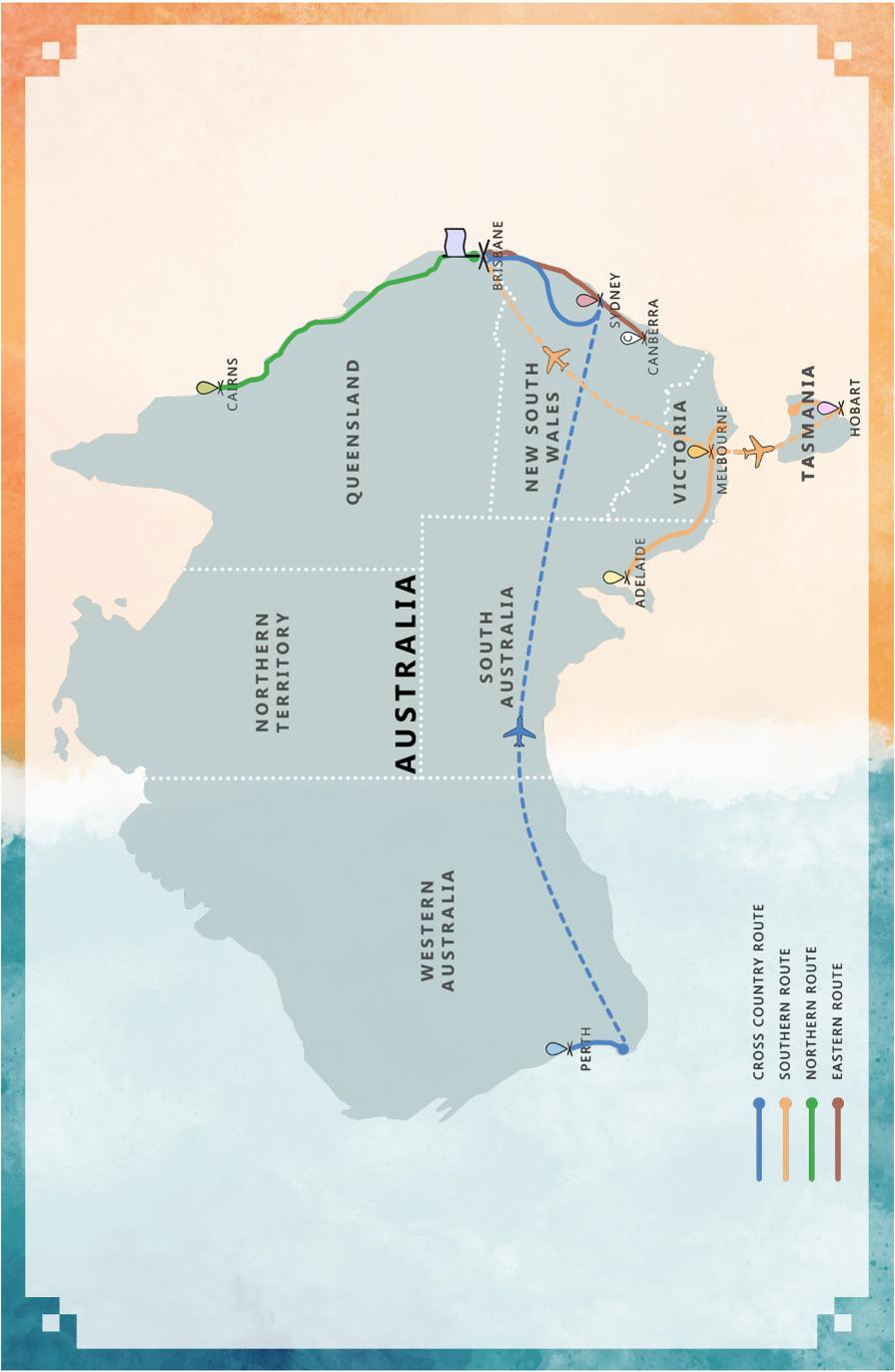


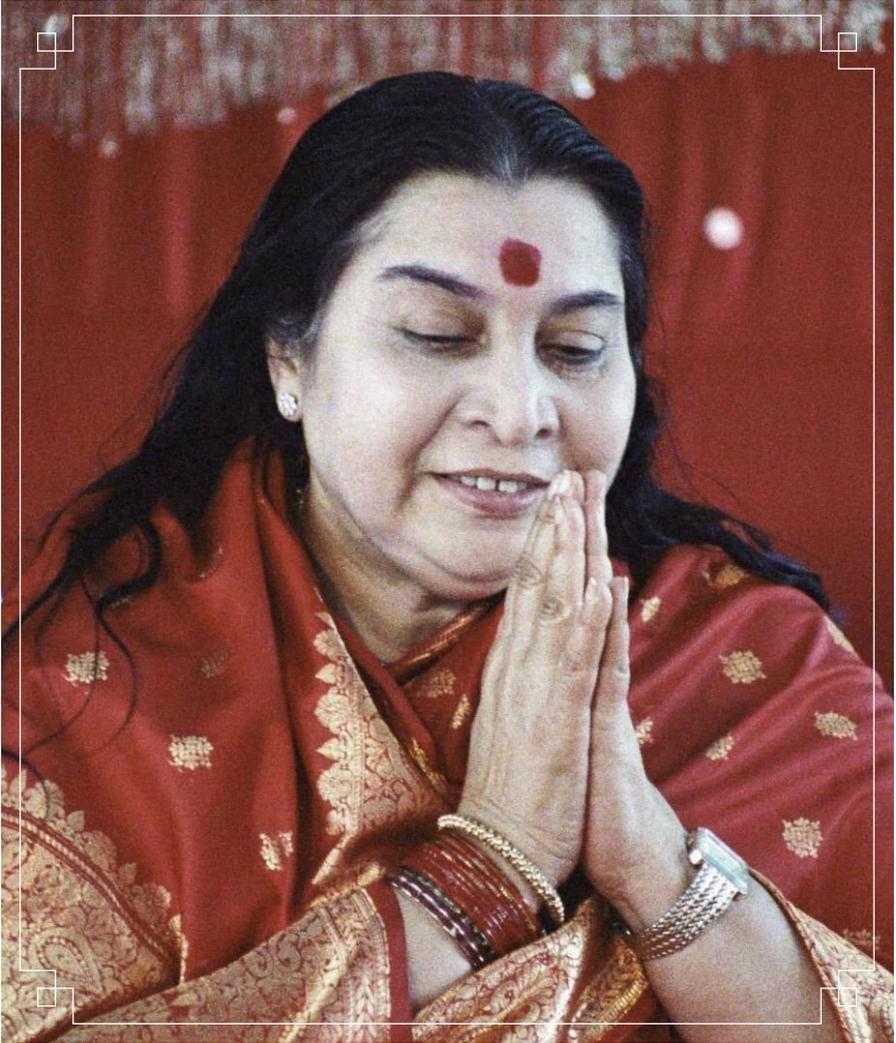
*The
Meditate
Australia
Tour*



DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to our dearest Mother, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, the perennial source of joy, wisdom and growth within us.

O Mā, please accept our humble effort to capture the infinite blessings you have showered upon us throughout this Meditate Australia Tour. Let such experiences bring us closer and deeper together, as we strive to become worthier instruments of your love.





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Preface

Three weeks, 34 locations, 150+ programs, 2500+ seekers. In July 2019, the Australian Collective hosted one of its biggest and most dynamic projects - the Meditate Australia Tour. It took 7 months of rigorous planning, introspection and dedication by yogis from small towns and bustling cities to bring the MAT to life. While blessings were shared immensely during the tour, most of us know this project yielded so much more. For many, this journey began several months prior, inspiring growth in ways one could never have imagined.

“It only takes a spark...”

MAT was born out of the success of the Love America Tour, which took place in 2018. Devindra Payment (Canada), Qasim Rashid (UK), Shaun Premnath (Australia) and Rennie Berry (Australia) initiated the MAT conversation rather spontaneously. Shaun and Rennie explain this in their tour recollections.

