social networking is very important for the physical and mental wellbeing of people going through the teething phase of settling in a new country. It helps to overcome home sickness, frustration and desperation of settling in a career.

So, I set about becoming an important part in organizing community events: events that soon became important annual occasions on the social calendar. Over the years, I underwent several roles starting from organizing charity shows, musicals, choreographing dances, writing production scripts, directing skits, being part of the orchestra and MC.

I have been an ardent promoter of Indian dance and music. I always felt it was very important for

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migrants to preserve their cultural heritage while also embracing the culture of the adoptive countries.

Community support activities bring us all closer to gain strength from one another and to be a part of each other's joy and despair.

While coping with my professional full time career demands and family commitments I also became a valuable resource for new migrants trying to find their feet in Australia.

Over the years our house did host quite a few migrant families freshly arrived in Melbourne who had nowhere else to go.

I helped them to settle in their new lives through career advice, help writing CVs and just giving timely guidance and appropriate mentoring.

In the last few years, I have been conducting free meditation sessions at our place on the weekends.

Practicing meditation has benefited me a lot and I like to share this with all others in the community, particularly those suffering from depression and stress.

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I did not do all the above community work for my recognition award or an honour. I did this because that's what my heart wanted me to do. The more I serve the humanity the more my heart fills with joy and contentment and I feel aligned with the universe. The award from the Government was [merely](#) a “thank you” gesture from the universe.

The award was presented at a ceremony hosted by the Governor of Victoria Alex Chernov at Government house.

I have special thanks for my family, particularly my husband Harish. I could not have achieved what I have without the support of Harish and the children. Over the years they have adjusted frequently with our home being at times a refuge, a rehearsal studio, and meditation school.

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Young MASTERS

1992 and 1996 are the two memorable years in my life when two great masters stepped into my life: our son Nikhil followed by our daughter Navya Manjari. I and Harish are so thankful to them for choosing us as their parents for these two masters have had a great impact on our lives.

Motherhood has been the best gift to me that this life has given. Only through our children did I experience what is called unconditional love. I never could understand the term before. But life changed once that happened.

Nikhil, as any first-born child would be, has been the apple of our eye since the day he was born. I got back to work when he was five months old. With a full-time career and a little one to look after, life has always been busy. But his arrival did not change our

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lifestyle much, for Nikhil was a very easy child to deal with.

I used to go for late night music rehearsal after work and would take Nikhil with us to the rehearsal. We would finish at 2 am in the morning and Nikhil would still be awake happily enjoying the rehearsal. Our active socializing life did not have any adverse impact with the arrival of Nikhil.

I always felt there was a very strong bonding between the two of us.

Navya blessed us with her gracious entry into our lives in March 1996. We were extremely delighted and over the moon to have a daughter after our son Nikhil. This beautiful princess with big black eyes and dark curly hair got our attention pretty much all the time.

Harish's parents were tremendously happy to have their first granddaughter. She is indeed a very lucky girl to have loving parents and an elder brother who was always looking after her. For Harish, she has always been his world. He was always seen carrying

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Navya in his arms when she was a baby. She was very comfortable and always at ease with him.

When she was three months old, she took us around the world for a year on a *show and tell* journey. After all I and Harish were the proud parents of a gorgeous son and a beautiful daughter.

She started learning Indian classical dance at a very early age of three. It gave me immense pleasure to see her on the stage from the age of three whenever she gave her dance performance. I could see my passion for dance coming through her.

Time was flying at a very fast pace for us and now with two little ones we were running short of spare time. Being a full-time working mum, I always had to plan ahead to make sure our children did not have to compromise on anything.

Weekends would vanish between attending the numerous extra-curricular activities for our children, socializing and getting ready for the following week. Keeping up with our vast network of friends was turning out to be quite exhausting and very challenging. Also, my interest in the community

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activity was stretching me thin. The responsibility at work was increasing with experience every year and both Harish and I wanted to do well in our professional careers.

Amid all, the one thing that was of utmost priority to me was the children. I would take time off from work to do the reading session at their schools, make sure I was at their sport events and Christmas picnics so on and so forth. To me nothing in the world came ahead of them. I could never forgive myself if I missed to do something for them on time. For this all to happen, I had to be on my toes all the time. I was like a central force of the family driving them all forward along with me.

Life was that busy till 2002, we were literally running in the fast lane on the freeway. In the year 2002 while going through the self-realization process, I realized I had to slow down to experience and enjoy this life. Life was not about just ticking days in the calendar but is more about living every moment.

When I slowed down in December 2002, it was a big shock to the whole family as they had never seen me

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in that space. For children, this was not the “mother” that they were aware of. It was a big adjustment to them. They slowly watched me going through the transformation from a “full on mother always on the go” to “a silent mother at home” and then to “a mother with changed priorities enjoying her life”. All this happened in a span of few weeks.

Though my parents came from a heavy spiritual background, but very little philosophy of life and spirituality was discussed with the children. Spirituality to many, is an aspect that you learn and practice late in life: after you have fulfilled all your responsibilities. Because, it is only then that it becomes easy to detach oneself from the material world and the worldly relations to practice spirituality. However, I did not want to have that situation with my children. I wanted to share everything with my children that I was learning on this path. I wanted them to be equipped with these tools: like meditation and understanding of life in the bigger picture so that they can live their life to the fullest and not get swept away by the day to day material drama one goes through in life.

