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Self Discovery

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Samadhi is
Loose in America



"If I believed there was a physical, I could not do this. We walk upon the Grace of God. Nothing else exists except that. It's like gliding. You walk just above the physical. You only walk or live this way if you have a terrific love for Existence. If you have total faith and love then that which you love will help you. Then you can walk on anything."

—Atmananda

SAMADHI IS LOOSE IN AMERICA!

EDITORIAL

In previous issues, *Self Discovery* has explored many different Spiritual Pathways and methods for expanding consciousness. It has been our policy to try and present a variety of spiritual practices in each issue in the light of equality and oneness. While the theme of *Self Discovery* is the Universality of all Spiritual Pathways — for the next few issues we will be focusing in depth on one particular "way" or pathway in each issue. In this issue we are presenting the teachings of Atmananda. We will be devoting our Spring issue to Zen. It is our feeling that presenting one pathway or Spiritual Teacher in depth in each issue will be of more use and provide greater spiritual insights to our readers.

All of the articles in this issue are extracts from the forthcoming book: *Samadhi Is Loose In America! Samadhi Is Loose In America!* is a collection of stories written by persons who have had close encounters with Atmananda.

The accounts presented in this issue of *Self Discovery* reflect types of experiences that many in the West may be unfamiliar with. These are direct encounters with alternate realities via a Spiritual Teacher. These encounters produce radical transformations in the conscious awareness of persons who have them and, in the Far East, are highly sought after by persons who seek Enlightenment.

Levitation, out-of-the-body experiences, manifestations of Light and other so-called miracles are not miracles at all. In the Far East there are many persons who can manipulate consciousness just as a trained gymnast can manipulate her body. Ultimately what is important are not the "miracles" which many seek to validate their spiritual beliefs, but the body of Truth which these activities represent.

While some might label the following accounts as "sensational," we find them no more sensational than a bright summer day or the experience of loving someone. It is not our intention to convince you of their validity. *Samadhi Is Loose In America!* is made up of over one hundred and fifty accounts of persons who have had experiences with Atmananda. These accounts were selected from seven hundred submissions from persons who have either meditated with or are students of Atmananda.

The persons who have submitted these accounts come from a wide variety of different backgrounds and age groups: doctors, students, machinists, lawyers, psychiatrists and psychologists, computer analysts — what we would call relatively normal persons who have had experiences which have changed their ideas about the nature and structure of existence.

Before going to press with this issue I had lunch with Atmananda and discussed the

possible outcome of releasing *Samadhi Is Loose In America!* to the general public. Traditionally, the type of phenomena presented in *Samadhi* is not presented to the general public, but is only seen by the close students of a Spiritual Teacher. Naturally, I assumed that Atmananda would be concerned with attracting a certain amount of kooks, cultists and crackpots to his public meditations, who would come either to heckle or be convinced. To my surprise, Atmananda began to laugh and said that he wasn't at all concerned. He said that no one would probably believe what was in the accounts, since most of his students who witness these manifestations whenever he is with them have trouble accepting the validity of their own experiences.

My curiosity aroused, I then asked him why — if he feels that few if any will understand the import of these accounts — is he allowing them to be published. He responded, with a half smile and a twinkle in his eye, that the future was already fixed, and that he had seen that this would happen in the future, so he was unable to do anything about it.

Be that as it may, the editors and staff of *Self Discovery* hope that you find the following accounts enjoyable. Atmananda is, as usual, available to the public in his yearly fall series of workshops and intensives in Los Angeles and San Francisco. He has assured me that this season he will be less serious than ever, and that if anyone needs to be convinced of the validity of Spiritual Consciousness and alternate planes of reality, they should go and seek out a wise person who will teach them the true nature of reality. But if they have reached the point where they do not need to be convinced that God exists and is more wonderful than they can imagine, then they might drop in to one of his fall workshops to brush up on some of the fine points of the Enlightenment process.

— Katherine Manning
Editor

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Margaret

I had been a student of Atmananda's for three months when it came time for a desert journey. I've always loved the desert; one can look in any direction and see forever, losing oneself in the vastness and endless silence. Needless to say, I was very excited to be going with an Enlightened teacher.

Atmananda told us to make sure that our lives were in perfect order before we left. We were to take care of all unfinished business, clean out our closets, making sure that we had no worries to carry with us. In other words, we were supposed to go to the desert with the attitude that we might never return, that we might meet our deaths out there.

He told the new students that we could expect anything from an uneventful to slightly unpleasant evening. We probably wouldn't "see" anything out of the ordinary. We should only anticipate going for a nighttime walk in the desert under the stars with occasional stops for meditation and food.

I had been ill, running a high fever for several days prior to our departure. I had been looking forward to the journey for a long time, but that morning I seriously questioned whether I should go at all. In my noon meditation I inwardly asked Atmananda whether I should go. I received a very adamant "yes." So, that was that, body or no body.

During the drive out my fever subsided, the nausea and weakness entirely disappeared. By the time we arrived my energy level had reached a peak.

We gathered together and headed up the gorge, about 300 of us. Atmananda and company walking in front, sweeping the bushes with their flashlights, eyes peeled for snakes.

We entered into an ancient world of harsh, dry beauty. The rock formations on either side of us grew taller as the gorge fanned out in width. I got smaller and smaller. My consciousness expanded to encompass the experience as thoughts about the world and my life fell away. I felt as if I extended about four feet above my head, as if I were riding on my own shoulders. As we walked, that "me" grew very white, clear

and radiant. I felt clean.

We stopped at a circular clearing, nestled against the side of the gorge. Atmananda stood near a large group of rocks and we sat around in a circle. He talked a little about the desert, then he stood silently, arms outstretched, calling the wind...

"The wind," he announced, and it started rushing down the gorge, sweeping over and through us. He introduced us to

some distant mountains. Then he raised his arms and pointed at them. As I watched, I saw two streams of light shoot forth from his hands and extend to the mountains. As the light hit them they seemed to lose their solidity and became fluidly viscous. The slopes and tops of the mountains began to move like waves, undulating, until there was no peak. It had vanished. Then I started to see tongues of lightning licking the

almost like a huge sliding board, which joined the two points. All the time there was an excited knot in the pit of my stomach, almost as if I'd drunk too much coffee.

We took turns speaking, sharing our experiences with the group. I was amazed at the variety of perceptions. Some people saw more than I did, some saw less. Nevertheless, we had all been transported into a reality that most human beings never witness.

We had something to eat, and, bathing in the moonlight, headed back down the gorge. During the walk back I wanted to stay out there by myself. I didn't want to return to the world, but right behind me were two of Atmananda's staff members, following up with walkie-talkies to insure that no one was left behind. I walked very slowly and turned around every few minutes to soak up the beauty. The sun was beginning to rise and the colors were constantly changing. At some point I remember a staff member asking me if I was okay. I was quite fine, indescribably so.

When we reached the entrance to the gorge, we stood in a huge circle around Atmananda. Everything shimmered and I wasn't sure if we were really there at all. He focused on each one of us for an instant, directing his eyes and palms towards us. I felt a tremendous surge of power rise up inside of me, and I knew that this power would enable me to make certain necessary changes in my life. A deep gratitude filled my being, then he shifted his gaze to the person on my right. After completing the circle he went around again and again, faster each time. I felt like we were one unbroken ring of energy, instead of separate individuals.