Shaun: “One night, there were a bunch of us at Burwood. We all got back after spending time with yogis at a picnic. We were actually joking with Devindra about how he is always on his computer working on the Love America Tour. Some of us were making jokes like ‘Love Australia’ and, as Australians, we would all try have some banter behind it. Whilst it was all good laughs, I went to bed thinking, ‘What if?’”

Soon, I was in discussion with various people. I roughly knew the Love America Model, so I was just using that to form ideas for an Australian version. At that time, I was also helping out with organising International Ganesha Puja as part of the Yuva Shakti team and talking to the Australian Council. The council was already thinking about doing a tour of some sort before or after the 2019 Maha-Ganesha Puja which was to take place at Uluru. So discussions were already there, but it was just a matter of timing.

Rennie: “Funnily enough, it was after Shri Ganesha Puja and the marriages that we all (everyone left in Cabella) were at Il Patio for the customary pizza dinner. It was then that I spoke to Qasim about the potential to do a ‘Love America style’ tour in Australia. He knew our desire to do a tour in Australia and we wanted it to be a tour that wasn’t just for yuvas, but all age groups. Qasim was keen and seeing that we had both previously worked together it was exciting to be finally

doing something that would bring the rest of the world to this incredible country, Australia - the home of our big brother, Shri Ganesha. Unbeknown to me, Shaun had had a similar conversation with Devindra.”

Shaun: “After Ganesha Puja, I came back to town and was busy with my work, so tour planning was put on the back burner. Meanwhile, Devindra and Qasim were already in conversation with our National Council. So after that, Qasim and I spoke towards the end of October 2018 and decided “Love Australia is happening. Shout it from the rooftop!”

I first announced it to the yuvas and told them this was going to happen; the responses were mind-blowing. Everyone was just saying, “YES! What do you need?” I had conversations with Rennie, Nathan, Pranav and Jahnavi. They formed the base team for the tour.”

Rennie: “It was quite funny when Shaun called us to ask our views because it was an easy conversation as we could see that the desire to do this tour was a lot bigger than we had even realised...”

Shaun: “So our first online meeting happened with Aunty Lyn Vasudeva and Andre Maynard just before Diwali, and it was from there that the first planning stages began.”

“...to get a fire going.”

During our first meeting it was clear that this tour had to be more than a yuva tour - including everyone with a desire to participate, regardless of their geographic or demographic position. On the surface, the goal of MAT was to reach as many seekers as possible across the continent. Deep down, we also desired a greater sense of unity and family within the Australian collective. As bold as it seemed, we knew for this tour to be a success, every instrument from Perth to Tin Can Bay would need to be involved. Eventually, we had over 150 yogis working across all aspects of the tour, many who had never even met their teammates before! It was certainly a grassroots effort, (hopefully) empowering each person to own their patch and contribute in their own unique way.

Apart from Her grace, one of the things that helped build this dynamic was having open communication. We tried to make resources and points of contact easily accessible. This took a while to achieve as we were all new to the game, but rewards were ample. A sense of trust formed as we talked about growth and

overcame any challenges together. Every story of progress shared via the newsletter, weekly meetings or in casual conversation, inspired confidence in our capability. Importantly, there developed a network of support between the yuvas and older yogis, exchanging years of tacit knowledge for fresh energy and new ideas. The feeling of love and family was absolutely immersive as we realised the power of a unified collective during our final weekend at Wamuran.

“And soon all those around...”

Common to any large project, many collectives took our announcement with a grain of salt. Some even thought it was a joke until we contacted them to see how they were progressing!

People were keen, no doubt. But many were grappling with the idea of what the tour could mean for them, whether they were even capable of committing to it and how they would begin. This was especially true for smaller collectives where hosting a national event was relatively uncommon.

As ancillary planning and weekly check-ins persisted, we worked through the hurdles - lack of resources, vibrationally heavy towns, the usual politics, etc. In larger collectives it was more about alleviating scepticism surrounding the tour’s materialisation and clarifying technical details of our processes through one-on-one conversations with several yogis. Soon enough, each collective found their groove. When we travelled along our routes, our experiences at each stop were so unique and the standard of delivery was incredible. Some locations only had one faithful yogi planning all the accommodation, venues, promotions, meals and sightseeing for their part! Hearing stories in retrospect, this activity brought several yogis closer in their own collectives. Some even reconnected with the main collective after spending years apart. There was a thirst for something fresh all over Australia and, by the end, each collective really stepped up to the challenge wholeheartedly.