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So, soon after I learnt meditation, I began to teach my children how to meditate. They would practice every night with me. I would read spiritual books and share with them the interesting aspects that night. Soon the scene transformed at our dinner table. This would be the time we discussed all the worldly and spiritual aspects of life.

It was very interesting to see the children practicing meditation to improve their concentration before preparing for exams. They had realized very early that practicing meditation was helping them to focus better in their studies and other activities in life including sport. They would discuss this with their friends at school. My daughter would teach meditation to her friends at the school! Their confidence in themselves and the world around was increasing day by day.

The one thing I taught them was that meditation was the whole answer to anything and everything. That was exactly what I had learnt through my personal experience.

At one time, I had planned to pave the area around the post box. This was not the type of work I was

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used to. I had to dig about five square meters around the post box, fill it up with gravel, cover it up with mud, pave it with bricks and concrete at the end. The whole job took me several hours by the end of which I was extremely tired. My arms were hurting so badly that I could not raise my arm. I had half an hour to pick the children from school. So, I debated between taking a short rest and meditating for half an hour as I was exhausted. Finally, I decided to spend the half an hour meditating. I set the alarm for after half an hour and sat down to meditate. As I was physically tired my mind went blank instantaneously and I went into deep meditation. When the alarm went off in half an hour I came out of meditation very refreshed. To my pleasant surprise, I had no body aches or arm pains that I had suffered from prior to that. I shared the experience with my family that evening.

So, it has become a guideline in the family that if anyone is unwell, they meditate. We all know that this is the quickest solution to come out of any predicament.

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When my son came to the final year of his high school, I saw a very interesting process happening. Normally the final year is a very stressful year for any student: as the results pretty much decide their future course and career. Though Nikhil was academically a high achiever and on scholarship, one would expect him to be working very hard to score even better. On the other hand, he took things very easy. One thing he did without fail was to practice meditation regularly which helped him to focus well on whatever he spent his effort on. He was always confident of his year-end results and never worried. His mature behaviour took me by surprise most of the time. Then I would have to remind myself that this teenager has all the wisdom and knowledge that I had gained very late in my life. But that's exactly what I wanted to happen, and it was all happening. My heart filled with joy I would think 'What bigger treasure can a mother give to her children'.

When I saw this young man winning the "Victoria State Trophy" for his school for standing first in the UN mock competition, I knew there was nothing that could stand in his way. I was a witness during the entire final round of the competition that went

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on for more than six hours and the confidence and maturity with which he handled himself was profoundly amazing!

When the VCE results came out, he was not surprised to receive a fantastic ATAR score of 99.8. University offered him a scholarship straight away! As proud parents, we attended the scholarship ceremony at the University.

Soon after his high school Year 12 exams, he started tutoring Year 12 students. There were many students who wanted him to coach them as Nikhil had done extremely well in Year 12. All the students in his school are asked to meditate for ten minutes before Nikhil starts his tutoring lesson. It amazes me to see the discipline with which they all meditate. He has shared the benefits of meditation with them as he defines meditation as one of the key focusing techniques for students.

To Nikhil, nothing is impossible. He has applied all the key spiritual leanings in his life and is reaping the benefits of it. Life is a playground to him and he is not afraid of enjoying his game here. He is a role

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model to his sister and to many other children around.

When my niece joined us in Melbourne in 2004 from India to pursue her Accounting degree, she was amazed to see the atmosphere at our place. The spiritual discussions that we had at the dinner table with our children who were only 12 and 9 at that time took her by surprise. The whole family meditating together before going to bed was another surprise to her. She had different expectations of us as we have been living away from India for more than ten years in a western culture. The children talking about spirituality was the last thing she had expected. She would see me teaching meditation to people in my spare time and hosting Sunday meditation sessions at our place. Slowly she got drawn into the wave of spirituality. She started practicing meditation herself. She soon became part and parcel of our lifestyle. Sometimes it makes me think; this may be her real purpose of coming over to Melbourne more than her Accounting degree!

Our visit to “*Dhyanamahachakram*” at Amaravati and Visakhapatnam took our extended family by

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surprise. They were under the impression that I and Harish were compelling our children to attend these meditation camps which was not the case. When they saw Navya getting up at 3am in the morning every day to be at the meditation camp by 4am, this was beyond their understanding. Every day, during our stay in Amaravati, it was our daughter Navya who would lead us all to the morning meditation.

For our family, meditation is a way of life, a part of life and sometimes life itself. Our children meditate if they are unwell, they meditate if they are unhappy, they meditate if they are unsure, they meditate before the exams to overcome stress and after the exam to calm their nerves and also meditate in their free time. Harish meditates on his way to and from work on the train.

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New Meaning to Life

Life is still the same around me as it used to be before 2002! But it looks different to me as I am not the same anymore.

I am now the unlimited, all-potential being, who is here to experience life just like many other lives I have been through in the past. That one interpretation of life changed my whole world around me.