He told us to say goodbye to the desert and to offer it our gratitude. Atmananda told us that we couldn't be sure if we would ever return here again and that we should seal this moment within our hearts forever, that way it would become a part of us and we would never lose it. Needless to say, I have never been quite the same since.

"If I believed there was a physical, I could not do this. We walk upon the Grace of God. Nothing else exists except that. It's like gliding. You walk just above the physical. You only walk or live this way if you have a terrific love for Existence. If you have total faith and love then that which you love will help you. Then you can walk on anything." —Atmananda



THE DESERT

Vanessa

In this lifetime they named me Vanessa. I am almost 12 years old. I became a member of the San Diego Center on April 27, 1982.

I remember on June 12, 1982 was my first desert trip. At first I was not really sure I wanted to go, because Atmananda had said, "You probably won't see anything the first few times." However, deep down inside I knew I wanted to go, and boy! was I glad that I went.

When we arrived there we walked up a riverbed of about 13 1/2 miles each way. There were around 250 people. As we were walking Atmananda would bring us into different worlds. They looked the same, but were more mystical. When we arrived where we were going to meditate for the night, we sat down in a horseshoe shape. Atmananda sat in the middle on some rocks.

First, he called to the wind and if you listened very carefully, you would hear the wind coming down the riverbed and a few seconds later the wind would be blowing in your face. He talked about all the different types of winds and then showed them to us.

Atmananda was so much like a kid the way he was having so much fun.

I saw very many things that some people saw and some did not. At one time Atmananda appeared with four arms. Once he made the moon and a star disappear. At one time he appeared to be jumping over some mountains. He made some beings from a different world appear. They are called astral beings. The way I saw them they just seemed like balls of light.

Atmananda went over to Neil (one of the men on the staff) and threw some mystical powers at him. It made Neil fall into Atmananda's arms. Atmananda carried him over to an open spot and laid him down on the ground, while Neil was going into a lot of different worlds. Nobody knew what Atmananda had done to Neil. Thus, some of the students asked funny questions. His physical body was there, but his inner being was totally in a different place. To bring him back to this world is just like waking him up from sleeping.

Much of the time I could not see Atmananda as he was continually disappearing. When it was possible to see him, I could see right through him.

While I was there I just felt so happy, and Atmananda said, "For a few days you could change your whole life around." It was because he put so much energy behind us. I had a feeling of wanting to do so much for others.

This was an amazing trip for me — one I shall never forget.

the different types of wind which come at different times of the day, each one bringing a very distinctive quality of energy. He said that the wind was our friend, and if we listened very carefully we would hear its message. Again it came, gentle but strong, swirling around me, touching every part of me lightly. It felt as if we were erasing my edges, melting away my skin, the illusory border between myself and the universe. Then I opened up my being and let it inside. A feeling of sadness overcame me and a vague memory of who I've been started to form, but the wind turned it into dust and blew it away.

"Dissolution," he said, and I watched his form fade into the darkness until there was no one there. I felt empty and a little scared, insecure as my reality lost its realism.

"Levitation," he said, seated cross-legged on top of a rock, and his body lifted up about four feet in the air and then returned to its original position. There was no sense of motion or spatial displacement. It was much more gentle and still than any movement I've ever perceived. It seemed not to take place in time or space. It was very soft yet threatening to the part of me that operates in a fixed universe of "natural" law.

"Heat," he said, and the air around me got very dry and hot.

He had us fix our gaze on

tops of the surrounding ridges.

At one point Atmananda said he was going to send his double up to the mountain peak. As I watched, I saw him start bouncing back and forth between the desert floor and the mountaintop. He was traveling along a wide band of light,

Rebecca

We are in the desert during Easter and Atmananda is talking about Christ. I'm not "seeing" much. When this happens I get disgruntled and pissed because it is clear that everyone is having more fun than me and I like to have all the fun. I also conclude that Atmananda is a charlatan and a maniac and we are all under his spell. (On one of the trips as I was thinking this he said, "I know you're thinking I'm a charlatan or a maniac." Hmmm.) I figure he just wants to rip us off and abscond with the funds to Tahiti.

He keeps walking forward taking little steps. I know something's going on but I can't tell what.

I let out a gasp. The ground under his feet has disappeared and he is walking on light. I think, my God, this is what Christ did when he walked on water. This is a very odd thought for an absolutely non-religious very Jewish girl.

I'm afraid to say anything, but I am seeing what I'm seeing. I expect it to go away and it doesn't. He's off the ground, walking on a cushion of light. I start to tremble. My body is telling me that I really am seeing something.

Everyone keeps guessing what's happening and Atmananda keeps saying that they're wrong. He's getting a little impatient with us. I get up courage.

My voice is shaky. "The ground isn't solid beneath you."

"Well of course the ground isn't solid beneath me."

Another woman says, "You're walking a couple of inches above the ground on light."

"Yes, that's exactly it," he says.

I say, "It's like a hydrofoil, except on light."

"Yes," he says.

He still seems a bit annoyed with us for having taken so long to see it and says, "Come on, you guys, you know how much energy that takes!"

Very impressive.

UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTERS

James

I am in my mid-thirties. My wife is ten years younger with a strong Christian background.

I guess I knew, when we became students of Atmananda, that our lives were going to change dramatically and I thought I was prepared for anything. I was wrong. My wife was rapidly becoming independent and, not being able to handle it, I clung to her for dear life, choking her with my insecurities. She suggested a temporary separation. I was crushed but knew she was right. Nonetheless, I became angry and overwhelmed by a feeling of rejection and, even though Atmananda had nothing to do with our marital difficulties, a resentment towards him began to swell up in me.

Atmananda was doing a public workshop at the convention center in San Francisco and I was home alone going through the pains of our inevitable separation. Then, as if guided by some invisible force, I found myself on the afternoon flight to San Francisco. I made my way to the convention center and took my place, among pleasant looking strangers, in the meditation hall.

Atmananda arrived and there I was, wearing my "I'm here, all the way from Los Angeles. I'm miserable; please notice me" suit, so naturally he never looked my way during the entire evening.

By the time we meditated I was more relaxed and quieter within. The weight of my problem seemed lighter and I sat back and was able to enjoy the rest of the evening. When the meeting ended, I just sat there until the room was nearly empty and then left the meditation hall, feeling disoriented and a bit lonely. I had neither car nor a place to stay and I began to walk through the now quiet streets with no idea of where I was or where I was going. I don't know for how long I walked or how far, but I found myself at a large hotel. There, I was informed that the only room available was a parlor, which is little more than a closet with a bed, pay T.V. and phone; a cocoon in which to curl up. After ordering food from room service and James Bond from T.V., I fell into a restless sleep full of angry dreams directed at Atmananda. I awoke a mess, with more angry thoughts. I spent the morning watching game shows, trying to distract myself until my two o'clock flight back to Los Angeles. At eleven o'clock I packed my bag, took the elevator to the main floor, paid the cashier, turned around and there was Atmananda standing almost face to face with me. He said, "O.K. Let's talk. Tell me what's going on."

I just kept babbling over and over again, "Atmananda, Atmananda." I was stunned, even while I knew that this meeting was what I had hoped for and was what had pulled me to San Francisco.

We walked to a spot in the center of the lobby, leaned against a wall and talked. We

I wasn't in the best physical shape. I'm still not, but it's a little better now. For weeks I'd been trying to convince myself to start running at the beach. I always found something 'urgent' to do whenever the thought arose. One day, however, I couldn't find a good excuse...