“...will warm up in its glowing”

Where reasoning fails, vibrations prevail. This is literally what sets a Sahaj event apart from the rest - and using our vibrations was fundamental to the MAT’s success. Before and during the tour, we employed three main techniques. First, checking vibrations when making decisions on delicate matters or with multiple unknowns. For example, when deciding how much to charge the touring yogis, which route to place them on and which airline to book our flights with. This was a good way to eliminate the element of ego.

Second, using treatments to pre-empt or deal with obstacles. When working on Sahaja projects, we become a bullseye for negativity, as it tries to hinder the work of God. It creeps in from obscure places and turns progress into emotional turmoil. To combat this, we created a vibrational support team, responsible for holding regular foot soaks and paper burning sessions where many obstacles were resolved collectively. Of course, the organisers did plenty of their own clearing and touring yogis held regular clear-out sessions on tour.

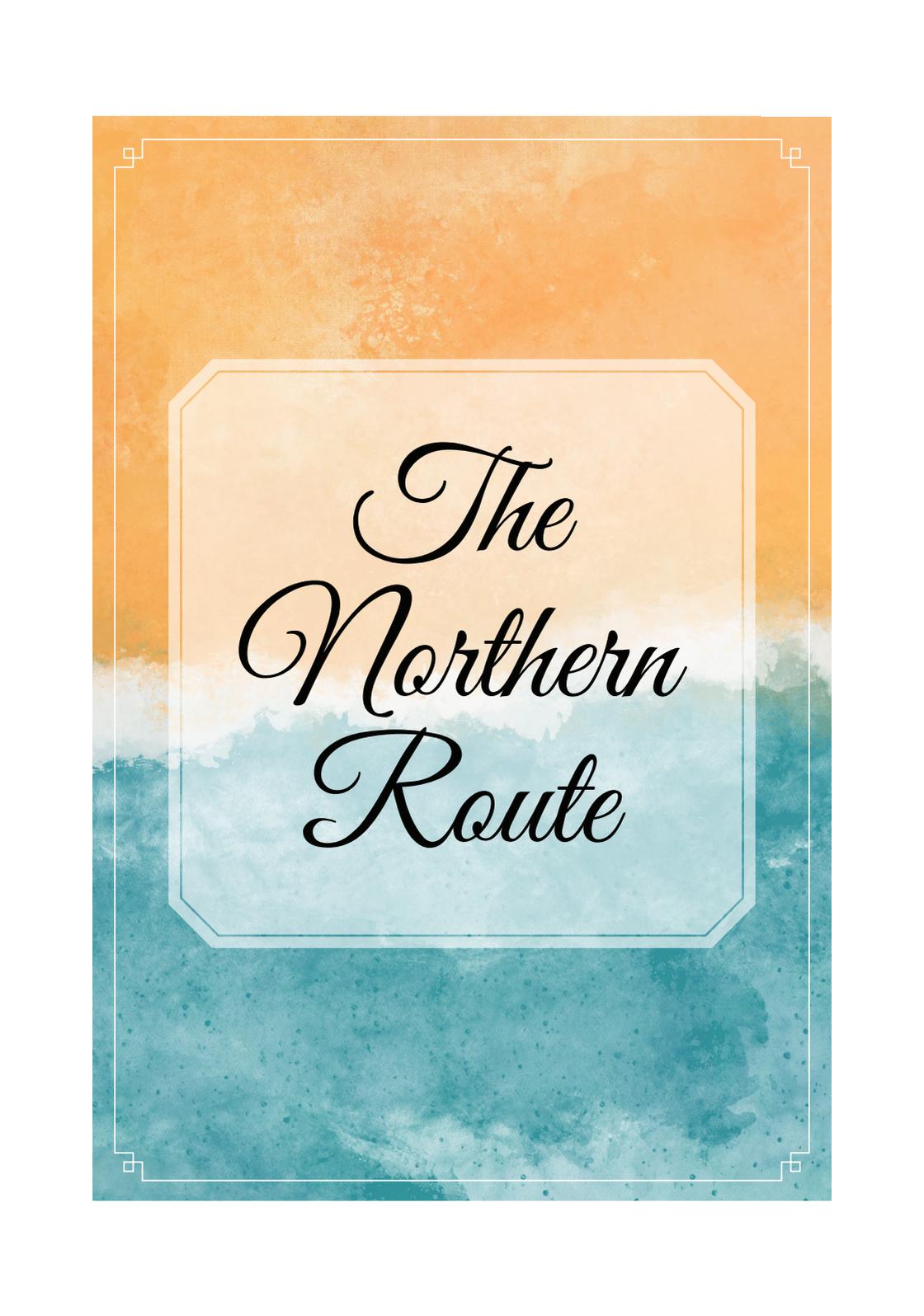
Finally, using treatments to address negativities attacking Sahaja Yoga in Australia from external sources. During our travels we visited places parched of seekers, severely caught up in the worldly maya. In such cases we chose to vibrate the town by offering havans, pouring vibrated water in local dams and burying vibrated coconuts wherever possible.