My parents were very spiritual and read a lot of spiritual scriptures. Early on in my childhood, I was introduced to some very powerful statements from scriptures like “*Aham Brahmasmi* “ meaning ‘I am the Creator’. But did we ever contemplate about this or did we ever think of behaving like one- NO!

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There is a big difference between knowing things and practicing them. Till you apply them, they are only theoretical statements and do not really mean much to an individual. People in the past who applied them practically gained the benefit. But in most of the households, children are not encouraged to think that they are Gods. Very early on they are introduced to worshipping the idols, mechanically following rituals, introducing children to socially acceptable good and the bad, thus creating a huge rift between the body and the soul. There is a duality created when you are the *bhakta* or the follower and there is a different identity called the God or the leader. Then we call the God as the “Supreme” there by implying that the followers are inferior to him. When the life turns out to be a little bit different or challenging, instead of understanding the challenges and why they have been created, we are required to plead to the God Almighty to help us. This way we can off load our responsibility to the Supreme! We really do not have to do much ourselves, and when things do not happen the way we want, there is someone to take the blame for: “The God Almighty”.

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When the real meaning of “*Aham Brahmasmi*” dawned upon me in its complete reality in the year 2002 and I began to contemplate on the real essence: the truth of life hit me like a 1000 volt electric shock! I experienced the feeling of Hanuman growing from a mortal size to an immortal gigantic being just before he crossed the ocean to go to Lanka. Both the books “You Forever” and “The white Book” further helped me in understanding the whole essence of creation and the gradual evolution of a soul.

The reality was just there in front of me. It had always been there, but it was I who shut my eyes and ears of heart and was oblivious to that. Simple truth – we come to this earth again and again for different experiences, we create the situations around us, choose our parents, create challenges to gain experience from it.

We are unlimited souls coming to the physical plane for unlimited experiencing. We have come to this world by choice to experience ourselves just as we have done in many other worlds and will do again in many other worlds after this one, whether they be

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physical or non-physical. As a creator through experience, we have complete free-will to create what we wish.

What a beautiful concept! If we are creating all this before coming to this plane, then why worry when we must face them. There is no 'winner' or 'loser' in this game, just souls experiencing in physical plane.

Once you begin to understand the bigger picture, then life no longer is painful. Once you start believing in your unlimited potential, slowly, miracles start to happen in your life and then you understand that they are no longer miracles just your unlimited true self.

In my life too, miracles started happening beginning with the right book falling into my hands every time I went to the library in search of the next book to read. Then I understood that when you are open to the universe, ready to accept whatever comes in your way, you begin to draw from the universe whatever you desire.

Everything exists there in the universe. It is just a matter of aligning yourself with a strong intention.

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Whenever I had a dilemma or a conflict in my mind, I would go to my spiritual library at home, pick the first book that I could lay my hand on, open a random page and read it. There I would find the exact answer to my query. The more I believed in myself, the more these so-called miracles continued to happen.

Then it started with the phone calls. I would think of a person and my phone would ring. It would be from the same person I have been thinking of. Sometimes I would give a call to someone who would tell me that they were thinking of me and were about to call me. These days the moment our phone rings I tell my family who it is from. That is the first thought that comes into my mind when the phone rings. Whether you call it 'telepathy' or 'miracle', it all happens when you open-up and understand the real meaning of life and your true self.

Then one day John Payne's book "Omni reveals the four Principles of Creation" fell into my hands which remarkably changed my life and the lives of people around me. I read the four principles of creation

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which are a description of our divine self: love, health & well being, abundance and creativity.

“Love is the total and complete acceptance of what is. Love allows. Love is about allowing yourself to be who and what you are and allowing that same right to all others”, this opened doorways to forgiveness in my life. The person I had always been, very unforgiving to myself and the others around me, taking life very seriously as if it was an exam, everything changed slowly. I slowly eased accepting things the way they were unfolding, good or bad, not being judgmental. Out went the “task list” I used as my daily lifeline without which I never thought I could live.

Slowly things started to unclutter in my life. I was slowly finding more time and more space. Life started to look prettier. With little effort, I could achieve more tasks in the day, both at work and home. Success began to follow me in every front: as I stopped chasing it. More and more satisfaction and contentment began to make place within myself. Materially, I had still the same stuff as before but mentally I was a very rich and contented person.

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Slowly my material wants list began to get shorter and shorter and very soon disappeared. Then wonders began to happen in the physical world. I got my next promotion at work which I was not looking forward to anymore. We moved into a bigger house. The universal law of attraction was in its play.

The Law of Attraction states that everything draws to itself that which is like itself. So, when think and feel you are in abundance, you draw more abundance from the universe. This was the most important learning in my life. If you focus on the lack of anything, anything at all, you will get it. If you fear ill health, you will attract ill health. If you fear loneliness, you will attract loneliness because that is what you are always thinking of.

Something that I remembered from then on was "The Universe does not judge whether or not what you want is good or bad: it simply is, and it responds to your every thought, to your every whim. This life-force-energy does not understand the difference between 'want' and 'don't want.' It only follows and supports thought. Energy follows thought, not the other way around. So as your thoughts are focused

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on what you fear: or things you do not want: or are displeasing to you: the ever faithful life-force energy of the Universe, that very same energy that creates worlds, accurately follows your thoughts to bring into your experience that to which you have directed your attention.”