The sky was crystal blue and the afternoon sun was on its descent from intense yellow glare towards golden luminosity. Dressed in a pair of baggie army pants and a ragged-out faded red sweatshirt, I was trying my best to jog along the beach at La Jolla Shores on this fateful summer day in 1981. I

was running barefoot, trying to stay one step ahead of the waves, like an overgrown sandpiper. My pants were soaked to the knees because I needed a little practice at this. A headband across my forehead kept the windblown tufts of friz and curls out of my eyes. I definitely did not look like the sea-

soned California jogger.

So I'm running by the waves at an incredibly slow pace and I decide to stop and walk after I'd gone about 500 yards because I figured that I was out of breath. No sooner did I stop than I heard Atmananda's voice say to me inwardly, "Why are you stopping?"

"Because — I'm out of breath!" I said with conviction. "No you're not!"

I thought about it for a minute and I realized that I really wasn't out of breath, so I resumed at my snail-paced run. I went a little further and again I stopped.

"Now what's wrong?" Atmananda's voice inquired.

"Uh...well...uh...let's see...my legs are tired!! Yes, that's it!"

"Your legs aren't tired — give me a break!"

"No really, they are..." I pleaded. But I had to admit that I was just trying to find an excuse not to run. I kept going.

Finally I had to stop again. Before the voice could ask, I said, "I'm getting a stabbing pain in my side; I've got to stop."

"You're really into heavy avoidance, aren't you?"

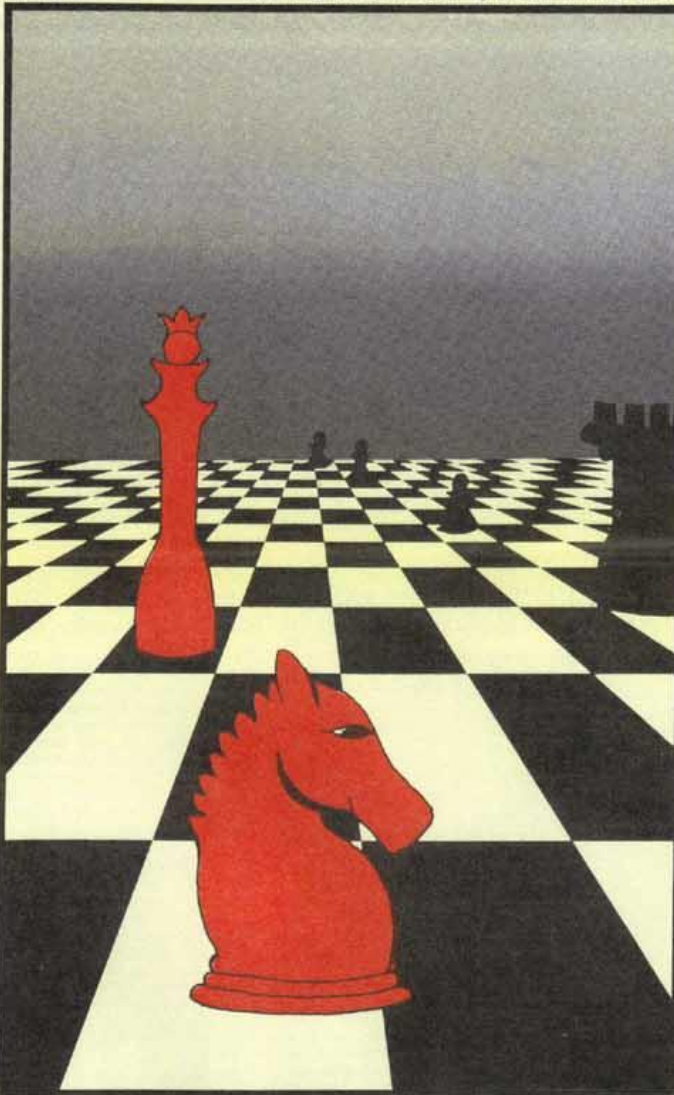
"Okay, okay! It's true! I give up, I'll keep going!"

Just then a swift-footed Atmananda in blue running shorts came up from behind and ran past me on my right. A rush of energy from the shock of unexpectedly seeing my spiritual teacher ran through me.

"My God!" I thought. "He really was talking to me!!" I was so thrilled and exhilarated by the whole transaction, not to mention the energy he boosted me with as he ran by, that I ran on boldly and effortlessly. I realized that the aches and pains and complaints were all illusions created by my mind in an attempt to foil something which was good for me.

I ran on and on, thoroughly enjoying each stride I took and each breath of fresh air which stretched and strengthened my long-forgotten lungs. I turned around after some time and began heading south, back to the car. I was so absorbed in the fun I was having running that it didn't occur to me that Atmananda might still be on the beach. I began to experience an incredible sense of joy and exuberance. My smile started beaming on its own and I could hardly hold back this tremendous urge to laugh and shout and jump around like a kid. This feeling kept building and building until I could contain myself no longer. I took a flying leap into the air and let out a zealous "WHOOOOO!" Just then Atmananda breezed by me again from behind. I thought I was gonna die — I was so embarrassed. He just kept going unaffected; not acknowledging me outwardly, although inwardly he had just given me one heck of a zap!

Of course, after that I was running on the thin air; my subtle body felt like it had literally been lifted three feet above the ground... and I've enjoyed running ever since.



spoke of love, marriage, relationships and attachments. He told me some things about his own past, relative to my own situation, and spoke to me more like an old friend than a spiritual teacher. He reminded me that my wife and I would have come to this crossroads even if we had not stepped upon the spiritual path with him and I knew that he was right. He said that he couldn't tell us what to do but, that if I was going to attach myself to anything, it should be to LIGHT.

I heard myself talking and realized that when I am with him, nothing I say seems to be worth saying... once I've said it. He smiled at me and said

"O.K.," and we just stood there looking at each other for a moment, and I felt as though all the anguish had vanished. His seemingly miraculous appearance reminded me, once again, that the whole spiritual process is real and that Atmananda was with me all the time.

When he said goodbye, I just kept saying "Thank you" as I watched him ride down the escalator. I stood there staring, riveted to the spot. Then my senses returned and I ran down the escalator... He was gone! Vanished... as suddenly as he had appeared.

I danced back up to the main lobby and called my wife. She

answered with, "Hi, you just spoke to Atmananda, didn't you," and told me that she had been meditating and could feel the meeting. Nothing could surprise me any more! I related some of the details of the meeting and she told me she was getting high just listening to me.

I left the hotel, bought a three-scoop ice-cream cone, sat down and lost myself in the transitory pleasure of that cold, smooth cream and glanced up at the clock. It was exactly twelve o'clock.

Atmananda suggests that we meditate at noon because the sun reminds us of the ever present eternal. I looked towards the sun and smiled.

First Meetings With Atmananda

Lisa

One night when I was at home reading a book, I received a phone call from a friend who is a veteran of spiritual circles. She had phoned me regularly over the past 12 years to tell me of new soul saviors and suggest that I attend the conference/lecture/seminar whatever. I rarely went. In my mind, I already had a teacher — an Indian man who taught a particular technique of meditation which I had been practising for many years.

This time my friend said, "I have just found the most fabulous teacher. He gave the best meditation I have ever had. There was gold light all over the room. Honey, the man is really powerful."

