**A Visit from Guruji**

1990. The excitement was great. I received a letter from Pune with the news that Guruji planned to visit us in Bern.

After a long journey through the USA and England he planned to travel via Paris to Bern, Switzerland. Gstaad also Switzerland, was the town where each summer for many years, he taught the famous violinist Yehudi Menuhin and his circle of friends. He was returning to the very country where ‘Iyengar Yoga’ in the West was born.

We turned our apartment upside down. The joyful anticipation was at least as great as the fear of falling below expectations. When the time came, a little reception committee was waiting at the station for the arrival of the fast train from Paris. I saw him immediately in the crowd. There he stood, together with his Indian travelling companions and a select number of teachers from the USA and France. Spontaneously, I ran up to him and embraced him.

What a thing to do!

Everyone looked at me, quite shocked. However Guruji gave a hearty laugh and hugged me, clapping me on the back with both hands. He was the only one who didn’t find it embarrassing.

At home a burned meal of kitcheri - a popular Indian lentil and rice dish - awaited him. I had cooked it too soon and they had arrived too late. I rescued what I could yet it had a somewhat burned flavour all the same. The whole group sat around Guruji on the carpet with their plates. After taking a spoonful he looked at me and said: “It’s delicious, thank you.” Phew – he had redeemed me again.

Everyone joined in a praise I did not really deserve. Then they all retired for the night after their long journey.

I prepared a large bircher muesli for breakfast next morning. When they saw this, his attendants explained that Guruji kept a strict diet and ate only fruit in the morning. I slipped out quickly to buy some Swiss apples.

Guruji arose at four o’clock and drank a small espresso before practising pranayama and asanas. When he joined us later, he praised the fresh air for its health benefits and regenerative effects. Five hours of deep sleep had banished all traces of fatigue after the journey. He looked at the breakfast table pointing to the bircher muesli. „This please.“ Then he proceeded to eat two large bowls with visible pleasure. He showed no interest in anything else, not even the apples.

Again and again he surprised us with his spontaneity. Each day is fresh and new. The same applies to yoga practice. How often had I experienced times in Pune where he scolded us, turning our preconceptions upside down, creating confusion, stimulating our minds and taking us back into the Now.

“Yesterday is past! Do not practice mechanically, analyse, create new points of reference over and again, go deeper, practice from the inside out and from the outside in. The goal is to awaken this body intelligence to the very last cell.”

His words remain deep in my mind and heart.

That afternoon, a question and answer meeting was to be held at the yoga school in the basement of our building. I was terribly nervous and tried to cover it up with pleasantries. On the way down, Guruji suddenly stopped, looked at me and asked: “Why are you nervous? It’s me who has to be nervous!”

His words released all my tension. I could let go. In his presence everything could become suddenly so simple, the most difficult asanas, the most awkward moments.

Guruji, I miss you. And, at the same time, you are so close.