It was as if OMNI has handed over the keys of life to me. I knew what to do with this.

I slowly put my learning to experiment. One of my close family friends who has been very near and dear to me had been suffering lot of dis-satisfaction in his work front. He never had job satisfaction in the last fifteen years of his career and always thought he did not have enough work. This led to low self-esteem, resulting in inferiority complex in him.

Those were the days I was getting to know the life and universe better and was oozing with contentment and self confidence. I slowly started sharing the universal law of attraction with him. I strongly believed that he was undergoing the experience of lack of work because that is what he always thought of and hence he was drawing more of that experience from the universe. If your thoughts

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have been more towards the 'not having' of the thing you want, then that is what you will get. If your thoughts have been more towards the 'having' side of what you want, then that is what you will get.

Once you come to understand the Law of Attraction, you will begin to understand that whatever you direct your attention to is invited into your experience. I talked to him every day and slowly helped him to change his thinking which was not easy. He had to think and feel abundance to draw the experience of abundance. Now for him to suddenly start thinking that he had plenty of work and job satisfaction was a big step. But a great soul that he is, with strong determination he began to change his thinking.

And finally, it happened. He got an offer from an employer without a formal interview. The pay-pack he received was twice as he ever received. He was asked to head the department. There is plenty of responsibility and work in this new assignment that he had always craved for. Life has changed for him! He is the happiest and contented person I have come across these days! It gives me immense pleasure to

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see him spreading this secret message of law of attraction which we all can use without hesitation.

We have to realize that we are the source of our own abundance. Through uncovering your beliefs concerning lack and scarcity, you can begin to create abundance in every area of your life, including financial freedom.

One should never underestimate the power of intention. One of my favourite authors said “Intention is a force in the universe, and everything and everyone is connected to this invisible force”. It is so true. Everything emanated from the universal all-creating field of intention.

Carlos Castaneda writes: “In the universe there is an immeasurable, indescribable force which shamans call ‘intent’ and absolutely everything that exists in the entire cosmos is attached to intent by a connecting tool”. This infinite, invisible force of ‘intention’ is everywhere both in physical and non-physical world. This power of ‘intention’ is not within me or you but everywhere and in everything. So, we are connected to anything and everything through this all-pervading source. I strongly believe that if

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one has a pure intent, then nothing can come in its way to creation.

I always discussed with my family about power of intention and that everyone should practice and experience oneself connected to this force of intention, which is in abundance in the universe. I have this habit of reading spiritual magazines and discussing good articles with my family at dinner table.

So one day I was telling our friends about how this article where a lady shared a wonderful spiritual experience. This lady had trouble with her kidneys and had to go through kidney dilation every so often which is an expensive and painful process. She came to learn about meditation and its benefits and decided to give it a go. She meditated for a few weeks and saw amazing results with her health. She never had to go back for kidney dilation as her kidneys started to function normally.

One of my friends, at the time, was taking medication for cholesterol for the previous few years. After learning the experience of this lady through me, he decided that he would also try to bring his

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cholesterol level down by meditation. He was seeing his doctor the following day as a part of his quarterly appointment which he had organized weeks ago. He said to me “if only I could postpone my doctor’s visit by a few months, it would give me a chance to bring down my cholesterol level through meditation and then the doctor will not be prescribing any further cholesterol medication to me”. I was very impressed with the sincerity in his voice and his strong intention to heal himself through meditation.

The next day when my friend went to the doctor, he was pleasantly surprised when the doctor asked him to stop taking any further cholesterol medication for the next few months to see how my friend would cope without cholesterol medication. So, the doctor asked my friend to see him in a few months time.

When my friend shared this with me, I reminded him once again of the Power of Intention. It was his strong intention of not to take any more medication that made things go this way.

Time and again we are reminded of our will and strength to connect to this Force of Intention. But we have become so busy running after the little things

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in life and are so lost in the fierce material competition around us that we have lost the bigger picture.

With all fears gone and life in abundance, life has now become a beautiful journey to me with lots of experiences at every corner that I stop to gather them with open arms without being judgmental. Remember that every experience, every object, every person in your life is present in your life because you have drawn them into your experience.

These days I do not need verbal communication to understand the physical or the emotional pain of the other person, most of the times I can just feel it.

The art of forgiveness that I am practicing is making my life more beautiful and interesting. I get up every morning and express gratitude to myself: and my bigger self: for all that I am experiencing: so called 'good' and 'bad'. I am continuing to learn to accept myself and everything around me the way it is. I thank the universe every day for giving me everything that I need and the abundance that I am surrounded with.

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Pleasant Surprise

December 2010, PSSM had organized the year-end 10 days meditation camp calling it “*Dhyanamahachakram*”. This was conducted at Amaravati, a small town close to Guntur on the banks of Krishna river. Amaravati is well known for its magnificent temple of Lord Shiva-Amareshwara.

We had been planning since October that year to participate in this camp. As Amaravati is a small place, PSSM had made some temporary accommodation arrangement for the camp as the local motels would not have the capacity to accommodate so many visitors. We arranged for our accommodation with PSSM prior to leaving Australia.