“You want to pass it on”

Lastly, we would like to thank all the people who have kindly shared their experiences for this recollection. A big thanks also goes to the MAT recollections team – Neelam, Jahnvi, Gabriel, Kush, Rani, Jenny and Kirsty – who have helped to pull the strings together and weave a wonderful narrative of contrasting colour, light and joy. We hope that you, dear reader, may enjoy these waves of love and dive deeper within.

With all our love,

- *M.A.T. Core Team*



*The
Northern
Route*



The Northern Route was greeted with coconuts, sunshine, and sublime moments at their launch pad in the Far North, before travelling southwards along Queensland's coast. Between Cairns and Brisbane, they visited 6 main regions - Townsville, Rockhampton (Raglan), Hervey Bay, Tin Can Bay, Maryborough and the Sunshine Coast. With only 9 yogis holding the fort across these areas, the team moved with intent from programs and flyering to vibrational activities, triggering renewed vitality to previous efforts. This particularly international cohort was also treated to generous home-cooked meals and the occasional kangaroo-spotting and tree-climbing opportunity along the way. Exceptional interest from seekers in the Central Queensland area certainly sets a precedent for another regional tour in the future, if not regular weekly programs.

SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE, NORTHERN MOON



From beyond the plane window, the dawn light crept up across the slightly curved horizon. Stars gradually vanished into the wave of colour. Yet, the thin crescent of a waning moon, brilliant against a backdrop of deep blue, kept me company. Its sweet smile, peculiar to its orientation near the equator, had greeted me earlier as I woke from my fourth and final nap on my flight to Australia. Gazing at this unusual sight, I recalled the name of Bhala-chandra and smiled back in return. I kept my eye on the sky and its sliver of a silver white moon until the pilot made an announcement, and we dove back into a thick blanket of clouds on our descent to the hallowed land of Ganesh.

I would like to describe my first few days in Cairns, but I'll save you the details as I endured – what I would like to term – an ‘Intensive Mooladhara Detox Session’ (which was great for losing some extra weight!). This was coupled with a brain-jamming jetlag that seemed to freeze all my cognitive capabilities. What I do remember, however, were the sweet smiles that graced every face of the Rawal household and the Cairns collective as they ensured that all hands were on deck for the maiden voyage of the Northern Route of the Meditate Australia Tour. My first impression, on the other hand, wasn't a flattering one. When the majority of the tour participants funnelled into Cairns over the weekend and into the Queenslander house on Little Street, I greeted most of them with a feeble croak and a mat of dishevelled hair while I precariously hobbled around the house in pyjamas well past midday. But even in my less-than-great state, the Australian natural landscape continued to catch my attention. Its stunning assortment of flowers were like rays of sunlight made tangible with eye-watering bursts of yellow, orange and the reddest red.