My friend had raved about other teachers before but the phrase that resonated in my mind was the presence of golden light. I asked her to tell me more about him. "He's young, American, funny and humble," she replied.

"I'll go," I said.

The lecture took place the following evening at UCLA.

I sat on the side of the hall about six rows back from the lecture area. Atmananda was wearing light blue pants, a plaid shirt and an assistant college professor-type wool vest. Style-wise, he blended in with the blackboard, but I liked that. He dressed the part of humility; his face looked honest and without pretension.

As he began to speak, I found him to be extremely interesting and clear and was glad I came.

After about 30 minutes, Atmananda said we were going to meditate and suggested we keep our eyes open for part of the time. I started out with my eyes closed doing my regular mantra meditation and then I opened my eyes. Atmananda was sitting cross-legged on a desk and gazing out at the audience. As I looked at him, I saw him rise off the desk to a height of about 12" off the surface. He simply floated straight up.

My previous teacher ostensibly taught a technique of levitation so I had long been mentally prepared to believe that levitation existed. But this was the first time I had seen it — unmistakable and effortless. Atmananda hovered for several seconds and then floated back down to the desk.

I watched closely to see if he would do it again. Suddenly, however, I wasn't looking at anything. He had disappeared. All I saw was blackboard and the desk. Just as suddenly, a moment later, he was back, meditating quietly on the people in the lecture hall, making individual eye contact with each one.

Once again, I was Joe[anna] Cool about this phenomenon. I was prepared to see disappearance because that was another technique my Indian teacher claimed to teach — except that no one had ever done it. Now I had seen it done.

As the meditation continued, I saw Atmananda levitate two more times and saw him disappear completely and then reappear in the same spot a total of five times. Once, his body disappeared and only his head remained, like a cheshire cat. Joe[anna] Cool began to feel elated.



After the meditation, Atmananda asked for people's experiences. Several members of the audience mentioned seeing gold or multi-colored lights around him; others reported seeing his face change. No one said anything about levitation or disappearing and I was too timid to raise my hand.

After the lecture was over, I had promised to meet my spiritual friend. She was lingering at the front of the hall and socializing with others of the L.A. seeker set, so I looked around for Atmananda.

I noticed him standing behind the desk, apparently waiting to talk to people. No one was there except for one girl. "I will give this man a break," I thought, "and tell him I enjoyed his talk and meditation."

I went up to the desk and caught his eyes. We looked at each other openly. Then he extended his hand, which I thought was strange since most spiritual teachers do not like to touch people, much less strangers.

I gave him my hand and our eye contact continued.

That was it.

Something occurred which had never happened to me before. I recognized Atmananda. It wasn't a mental feeling, like I knew his face, or an emotional feeling, like I understood his heart. Rather, everything in my self responded. I knew the "marriage" with my first teacher was over. With the accompanying sense of freedom, I felt like I'd shed a hundred pounds. I sensed that my yearning for spiritual adventure would be fulfilled.

Mainly, I knew at a deeper level than I had ever known anything before that I had found a real teacher.

I knew I had found a friend.

Later, after leaving the campus, six of us from the audience gathered at a local restaurant. It turned out that five of us had seen Atmananda levitate and disappear.

Renee

A voice kept coming up inside of me: "GO TO CALIFORNIA." This was in August of 1979. I was living in New York. The same week, I later found out, Atmananda moved from New York to San Diego. I hadn't met him at that time.

It took me almost a year to follow my intuition. I ended up in Los Angeles. Shortly thereafter I made a new friend, Jack, who called one day to say that he was going to check out a spiritual teacher who was lecturing. Having nothing better to do, I tagged along. I had been a member of another spiritual organization for twelve years and doubted that I was going to learn anything new. So I approached the event with no expectations.

Atmananda turned out to be very funny and I liked him immediately. We started to meditate and were told to do so with our eyes open. I sat there wondering how anyone was supposed to meditate with their eyes open and Atmananda looked at me.

And then there was a moment. When I met Atmananda's eyes something happened and I felt this world for a few moments. It was as though his eyes became a gateway to eternity, and as I looked into them, I passed through the gate and on the other side, there was no time, no space. The room didn't exist. Nothing existed but eternity itself. It was like passing through a golden doorway of light and standing for a moment on the edge of nothingness. It was the most beautiful experience I had ever felt and I longed to have it over and over again. Because it was like coming home. It was like finally coming home after being away for a long, long time.

Chris

Here I am in 1982, on the planet Earth, studying with a spiritual teacher. This may not sound like such a strange occurrence to you, but in my opinion, it is. I will be thirty-two years old this year, and I have done my very best to live these years in the fast lane. I have developed and own a million dollar business, I have eaten repeatedly at the finest restaurants, and I have traveled over much of the world, including remote areas accessible only by helicopter where I have skied virgin snows. I have chartered boats to fish and among my catches is a 500-pound world class marlin. I have experienced the finest in drugs from all over the world and drive whatever car I choose. The list goes on and on. Nothing was handed to me on a silver platter. I began chasing these dreams when I was twelve years old, putting away empty pop bottles for fifty cents an hour. I admit that I was probably in the right places at the right times, just as I was in October of 1981 when I first met Atmananda, my spiritual teacher.

Being in the right place at the right time is not always by one's own choice. I know that this meeting with Atmananda was not because of an independent decision of my own. I had seen spiritual teachers before with my sister, and I was frankly unimpressed. I have given you some of my personal background to give you some idea of what it might take to impress me. The spiritual teachers I'd seen appeared to me to be persons educated to help lost souls. You know the types, with problems at home, who just lost their job. These spiritual teachers seemed to be group counselors with only a slight insight into life in general. My sister, whom I love dearly, seemed to get involved with this sort of person on a regular basis.

I have always been interested in spiritual teachings. I meditated for a period of time once and experimented with some spiritual theories. I was a vegetarian when most people here thought that you would die if you didn't eat meat. I had pretty much led my life being my own spiritual teacher, believing that the human race had not yet produced a spiritual teacher real enough to teach me. What the heck! I didn't think I needed a spiritual teacher. Everything seemed to be going fine for me.

One day my mother called and asked me if we could have lunch together. As we were dining, she began to tell me about my sister's new teacher. She said that even she felt drawn to him in a very magical way. She asked me if I would go see Atmananda. Knowing that I had been to a number of spiritual meetings and had been unimpressed, she made it sound pretty interesting to secure my attendance. She finally convinced me, and I made the drive to the Los Angeles Convention Center.

I got there early and met my sister near the door. She introduced me to a few of her

new friends, and we all "hung around" waiting for the evening to begin. "Sit up, nice and straight," she told me, "when he says it's time to meditate."

There I was, sitting in the back corner, figuring out what I'd do for the rest of the evening after the meeting. I was paying just enough attention so that I could discuss the evening with my mother and sister to their satisfaction.

Atmananda entered the room. After he made a few jokes and some spiritual remarks we began to meditate. I sat up straight and started to study him. He was young, about thirty to thirty-five years old, had curly brown hair and looked like an average kind of guy. He was dressed like people in Los Angeles dress. It was a ready-for-anything type of apparel, good for anything from a rock concert to a fine French restaurant.