The day before we left Visakhapatnam for Amaravati, we were discouraged to leave

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Visakhapatnam by our extended family as there were a few unpleasant things happening around Amaravati at that time. One of the political parties had organized Rasta Roko: a road and rail blockage demonstration at Vijayawada: which is close to Amaravati. Also, the area was flooded by heavy rains in the previous few days. However, my son was very keen to reach Amaravati and didn't want to postpone or cancel our trip at any cost. Seeing his keenness, my husband said "Well, we have the strong intention to be a part of this meditation camp. Let's leave it to intention and follow our hearts."

So, we set off leaving everything to intention to work its wonders. The train journey felt like eternity as it took way longer than usual time due to heavy rains and the demonstration. Though we had planned to reach Amaravati by 4 pm, we reached at 8pm due to unforeseen circumstances.

Our strong intention finally led us to Amaravati. The scene we encountered upon arrival was beyond our expectation. There was water everywhere due to heavy rain and the countryside roads had become wet and washed out. When we reached the

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temporary accommodation site that we had been booked into, it was chaos everywhere.

The land was flooded with water. The tent arrangements were incomplete with no water connection at that stage. I was shocked to see that site. One big question that came to my mind at once was how we were going to manage that night in those unfinished tents with our children who have never been through such circumstances before.

We were all tired and hungry and my brain stopped functioning totally. It was late in the night to even look for an alternate accommodation at that hour. When I shared my concern with my family members, children laughed it off and said, “We are not worried; let’s think of this as an experience and enjoy our stay in these tents tonight.”

I was taken by surprise at their reply. I was worrying that they will kick a big fuss about spending the night in those unfinished tents with water all around though I knew they had both gone camping in the wilderness several times in Australia along with their school mates. But nothing seemed to worry them. They were having fun and had

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already made up their minds to spend the night in the tent.

We left our luggage in our allocated incomplete tent and headed towards the meditation camp nearby. The meditation camp area was totally a pleasant change in scene for us. The camp was close to the Amareshwara temple. It was beautifully lit and occupied by hundreds of thousands of people.

Meditation was in progress under the guidance of the divine flute music being played by Patriji who was on the stage. We forgot everything and joined the meditation for the next two hours.

When we met Patriji and talked to him after the meditation, all our tiredness and doubts vanished in thin air. He took us to the dinner hall and seated us at one of the tables. That is when we realized how hungry we were. We had not had a proper meal in the last 24 hours of travel. We enjoyed the delicious meal in the wonderful company of Patriji!

That is Patriji, he always made sure we were taken care of, in midst of all the responsibilities he had of presiding the Dhyanamahacharam .

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After dinner we went back to our tents. It was 12 in the night and we had to wake up early next morning for the 4 am meditation. I was not sure if the children would be up that early as we had a long day in our travel. We settled in our cots. Most of us didn't sleep all night as there were little frogs jumping around us most of the night. This was an out of the world experience which I will never forget!

Alarm went off at 3:30am and we were all wide awake. We made it to the meditation camp on time and the next four hours were full of bliss, meditating with hundreds and thousands of great souls in the proximity of Lord Amareshwara. The live meditation music was heavenly. As I sat there in meditation, I had a vision. I saw a big long tunnel with water flowing forcefully through that tunnel. Apart from the slight glimpse of some light at the far end, the tunnel was almost pitch black and dark.

Suddenly I saw a big Shivalinga along with millions of small shivalingas around it floating on the water moving with the water force. As the Shivalingas were moving ahead with the water, they came to the opening of the tunnel from where I had seen the

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glimpse of light coming. Now I could see the exit of the tunnel. Outside the tunnel there was this white bright light blinding my vision. I could see nothing further beyond that point. The big Shivalinga lead all the others out of the tunnel into the bright light and vanished.

Suddenly a thought flashed into my mind: it symbolized as if the big Shivalinga was Patriji leading us all through this dark tunnel like mundane stressful life towards the brighter self - the enlightenment. My vision broke with the loud clapping around, signalling the end of morning meditation hour. What a great concept, it remained with me for the rest of the day.

After meditation we went around in the town for breakfast and within the next hour we got an alternate accommodation in one of the better motels nearby. There was a last-minute cancellation and the motel owner was more than happy for us to have that since we were struggling with our temporary unfinished accommodation. Though we all four had to accommodate in a single room, we managed with some extra beddings and our children never

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complained. I was amazed at their capacity to adjust to the circumstances at every stage: thanks to their strong intention.

We moved to the hotel, freshened up and returned back to the meditation camp later that day. We had just taken our seats when I heard Patriji calling my name addressing me as a “spiritual master from Australia” and asking me to come on the stage and share my spiritual experiences. That is Patriji’s way. He places every being on such a high pedestal that one is forced to act so. His belief that each one of us is a master has always impressed me. This helps to bring out the best in everyone.

I walked up to the stage and took a seat next to my master. From where I sat, I could see the ocean of people in the ground that day. I saluted to all those great souls with whom I had the opportunity of meditating that morning and addressed the crowd.