Even so, these tropical flowers could not compare to the colour, depth, and variety of yogis, yuvas, and seekers who I had the pleasure of meeting over the following four weeks. While small in number, the Cairns collective was solid. The only program that wasn't attended well was one for families and kids, but if my memory serves me correct, it has been continued in another format. The collective has strong connections with the Cairns City Council which helped them to secure the key location of the Esplanade for self-realisation programs, as well as a handful of library programs, plus private corporate meditations at the council offices. We spent four evenings, under the stars or in rain, playing bhajans, dancing, and offering self-realisation to any seekers who came our way. There are many wonderful stories

from these evenings that others can recollect better than I, sitting as I was behind the mixer or busy engaging passers-by in theological debate! The highlight of each evening was usually the qawwalis or Jogwa which drew people in like bees looking for nectar.

One evening was especially memorable. Rain seemed to be a constant danger on the horizon for this outdoor program, and we continually checked and re-checked the weather report for the evening. The first evening when rain came pouring down, the crowds scattered for cover and we were left protecting the AV gear and instruments from damage. The following evening, the rain came our way again. However, instead of acquiescing to the elements, Tomas and Devdutt met this challenge head-on and began to drum the first beats of Jogwa. Gaspar followed on the harmonium, blasting harmonies and notes into the open air, while Anna, Madhavi, Jahnavi, Shivani, and Ganesh continued apace with the song. The audience was glued to their seats. Soon, as the second chorus rang out, people were up on their feet, dancing in the rain and clapping their hands to the thrum and drum of Jogwa. In between the rainclouds, I glimpsed a white smile: Bhala-chandra was there – watching all the while.

With this explosion of energy our trusty steeds – Helga and Zorro – zipped us down south into unexplored Queensland territory. This initial burst of energy was essential in order to retain our dynamism and good spirits, for the way down south was mired with challenges and obstacles. What had been an overflowing river of seekers turned into a trickle. On some days, this trickle only offered a few drops. I felt parched, thirsty and dry – spoilt as I'd been by the sheer number of seekers experienced during the past Love America Tour. In my ignorance, I forgot that Sahaja Yoga has never been about numbers, but the quality of its seekers. The maxim of 'quality over quantity', as familiar as it is, resounded in my ears with a new ring. For the first time – without the distraction of large groups – I could devote more time to each individual seeker who came across my path.

We had a lacklustre showing in Townsville. Our first program of the day was attended by a single person. Our second program was a no-show. We sat there in a beautifully lit wooden hall right across the Ross River with time on our hands. Faced with an obstacle, we chose the best course of action we could think of at that moment – meditate. The notes from Devdutt's bansuri swelled and echoed on the wood panelling, filling the space with the soft melodies of the flute. In that moment of meditation, my apathy was gradually replaced with resolve, with a detached certainty to observe events as they are, not as I would wish them to be. Krishna's words to Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra rose to the surface of my mind:

‘Do thy work in the peace of Yoga and, free from selfish desires, be not moved in success or in failure.’

I rose from meditation and walked across to the river bed. A pathway adjoined where the river ran, with only a couple of people enjoying the late afternoon sun. From the corner of my eye, a man with a pink shirt, green shorts, and a quizzical look to him approached me from my right. I stopped him and said, “Would you like to try Sahaja Yoga meditation?” He looked me up and down and asked, “I’ve tried a couple of different meditations. What’s your one about?” With only the slightest encouragement, he agreed to join us.

He had tried a variety of meditation styles such as Twin Hearts and Hatha Yoga. I worked on him for quite a while, correcting imbalances in his Vishuddhi and Agnya chakras especially his Agnya. After a while he looked up at me and asked, “Can you smell cinnamon?” I was quite perplexed and commented that it was a slightly unusual side-effect. Yet, his system felt cleared and he left with a smile, a talk, and a handshake. Only later on did I read in Babamama’s autobiography that during self-realisation, it is indeed possible to smell distinct, sweet fragrances emanating from the palm of the hands or the head.

I resumed my position next to the riverbank while a delicate shower of rain fell from the sky. The surface of the river was dappled by raindrops, while small tortoises poked their heads above the surface near the bank. A runner ran by but didn’t respond to my greeting – airpods in and all. For a while I stood there, mesmerised by the play of water, light and life. Again, the runner proceeded from the other direction on her loop back my way. Determined, I jumped in front of her path.