As we continued to meditate, I got more intensely involved. I quieted my mind and sat up very straight, in order to give Atmananda every opportunity to do whatever he could do. He began to scan the room very slowly, occasionally stopping to look at someone, in what seemed a casual manner. Suddenly he found me in my island of safety in the back of the room. Our eyes met and an inner dialogue began with a magnitude I had never before experienced. As we communicated, the room seemed to empty of all other persons. A bright gold aura filled the room. Colors and light streamed around Atmananda in a vivid visual display unlike anything I had ever seen. When the meditation ended, and I had had a chance to regain my composure, my conscious mind immediately attempted to deny what I had seen.

After the meeting was over my sister approached me and asked what I thought. I answered that it had been all right, thinking to myself that I'd better keep this under my hat for a while, until I had time to analyze it. We walked to the car in silence. Suddenly I had to tell her what had happened to me at the meeting. As I told her, I felt a great weight lifted from my shoulders. It was as if I was admitting to myself that perhaps, just perhaps, there was something to Spirituality, and perhaps there was a place for it in my life.

I applied to become a student of Atmananda's and was accepted. Between that night at the Los Angeles Convention Center and the first Center meeting I attended, enough time had elapsed that my mind had convinced my being that whatever I had seen had not been as vivid as I had imagined. I needed to verify the experience. As meetings go on, week by week, I am able to accept more and more of what I have been witnessing. I have had breath-taking experiences of visual light displays and feelings of inner peace. The highs I experience are unparalleled by any others I have encountered in thirty-two years. The whole process is still baffling to me, to say the least. But I am a spiritual seeker, and I admit it.

PUBLIC MEDITATIONS

Edward

It was late, perhaps 11:00 p.m., August 3, 1982. I was sitting in the second row of one of those semi-elegant public meeting rooms at the Miramar Sheraton in Santa Monica, a room that had probably seen more wedding and bar mitzvah receptions than the beach a couple blocks away had grains of sand. Now this room was hosting a spiritual teacher. He called himself Atmananda, which in Sanskrit means the bliss of the soul. However, he was not from India. He was an American, in fact, a boyish-faced former English professor, originally from the East Coast. When most of the Indian teachers I had studied with discovered that I was a lawyer, they would take me aside and somewhat nervously ask me about extending their visa. India was the mother country, they would sheepishly explain, but the bottom line was that the accumulation of American dollars was essential to keep the air conditioning working in the ashram back home. On this score, at least, I knew that tonight would be different.

Tonight would also be different in other respects. This was my second time with Atmananda. The night before I saw him for the first time. I had been hearing about him for about six months; now, I was in his presence. A group of us had just applied to join Lakshmi, the spiritual organization through which Atmananda conducts his teaching. The application for admission contained a clause, entitled "Is there anything else you wish to add." That's all I needed. I proceeded to cram my whole life into a cramped handwritten paragraph, pouring out the story of my quest for inner peace. Atmananda read each of our applications, looking up to acknowledge the person by name as he came to each of us. "You wrote me a whole thesis," he said when he got to me. This was his diplomatic way of recognizing my penchant for what my mother has called verbal diarrhea, ever since I was a little boy.

Atmananda then wanted us to meditate with him for a few moments. I was now sitting closer to him than I had sat during the night's program and during the previous night's presentation. I closed my eyes, but only halfway, because I had heard that when you meditate with Atmananda you are "supposed" to see a light show that rivals the bicentennial fireworks over the Potomac River. One, maybe two eternal seconds passed. Hey, I thought, where is my light show? I was just in the process of asking myself if this were another rip-off, when before I could even complete the question mentally, I began feeling my heart fill. Yes, my heart was filling with a sense of inner confidence. Me, spiritually confident? That's like Woody Allen winning the Mr. America contest. This was really something.

All my life, my major prompting for self-discovery

death. I wanted spiritual enlightenment so that I could penetrate the veil between this phase of existence and the next, if there is a next, and thereby obtain some peace of mind in the knowledge that my final destiny is more hopeful than just becoming worm bait. I had spent most of my time in spiritual search quaking in my boots that I would discover that this whole meditation business was a fraud and then have to live out my days with the conviction that the universe was totally pointless. Oh, I've had moments of bliss in my meditations before. These moments were actually pretty nice, until my rational mind stepped in to chop them to pieces, that is. The feeling I was now experiencing was right up there with some of the best glimpses I have ever had of a fleeting sensation that there was a larger and more wonderful aspect of myself than the one with which I was used to dealing. As always, I had to attempt to sabotage the experience. God forbid I should become Enlightened too soon: I'd have nothing to complain about.

So I proceeded to attempt to dredge up my fear of death. But my old nemesis was hiding out and wouldn't even show a trace. I felt tears in my eyes. I felt that liberation from the nightmare of not knowing what I am all about was a possibility. More than anything else, I just plainly and simply felt good. This moment was even. The nagging specter of doubt, for whatever reason, was not intruding. Things were in balance. The tempo of my awareness was satisfying. I was fully cognizant that I was not afflicted with any notion of incompleteness. I wasn't even worrying. This couldn't be me.

I always worry about something. Yet, it was me all right. I still had my awareness of myself. I felt myself to be totally still, except for a throbbing joy. My consciousness thrilled at this moment of clarity, unencumbered by the limiting tyranny of thought. Then I became aware of the room again.

Uh Oh. I was coming down now. All of this happened in just a few moments. Yes, here is the chair I was sitting on. Here is the sound of people talking. There is another person sitting next to me. I'm back. I'll probably start to try to kill this experience any second now. The analytic buzz saw is gearing up to do a number on this event just concluded. But what the hell was that marvelous sensation that had just been flitting with me? And, who is that lanky, curly haired guy, sitting on a rug up on the table in front of me, anyway? And, why is he always smiling like the cat that just caught the mouse?



Mark

Last August I took my mother to one of Atmananda's public meditations. The next day I asked her how she liked it, what she thought.

"It was very interesting," she began, "and that sure was a good-looking group of people who came to see him. I don't know about his spiritual qualifications, but his verbal skills are excellent. And he has quite a sense of humor."

My mother, who used to work in an employment agency, is telling me about his "verbal skills." She'd probably like to get him a job if he had an accounting background. I thought, based on my experiences with Atmananda, that maybe she wasn't saying everything; so I asked, "Like how was it interesting? Did you feel anything? See anything? Have any kind of unusual experience?"

"No. Nothing happened spiritual or anything. It was... interesting."

I was rather disappointed that my mom could sit in all that energy and not feel or see anything. I looked at my brother, who is two years older than myself (he is 22) and who also has meditated with Atmananda before, shrugged my shoulders and gave a "well-that's-the-way-it-goes" look. I started to walk out of the kitchen towards the living room

Deb

The most upsetting experience I have had with Atmananda, or rather with myself in relation to him, started at a big public meditation. I arrived somewhat emotionally drained from some personal problems that I won't go into — this is a family newspaper. I was in the company of a difficult friend that I wanted to expose to Atmananda's energy, who really liked Atmananda very much as it turned out but that is another story. Anyway, Atmananda was up against about 300 people, some students who might be expected to be in a good state of mind, and about 200 people who had never seen him before. Now the Bay area is filled with quite a motley crew of "spiritual seekers" and they were out in force with chips on their shoulders ready to demolish a new teacher. We sat gurus for breakfast up here. There were some rather tempestuous dialogues for a spiritual gathering and then Atmananda wanted us to meditate. He got up and sat on a table in lotus position but then seemed to decide that we just weren't ready — an understatement. He walked around the stage the way he does when he is preparing to do something outrageous and then suddenly turned to the audience.