Public speaking has always been my strength. The next half hour went by very quickly for me sharing my spiritual journey of this life and experiences with everyone. As I sat there addressing the crowd it felt very natural. Then our son Nikhil was invited to

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share. He hesitated a little bit initially as he is not fluent in speaking the local Indian Telugu dialect. Patriji asked him to speak in English and offered to translate in the local dialect Telugu.

That morning the spiritual concepts that Nikhil shared with the public made my heart overfilled with pride and joy for being blessed with this enlightened being as my son! As Patriji heard him speaking, he was speechless for some time. As he overcame his emotions, he started translating saying I am thrilled to hear these spiritual concepts from this teenager.

The two aspects that Nikhil shared that morning was

- I believe there is no death.
- There is no “time” as such

Then the rest of our family was invited onto the stage by Patriji. Harish and Navya joined us on the stage hesitantly after repeated requests. All the four of us were sitting on the stage next to each other. Suddenly Patriji got up, took the microphone and

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addressed the public by saying that he would like to felicitate our family.

Things happened very quickly after that. It felt like a dream. The beautiful shahnai music was played. The great spiritual master felicitated the four of us in front of hundreds of thousands of people. With great dedication he put sandalwood paste on each one of us, sprinkled scented water and adorned us with beautiful golden brocade *zari* shawls amidst the resounding applause from the crowd.

We were all mesmerized as if we were in a dream. Little did we know of what was coming. Tears of joy ran down Harish's cheek as he tried to come to terms with all that was happening around him. As we descended the stage, we were surrounded by hundreds of people. The great master made us feel like celebrities.

Even today we remember this event as if it had happened yesterday. Those shawls in my wardrobe remind me of the event often. Even after we returned from Amaravati, we never shared this with any of our family members. Somewhere in the corner of our hearts we cherish the whole event as a very

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personal spiritual gift to us by Patriji and do not want to spoil it by putting it into words.

Whatever it is, what a great honour to receive!!!

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Swami LIVANANDA

We were in Delhi, all four of us in December 2011 attending Hari's wedding. Hari is one of our close family friends.

Delhi is a beautiful place to be in December, winter just setting in and the morning's cold and foggy. We had attended the wedding the previous night and had the whole morning to us before we took our flight in the afternoon to Hyderabad for a family catch-up.

It was a beautiful morning and we were all very relaxed after the wonderful wedding. We had just set out of the hotel to explore Delhi in a taxi and the taxiwala was keeping us amused with the spicy news of the city. We were wondering where to start our touring from when Harish and taxiwala both suggested Akshardham. We quickly agreed as we

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could not visit Akshardham during our previous visit to Delhi due to lack of time.

Not that we had not planned properly ahead of time during our earlier visit, but those who are familiar with Delhi traffic, you never know when you can get caught in one of the traffic nightmares. During our previous visit, we were heading towards Akshardham towards the end of our tour as per the plan. We were on the road for four hours and had only progressed eight kilometres when we decided to conclude our Delhi tour and headed to the airport instead, just to make sure we didn't miss our next flight . Though we had not said anything to each other but all of us were disappointed to miss out Akshardham.

So, it didn't need much convincing this time for us to agree on Akshardham as our first destination. We reached the place in half an hour and were really taken by surprise to note that the temple grounds were huge, surrounded by a high wall that revealed nothing but the temple tops at one or two places.

We entered the temple and visited the deity. The atmosphere was very serene, and we sat there

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absorbing the beautiful stillness around us. Time came to a stop and I was very much aware of that moment. Life felt complete and great. There was nothing more that I could have desired for. At that moment I felt I was the most happy and contented being in the universe. I was fully living every moment at that point of time totally aware of myself and the beautiful creation around me. The noisy hustle-bustle of the great city around was not bothering me anymore. It once again reminded me that once you are at peace with yourself you automatically fall in peace with the world around you. Realizing the key to my happiness then, I started muttering the word “LIVE” with every step I took as I walked in that large temple ground. I wanted to ensure that those wonderful moments lasted longer by reminding myself to live at every step. My children who were on my either side joined me and soon we three uttered the word “LIVE” with every step we took. As we walked, I shared my beautiful experience with my children. Suddenly my son said, "Here comes Swami LIVANANDA". We started looking around hoping to see a saffron robed saint. My son laughed and said 'Mum, look at us, we

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are Swami LIVANANDA: as we take every step-in life reminding ourselves to fully LIVE each moment happily (*ANANDA*) and experience it."

I could not agree less with him. Laughing aloud, I held their hands looking at the Young Masters with admiration. I thought how lucky I was to have these great souls as my children around me all the time, reminding me the meaning of life.

We walked out of AKSHARDHAM taking with us a great truth of life. After that, at times when we feel that we are losing focus in life, we remind each other of "Swami LIVANANDA" and begin to experience life again moment by moment.

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Meditation in Daily Life

I started meditating since the day I met that dear Aunt of mine on the road when I was lost in my own world of restlessness.

It was a funny situation. I had all the material pleasures: a loving husband, two beautiful healthy children, a good career and a handsome pay pack. But suddenly something was lacking that created all the restlessness in me.