Surprised, but intrigued she listened to my offer. Yet again, without much cajoling, she was happy to try meditation. Kitty worked on her and meditated with her for a long, long time – for well over an hour. When she received the beginner’s flyer at the end of the meditation, she laughed. She had tried Sahaja Yoga meditation before, had tried to keep up interest, but had chucked away her previous flyer only a couple of weeks prior to meeting us! And now it had come back to her.

From Townsville, Airlie Beach, and Rockhampton, to Tin Can Bay, Sunshine Coast and Wamuran, the tour sped along with the accompaniment of dance, laughter and song. A novel (or perhaps a novella) could be filled with the gnyana and learning derived from the experiences under the southern sun. A tour is truly a

unique event; it challenges you on many fronts, but it is through these challenges we can arise in victory with greater knowledge. My only regret is that I did not get to see a koala!

My flight back home departed from Brisbane under the cover of night. I looked out at the fading orange lights of the city as the plane flew due north, following the contour of the land as it met the ocean. Here, in a moonless starlit sky, I watched as the plane retraced our steps back up the coast. As it passed Cairns, I let out a sigh. No tears, no cry – for my heart was filled with wonder, gratitude, and a new high. Even though I flew through a moonless dark night, I knew that dawn was just beyond sight. May we forever be the instruments of Her boundless love.

Jai Shri Mataji

- *Gabriel Kolanen (Finland, Northern Route)*

PLAY TO PRAY



This story is about two young boys who attended the public program at Maroochydore on the Sunshine Coast.

My role at the program was to oversee and interact with any children who came to the program with their parents. There was a good open space at the back of the room, with grass and a wonderful huge tree with a long table and seat under it.

Just as the program was to start a mum came in with her three children: two boys who were aged about 8 and 10 and a young girl who was about 2. So we went out into the open space with the two young boys. Of course, they were not very interested in interacting with a stranger – let alone the fact that they had been bought along to a meditation thing by their mum. These two boys then decided that wrestling and fighting were the best course of action in this situation and, of course, they weren't keen to interact with the stranger (me)! The older of the two boys was the ringleader with the younger one following his example. So when I asked a question like, "What's your name?" the answer came slowly. When I then tried asking more questions, they were met with a glance, a quick one-word response, followed by more wrestling and fighting. You could tell that these boys appeared to have had a bit of a hard life and that perhaps things were not that settled at home. From a teacher's perspective (which I am), you could see that the eldest boy could be a difficult student to have in a classroom.

So there I am thinking, 'Oh my gosh! What do I do? I don't want them running into the program and disturbing the seekers in there'. Of course, then the idea comes to mind to put the situation into bandhan and then everything changes. The right idea of how to interact with these boys comes to me and a softening of the feeling that this is too hard. Now, the right idea of how to interact involved me (60 years old) running around and playing bulrush with these boys. The eldest of the boys really enjoyed this and I kept making a bee-line for him and missing him, but he lapped it all up. Following this, when we chatted he gave more than one-word answers, he began to laugh and smile, and his face began to shine.

After quite some time, the eldest boy then decided that he wanted to make some origami things. We then all sat at the table under the tree and did some origami. The eldest one then shared with me how he had done this at school and he really enjoyed it. So here was this boy who previously would barely talk to me sharing his

personal feelings and experiences.

While we were doing this, the boys' mum came out and shared with me how she had asked them if they had wanted to go home and they had said, "No, we are having too much fun." She explained that this was very unusual as usually they can't wait to get home to go on their PlayStation.

These boys, the mum and the sister went home with smiles, joy and laughter within themselves and with shining faces.

So the point of me telling this story is that although I didn't get the boys to sit and 'meditate', the vibrations still worked through them. Our meditation was the sitting under the tree (maybe a bit like Buddha) and letting the vibrations work through them on a level that they were able to experience at that time. I think of them often and hope that this experience will stay with them and when they are old enough, they will seek it out and we will see them in the Sahaj collective.

Jai Shri Mataji

- *Debbie Miller (Brisbane QLD, Northern Route)*