Reality, he said, is not what you think. Watch this. He then held up his right hand and turned it about. The fingers seemed to melt and become fluid light and then the whole hand turned into a glowing and luminous ball.

When he asked us what had happened, I said, "Your whole hand turned into a big glob of light." How poetic! I notice people get really incoherent

when they try to describe these events. Other people said things like "You grew extra fingers of light" and "Your hand melted." We meditated then and the evening ended. I didn't think any more about the incident except to notice that I had a lot of new energy and wondered whether it had to do with Atmananda turning himself into a human torch — kind of like the Statue of Liberty, only his hand was the torch. The next day I was on the bus going up to my weekend abode in the Valley and realized that I was quite disturbed by the events of the previous night. This man was really serious! What had I gotten myself into now? Maybe I should get out while the getting was good. I mean, if he could turn his hand into light, he could just go up in a cloud of light if he felt like it. Even worse. I could turn into light if I got Enlightened, perish the thought. Atmananda is very vehement about not being anything special like an Avatar, so theoretically we all had this potential. Horrors. I didn't like it at all. Spiritual crisis on Highway 101!

Well, I knew that I didn't really want to leave Atmananda, so I started casting around in my head for ideas that would make my own reactions palatable to myself. I remembered the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna is showing Arjuna who he, Krishna, really is. He changes his form and shows Arjuna "the whole world." Arjuna more or less says "Just show me your regular face, Krishna, I can't handle all this." Well, when I read this I thought, "If I ever saw such things, I would say go ahead, show me the world." Ha, ha. Now here was Atmananda turning into a human light bulb for my education and what was I doing? Whining. "Atmananda, please show me your regular face." Well, this cheered me up a lot since Arjuna was a great warrior and even he had a few problems with this kind of stuff. Conclusion: When it comes to having my view of reality challenged, I don't exactly react with great joy. Or as Atmananda has said, "Resistance? Does Fort Knox have walls?"

when my mother, looking at the sink, said: "One thing did happen, though, that I wasn't going to tell; at one point during the meditation Atmananda turned into an Indian. His face narrowed and his hair became long, and turned white. I was going to say something during the meditation, but I thought everyone would think I was nuts. I wasn't going to tell you. But I saw him, distinctly, turn into an Indian." She made a motion with her hands and described how his face narrowed and his hair became longer, and described how it turned white.

I looked at my brother, smiled, nodded my head to signify "Yeah, I thought so," and said to my mom, "Wow, Mom, that's neat! I see those things all the time."

She seemed content to just leave it at that — Atmananda turned into an Indian. Not wanting to push it, I didn't bring up anything more about the experience. I joked to my brother, softly, "You know, nothing spiritual or anything." I asked Mom if she'd like to go to the meditation which was being held that night, but she said no, that she was thinking about going to the Music Center to see "Hello Dolly." I told her I was glad she could make it to one, and asked her if she would buy some milk when she went to the store. "Sure," she said, and that was that.

Studying With Atmananda

Martin

It was our regular Wednesday night meeting in Los Angeles and also the last Wednesday before the New Year. There were about 125 students present. Atmananda sat in his usual place on the stage and said that this would be a special meeting because he was going to give darshan. I had been a student for a very short time and did not understand what this darshan was about. Usually at our meetings Atmananda would talk with us, answer questions and we would meditate together. This night he told us to just sit up straight and not to try, but to keep our minds as still as possible. He closed his eyes and began to meditate while I just sat there as quietly as I could. Before long there were beautiful gold and purple colors all around him and they kept getting brighter. I had already become accustomed to this manifestation and, in my short time as a student, was taking it for granted.

Atmananda opened his eyes and began to meditate on each student individually, on some for just a moment, on others for several minutes. While he did this I kept my attention focused on him and on all the light which surrounded him; at one moment he would elongate to twice his usual size and then, as if letting air out of a balloon, he would return to normal. Suddenly he was looking directly at me.

Everything and everyone in the room disappeared in blackness and a tunnel seemed to open up between Atmananda and myself. A spectrum of energized colors were shooting through the tunnel from him to me, at first slowly and then gradually getting faster and faster. It seemed as though they were bouncing off me and shooting back to him so that they were coming and going simultaneously at tremendous speeds. All at once I could see my physical self at the other end of the tunnel, where Atmananda had been and then I, the perceiver was in that same place looking back at my physical self seated in the chair and as I, the perceiver watched, I, the physical self dissolved and Atmananda appeared seated there in my place. The energy was rushing even faster now and I saw Atmananda's form which was seated there, disappear and I was looking at an empty seat. Then I found myself back in my seat, looking at the stage to the place where Atmananda sits and there was nobody there. I closed my eyes. It was as if we had merged into one being with no separate identities. When I opened my eyes again, Atmananda was moving his gaze from me to another student. I no longer needed an explanation of darshan.



Ken

I saw Atmananda disappear. At the time I was sitting with about one hundred other meditation students in a meeting room in a San Francisco church. A few moments earlier we had finished a twenty-minute meditation. I was feeling easy and happy as I usually do after meditating with Atmananda.

He rose from the folding table he had been sitting on and walked to the rear of the dais. He stood in front of a full length beige curtain and said, "Watch this."

I saw what can best be described as a cloud start to form about his head. The cloud was translucent, or at least nonopaque, and it seemed to obscure his head. Gradually the cloud descended, enveloping more and more of his torso until the whole thing was invisible. It is difficult to describe exactly what I saw, because the words don't seem to fit the experience with a high degree of precision. On the one hand the cloud seemed to cover him and obscure my view of his body. On the other hand he became transparent and I could see the curtain where his body had been previously.

Atmananda remained invisible as long as I kept my gaze relaxed. When I focused and directed my gaze with intent he reappeared. I found that I could go into and out of the experience at will.

I am trained as a scientist, and my first thought was that eye fatigue or some trick of the lighting was causing the illusion that he had disappeared. This notion (hope?) was shortlived; almost everyone else in the room saw him disappear too. On top of that he had not told us that he was planning to disappear.

I've thought about this a lot in recent days. When I saw the disappearance, I felt that I had no problem accepting it as a fact. "Oh, I saw Atmananda disappear. I'm broadminded; I can accept nonordinary phenomena. After all, I read all the Castaneda books, and I believed them. Now I'm seeing it in person."

But there's more to it than that. I don't think I really did accept it totally. I placed the experience in a compartment labeled "nonordinary reality." I could still go on believing that I am here in my body and the rest of the world is out there. When something happens out there, I perceive it. But here is my dilemma. I could make him appear and disappear at will. Couple that with the fact that most of the others saw him disappear and my notions about the nature of reality come under suspicion. As I write this I feel my stomach contract with fear.

Kevin

At a Los Angeles Center meeting, July, 1982:

Atmananda: I would now like to talk about the main thing that all Spiritual Teachers say and have said, and that can be summed up in two words: "It's OK." That's the main thing that I or any other Spiritual Teacher has to teach you, that it's OK. Some teachers have said it just to their students: "It's OK. For everyone else out in the world it may be horrible, but for you it's OK." Some have said it just to a few of their advanced students. Some have even said it to the masses: "Believe in me, follow me, and it's OK." From my point of view, everything is holy, and there's nothing that isn't God, so it's OK.