The incident at work could just have been a trigger to the chain of events but the underlying cause was something totally different. This was my “wake- up call” to look at the bigger picture and to get out of the mundane day-to-day stuff that I was doing.

This was all part of the blueprint that I had planned before coming to this physical world.

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I am told that all of us experience this kind of a reminder at some stage in life. Mostly it happens in thirties or forties which some of us call it as “mid-life-crisis”. Anyway my “mid-life-crisis” changed my life for good. Now everything made sense. This physical life of mine is just another episode of the big series called “evolution of soul”.

How many incarnations have I taken on this physical plane? Every time going through the same or slightly different struggle of existence! Not any more If I have come here to this physical plane for experience: then I shall fully live to it and love it completely. No more tears, no more sadness, after all it is part of the experience that I have come here for.

Everything looked different now, no good no bad, they all exist like I exist. I just must learn to allow and accept myself and the things around me the way they are. There is no tomorrow. All that exists is now. I must live “in this moment” because this is where my experience lies.

This is where my “Life Part-11” began on a summer afternoon of December 2002.

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From that point onwards, my life revolved around three things: meditation, spiritual books and spiritual friends to share my leanings and experience.

My thirst for spiritual knowledge grew day by day and I started reading lot of good books. The PSSM website was always a good source to learn. I came across articles written by hundreds like me who shared their experience on this website. The more I read, more I wanted to go within myself to experience the truth.

“The kingdom of God lies within us” said Jesus. So I would meditate for hours which would give me the peace and contentment that I had never experienced before.

Very soon I started sharing my experiences with my family members. I taught my children how to meditate. They were 9 and 6 years old then. Within no time they were practicing meditation with a great ease every day! Every night I would discuss with them the books I was reading. They were like sponges, soaking every bit in. Every night after dinner our family would sit together and meditate.

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Meditation is silencing the incessant chatter of the restless mind for that ... we ... begin ... with ... the ... breath.

The process of meditation is simple.

“Close your eyes and be with your natural breath”.

Meditation silences the restless waves of mind, thereby preserving soul energy leading to good health, peace of mind and wisdom of life.

Meditation done inside a pyramid, or underneath a pyramid, is called as “Pyramid Meditation”. Meditation when done inside a pyramid, is thrice more powerful

The physical body has its own natural and easy rhythm of the breath. In meditation, the mind becomes totally attuned to the normal rhythmic nature of the breath of the physical body.

Since we have migrated to Australia, I always went through the experience of home sickness being away from my family in India. That was one issue I found hard to come to terms with. Every year we would go on a holiday to meet our families in India. The

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return trip would always be my nightmare as parting from my family would always be heart-breaking.

But all that disappeared from the time I started practicing meditation. Meditation helped me to overcome my fears and face my challenges. Now, after understanding the bigger picture of life I do not have any regrets or fears. My understanding for people has become better and I can better tune myself to other beings.

Strange things started to happen at work. People would walk into my office and share their issues and concerns with me.

Initially, I sat there and listened to people and their stories. Then more and more of this continued to happen. My colleagues, who were stressed at work or going through depression due to personal reasons: would come to me and share their grief. I slowly realized that it was time for me to do my share. These people were coming to me for a reason: and such a thing never happened in the past. That is when I began teaching meditation outside my family.

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I started giving meditation classes at lunch time at work as more and more people approached me. I would talk to them about purpose of life and give them the big picture in life that I had come to know of in my recent journey. There would be at least one or two who would approach me every week to check their restlessness in life. I would spend time with them to help them come out of the depression that they were going through.

Thus, started my part-time unofficial career in counselling. Almost all my counselling sessions would naturally end with a meditation class. I wanted them to have this meditation tool, so that next time they faced this situation, they had the key for the solution with them.

Slowly, I began to get phone calls at home from people who were going through depression and who desperately wanted to see me. Some of these people were complete strangers to me. But that didn't matter to me. There was a need out there and if I could help them out, that is the least I could do for people around me.

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People would come home, talk to me for a long time, learn meditation and leave. Some of them would come back again, and the others, I would never see them.

Then I opened my house for meditation on Sunday morning. Anyone and everyone were welcome to come and learn meditation: free of cost. Our house would be vibrating with all the positive energy that would emanate from the meditators. What more could I ask for!!

Meditation gives all the spiritual and physical health to a person that one can hope for.

Meditation is the greatest gift to be given to our lives by our own efforts.

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Journey of Four Souls

This is really funny. Our daughter Navya is a great fan of J. K. Rowling and Harry Potter series.

She always told me, “Mum, J. K. Rowling wrote most of her first book in a cafe. You should also do that sometime”. So, here I am today writing this beautiful chapter of my book from a cafe in the Burwood East Kmart Plaza.

It is a Tuesday morning. The cafe owner just got me my extra hot skinny cappuccino with a raisin toast. It looks delicious. Oh! He has also added a complimentary cinnamon donut for me.

Soul Number 1:

What more can I write about myself and my journey? I cannot say about my past lives. But this

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life...for sure I planned it well! Whenever I faced a challenge there was always someone near and dear next to me who gave me enough courage and mental stability to face the challenge.