Picture a spiritual seeker, who has spent years and years seeking the truth, and finally he goes to the Himalayas, to seek the Enlightened soul. He climbs all the way up the mountain, and finally he finds the wise man. The old guy is sitting there meditating, totally zonked out, trying to decide who to bet on in the third race.

The spiritual seeker bends down at the wise man's feet, and says, "O wise man, O enlightened soul, tell me, what is the meaning of life?" The old guy sort of opens one eye, looks at this person, and then tries to ignore him, hoping he might go away. But the seeker asks again, "what is the meaning of life?" Finally the old guy opens his eyes, looks at the seeker, and replies, "It's OK." Then he closes his eyes again.

The seeker looks at the old guy, and asks himself, "did he say 'it's OK'?" Realizing that this was his answer, he begins to climb down the mountain. But after a few minutes he starts to get angry, thinking that he had come such a long distance for such a simplistic answer. Finally, he climbs back up the mountain, confronts the wise man, and says, "what do you mean, 'It's OK'?"

This time the old guy looks at the seeker very seriously, and contemplates the question very deeply. He knows that if he gives the right answer he might become famous and have books written about him. Finally he says, "it's all right. It's not so bad. It could be worse."

Buddha, Jesus and Krishna have all said the same thing. All that exists is eternity, shining and perfect, so don't worry about it. It's OK. And actually it's quite a bit better than that.

René

It happened during one of my evening meditations. I had been with the Center about eight or ten weeks and was rather pleased with the progress I was making. It was already dark and rather than use a candle or any light I decided to leave the room in darkness. I closed my eyes and settled in to relax. I sat on a sofa facing a wall and a closed door that I focused on.

I opened my eyes and right in the middle of the door was a large flaming red ball with fuzzy edges. It glowed brightly with a great intensity. It took me by surprise and I closed my eyes immediately, not believing I had seen what I thought I had seen. I opened them again and, sure enough, there was the red ball shining as brightly as ever. I closed my eyes once again.

My heart began to pound and a feeling of fear came over me. I wondered to myself what kind of experience I was having and what was going on. I opened and shut my eyes several times but the ball did not go away.

It was then I decided to brave it all and confront this thing. Frying my eyelids open, I forced myself to look right at it. It was definitely very real, in the sense that it was there and I could see its pulsating and undulating movement. Gaining more courage, I started to examine it more closely when suddenly it receded as if going into a smaller and smaller tunnel and finally just a pinpoint before disappearing completely.

I closed my eyes and opened them again several times hoping it would come back, but it didn't. Needless to say, that was the end of my meditations for the evening. It did shake me up.

At the next Center meeting I was going to share it and then thought better of it, for no particular reason. I hadn't been sharing and didn't feel I wanted to start at that time. But during the break I found myself facing Atmananda over a table and quite spontaneously shared the experience with him. When I finished with the question "I wonder what it could have been?" Atmananda looked at me for a long moment and then gently said, "They don't like to be stared at." With that he walked away leaving me with a very silly grin on my face.

Sandra

We had all been doing rather poorly; we'd been raucous and inattentive at all the meetings. But for some reason this week we were saints.

We hold the Los Angeles meditations in a Women's Club. It is a large hall and we set up chairs to face a proscenium stage. Atmananda enters the hall from a door to our right. He then crosses between the stage and us, opens a door to the left of the stage, mounts the stairs and sits on the stage to talk to us and meditate with us.

On this night, instead of the usual goodhearted but raucous talk, conversation had quieted. Someone had turned the lights down and we were all being intently spiritual and meditative. I think a majority of us had our hands neatly folded in our laps.

Atmananda entered. You could hear the proverbial pin drop. He didn't look at us or say hello but walked quietly and exactly across the room to the stage door entrance. Then he whipped open the door and yelled to the empty stairs, "Honey! I'm home!"

We all practically fell out of our chairs screaming with laughter that probably lasted a full five minutes. Once again, in his totally American style he had managed to crack our spiritual pretense.

Out-Of-The-Body EXPERIENCES

Debby

Randi

Our center meeting that evening was very mystical and powerful. The awareness levels between the members present seemed to flow together with so much intensity that it allowed the whole center to make a great leap in spiritual transformation.

Atmananda used many of his siddha powers that he uses in the desert. During the meditation as he sat on the couch, I saw him elevating and moving from side to side, changing form and sending out waves of light and energy. He then proceeded to stand and raise his arms high in the air. He grew in height and then started to shrink in size. Soon the whole room disappeared. At one point, he walked to the back of the stage. He vanished as though he blended into the wall. When he came forward back onto the stage, the whole center reacted in complete amazement. By the end of the meeting I had forgotten that I was in a women's club in Los Angeles. The events and the power of the meditation were so similar to those I had experienced in the desert.

When I got home I grabbed a blanket and stayed downstairs to meditate for a while. I didn't want the experience to end. I lit a candle and reflected on the evening. I sat and meditated in silence. Although I don't remember, I must have blown out the candle. Then the journey began.

I clearly remember Atmananda coming behind me and placing his hand on the back of my head. Instantaneously, my body fell limp. I gently fell to the floor, comfortably resting on my stomach. Although my body was numb, I was very alive and perfectly awake. I was completely immersed in a very bright white light and lost all sense of this physical world. Very gently, at the base of my back, I began to feel warm, soothing explosions of energy that were similar to electrical shocks. However, instead of pain, I experienced laughter and ecstatic bliss. As though Atmananda was working with each vertebrae, he slowly worked the kundalini up the center of my being. Over and over I felt bursts of energy. As the procession continued, there was a perfect sequence in which the white light shifted to different shades and densities of gold. As my body became increasingly heavy, my consciousness emerged into light. The image I normally conceived of myself dissolved, I became light itself. The intensity of feelings and brightness of the light continued to increase. When it reached the top of my head, the energy peaked and I was set free. I left my body and looked down upon it. It lay there still and peaceful. The expression on my face reflected happiness and pure innocence.

Time and timelessness passed. With a sudden clap I came back. I found myself lying on my couch wrapped in a quilt. The amazement was overwhelming. I experienced reality in what we would call a dream. Nothing before had ever seemed so clear and perfect. There was a strong sense of being completely awake, that being in this world seems hazy and dreamlike. During those moments of traveling through worlds of light and tranquility, my consciousness was perfectly awake and aware. Being like a child, living in the moment, laughing and playing in the inner worlds with my friend Atmananda.

I punched in the tape "Equinox" by Jean-Michel Jarre. It was about 8:30 p.m., we were going between 75 and 80 miles per hour. The music was so loud it filled the car.

By now we were halfway to San Francisco. It was dark and desolate outside. Within the car, we sat in silence, speeding up Route 5, attempting to break last week's record of 7 hours and 10 minutes from San Diego to San Francisco. We were absorbed in the music. It was Wednesday night during the Spring Meditation Series of 1982. Each Wednesday afternoon, during this period from the beginning of March through the end of April, a friend and I would make the journey by car up to San Francisco. We would pack up all the clothes, Tab, coffee and cassette tapes we would need for the journey and then head on over to the Del Mar castle, where Atmananda was living at the time. We would pack the car with boxes of tickets, brochures, books to sell and various other things that we would need for the public

meditation the following night.

I was a college student at UCSD and had taken the quarter off to work more intensively for the center, helping mainly with the public meditations. I usually drove up with Mary Anne, who was waitress at the time. She was able to get the time off work and was up for adventure.