I received a lot of love from my family before and after my marriage. My parents and my siblings have always been giving and kind to me and I always did my best to reciprocate. I am always eager to help out my sisters and brother if they are in any need or trouble. Later the same repeated in our family after my marriage. To me nothing came ahead of my husband and our children. Even today, I do not have my meals till I make sure the rest of the family has had theirs. But this love and forgiveness of mine were limited to my family alone.

Only after I started my spiritual journey, I understood that love is not just about giving or doing something for others. It is about allowing everything to be as it is and accept things and beings as they are.

This realization changed my whole thinking and my total lifestyle. This definition at the outset seems

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very simple and easy as it stands, because now LOVE is not about doing anything but is about DOING NOTHING. How funny! Yes, that's right, just don't do much, open-up your heart and accept everything the way it is. Because there is nothing there for you to 'fix'.

Everything in this creation is perfect and exactly the way they are meant to be. We are all creating our own realities to gain the experience we have come here for. So how can they be 'imperfect' if that is the design intent. So it all comes down to; there is nothing 'good' or 'bad', they just are.

But is it that easy? For generations we have been hypnotized into judging things, trying to change things as per our understanding, to dictate other's lives to make us feel better. We have branded things 'good' or 'bad' as per our limited understanding. So no matter how simple the definition of love is, it becomes very complex to us with our complicated personalities. But I know that it is only about training our mind to think with open heart and accepting everything the way they are and allowing every person to-be.

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I had always been the worst critique of myself. To me everything had to go as per my schedule. If something different happened, then I would blame myself more than anyone else. As a result. I always checked and double-checked events to make sure I didn't get caught by any unpleasant surprise.

Life that way always felt like an exam. If I had the desired outcome as per my plan, then I would feel good about my plan: otherwise I would start checking and rechecking the whole chain of events to find out where things went wrong. Very soon I realized that life wasn't meant to be this difficult: like an 'exam' every day. I began to think I deserve better.

The first time I read about the concept of forgiveness, I knew this was what was missing from my life. It was not about forgiving others: primarily I had to learn about forgiving my own self. How can one learn to forgive others when he or she hasn't learnt to forgive himself?

As I began to practice the art of self forgiveness, slowly came with it the capacity and generosity to

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forgive others. Today, I have no enemies or anyone that I dislike. The long list of unpleasant and mean people in my life that existed at one time began to diminish gradually as my spiritual understanding developed.

With my new understanding of love and forgiveness, life does not appear as a baggage to me anymore. I am extremely happy with my life the way it is. To me the true happiness comes from within. That is the true nature of oneself. I do not look forward to any appreciation from the outside world. If I do so then my happiness will depend on others and their feedback. You will be happy when it is good, and you will not be unhappy if it would be otherwise. You certainly do not want others to have your remote control.

Remember, you are in-charge of your life as you alone create your own reality.

Soul Number 2:

My dear husband joined me on my journey in this incarnation in March 1988.

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What surprises me is the two great qualities of love and forgiveness that I have been talking earlier and which took me some time to practice, he always had it in him from the time I have known him! Simplicity has always been his key personality.

He has always stood by me at every step in life. The faith and trust he had in me allowed me to take key decisions for our family. He was always by my side helping me out when I was going through multitasking with our dual careers and with little children.

I can't remember of having done anything important in my life without him. To me, he is a good friend, an understanding husband and most of all my perfect soulmate.

During the journey of my spiritual evolution, he was never critical at any stage though he did not understand at times what I was going through.

Today, he practices meditation regularly. He has continued to be my true partner in my spiritual journey too.

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I am blessed to have him as my life partner.

Soul Number 3:

Little master Nikhil came into our lives in December 1992. There has always been a very strong “mother-son” bond between the two of us. He is the most wonderful being I have ever come across.

I taught him meditation when he was 9. I was pleasantly surprised to see him practicing meditation straight away. He started to read spiritual books from our library at the age of 10. He would read books like Ramtha and 'You for ever' and would discuss with me about the facts and concepts mentioned in those books, at such an early age. I never treated him like a child. I was always happy to share with him all that I knew or read from time to time.

I introduced him to books of Osho and the series of Lobsang Rampa books which he loved dearly. We meditated together for hours.

He is true partner in my spiritual journey.

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Soul Number 4:

Navya joined the family in 1996. To me and Harish our family was now complete with her arrival.

She is a very active and capable girl. Most of all, she has a heart of gold. Like Harish, I have not heard her speaking ill of anyone. She is very sensitive to other's feelings and emotions.

If our son Nikhil was fortunate to enter the spiritual world at the age of nine, Navya was further blessed to get introduced to meditation at the age of only six. Since then she has been practicing meditation. Her brother is a great spiritual guide to her, and she has a lot of faith in him.

I understand why these children have chosen us as their parents. They knew that this was one place where they would not have to wait long to get on the spiritual path. Otherwise how many children at such an early age get to be reminded of life and its true purpose?

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Journey of Four Souls

We all have travelled together on this spiritual path for some time now and I am blessed to have their company. Irrespective of age or gender, we have learnt from each other a lot in our lives.

I sincerely thank them for coming into my life at different stages, to teach me how to live my life completely.

THE END