Though the drive was physically the same, it felt new and different each week. Driving up that straight, long, flat, empty highway in the darkness pulled us out of our everyday life and world. There was nothing familiar to grasp onto, nothing constant or real. We felt we were setting off on a journey through other worlds and realities. We knew we would come back different. In some way we would change. At 8:00 p.m. Atmananda would start the Los Angeles Center meeting. Knowing this, we would focus on him inwardly and try to feel the energy and light he was putting out for the meditation.

As we tried to connect with him our consciousness rose and

Sitting here, thinking about Atmananda and the various experiences I've had since I've encountered him, one particular instance stands out in my mind. It occurred the morning after the second Public Meditation held in Los Angeles. I woke up early — it was barely light — yet I was wide awake. I sat up, leaned over, looked at the clock — quarter after six. Quarter After Six. Oh God. Now what am I going to do? I thought with a huge sigh, and from across the room I heard, "Well, why don't we meditate?"

And there he was. Atmananda. Now he wasn't there in the solid physical sense of his body being there in the room — it was more of a light that assumed his physical form... but it was definitely him. He was sitting there beaming and twinkling.

Thinking to myself, "I still must be dreaming," I rubbed my eyes, shook my head and looked again. He was still there, smiling at me, nodding his head. "Want to meditate?"

Me, completely disoriented, stuttered, stammered, hemmed, hawwed, and came out with "Well, aaahh, I think maybe I should take a bath first."

He looked at me, grinned, and said, "That's a good idea... why don't you take a bath?"

So in I stumbled, took my bath, wondered about the whole scene I had just experienced, shook it off as my imagination and an impressive previous night, dried off, and came out into the living room only to find him still sitting there. Hmmm...

"Well, so... are you ready to meditate?"

"AHHHHhhhhhh... welllll... hmmm... I... ahhh... think that I should straighten up my apartment."

He gave me this look like, "Ahh, I know what you're doing," but said, "That's a good idea, why don't you straighten up your apartment?" So, straighten I did. Only having three small rooms, it doesn't take much time, but I was stretching it this day. Finally I'm all through.

Patently, Atmananda looks at me. "Well, are you ready to meditate?"

Me, still not believing this could really possibly be happening, and assured that if I put it off long



Kay

three hundred miles away. The strength of our inner connection with him had enabled us to see these manifestations. Physical distance was irrelevant, on a subtle plane we were really together.

As the night grew later, I began to see different forms of light on the road. One time, I saw a large globe of light ahead of us. It filled the entire road. As we approached, it grew brighter and a moment before we drove through it, it exploded into a shower of sparks and lines of light and color. It was like seeing a giant fireworks explode on the Fourth of July.

Other times, we drove through patches of fog or mist that radiated beautiful pastel yellow or green colors. As we zipped through them, I felt a cool breeze blow through my body and a calmness overtake me. As we drove further, my feelings became more intensified. I could feel energy surging through my body and direct lines of power rushing up my spine. The energy felt like a mixture of electricity and adrenalin. My body was tingling and felt very light. I felt I was floating.

My stomach also felt light, as if it was rising up to my chest. This floating sensation grew into a strong pull which centered on my navel. I felt there was a cord connected to it that was being pulled with great force. As my attention

enough he'd tire of me and these games I'm playing with myself, said to him, "Oh... I really think I should write a letter to my sister first."

Atmananda looked at me. I mean HE LOOKED at me. It was like a mirror. I could see exactly what I was doing; couldn't understand why I was doing what I was doing when I always enjoyed to meditate and realized he wasn't going to leave until I did meditate with him... yet he still said, "That's a good idea... why don't you write a letter to your sister?"

Inwardly squirming under his gaze, and my folly, I relented sheepishly saying that perhaps I could write her later and that we could meditate first. "Oh, Good!!!" He settled himself, I settled myself, and we meditated together.

When I opened my eyes, the whole room was filled with a strong but soft white light. He looked at me, smiled "bye," and disappeared. Thoughts of Atmananda and what had happened stayed with me all day and night.

The following morning like an alarm, quarter after six. Booooo... my eyes opened. I was wide awake... hmmm... I peeked over to the hassock... Yep, there he was... Beautiful Light... grinning away. "Want to meditate?"

With a smile and a shake of my head, "yes," I sat up, got into a comfortable meditative position, and in I went. This happened a third day as well, until the fourth day I woke up and my first thoughts were to meditate. This was how Atmananda got me to start meditating each morning on a regular basis.

centered on my navel, I saw red lights in the sky ahead of us. It looked like red crackling lightning, then suddenly the whole dark sky took on a red glow. This was amazing. Mary Anne and I looked at each other; neither of us was about to describe what we had seen.

Immediately we broke out the Tab and Mary Anne rummaged through the back seat, searching for some cookies or anything to eat. As we drank our Tab and munched on crackers, we chatted about mundane and insignificant things, trying to avoid mentioning anything awesome and powerful.

We were driving through a valley with high hills on either side of us. My attention was drawn upwards, towards the sky. I saw lines of white light stretching over the valley in a lattice pattern. The lines reached from the hills on one side to the hills on the other side. I felt we were in a tunnel of light. Everything within the valley glowed and sparkled, above us the lattice-work of light seemed to shield us from the rest of the world.

As we rounded a turn in the road, we came upon the outskirts of Oakland. The lines of light faded and the neon lights of the city grew brighter. I was disoriented, the city seemed far less real than the sights and visions we had experienced out on the open highway.

Personal Experiences With Atmananda

Gerry

After the San Francisco center meeting a few weeks ago, I was flying back to Los Angeles with Atmananda. As usual, we were flying on Pacific Express, a neat little airline with about seven or eight small jets. The people who work for this airline are all relatively young and happy and like their jobs. The fares are also the cheapest available. Since they are such a small airline, their terminal is located in some basement of San Francisco International. The waiting room is old, its carpet torn. But no one minds because they will not be there long.

That night we were waiting for our flight in the waiting room. Only a few other people were in the room. Among them were a young lady and her daughter. We happened to sit down across from them, so that we faced them about four feet away. The lady was pretty, with big eyes and a tired smile. She wore blue jeans. She was very friendly and just started talking to us. She said she was going to Stockton. For some reason, it just seemed strange that anyone would be going to Stockton in the middle of the night. Atmananda asked her if she knew anyone there.

"No," she said, "I'm just going there to pick up my car." "Where will you go when you get your car?" Atmananda asked.

"I'm going to drive to Utah. That's where we are going to live."

So she was flying to nowhere to pick up a car so she could drive to nowhere, with her

daughter, in the middle of the night. I got the impression she once had a husband or someone she lived with, but that it was over long ago. I felt she had been on her own with her daughter for a year or two. It didn't bother her. She was doing all right.

Atmananda said to me, "Open up some of that candy." We had bought a bag full of candy before checking in for the flight. Atmananda had flown on this airline a few times before and said that they always forgot the in-flight snacks. So I gave him some chocolate. We had stopped talking to the lady for the time being. Her daughter had been wandering around the room, in her own world. But when she saw us eating, she was across the room in a second.

"What are you eating?" she said.

"Some chocolate raisins," Atmananda said.

We tried to ignore her. Her mother told her to stop bothering us. But after a few seconds,

"What are you eating?" "They're raisins," Atmananda said.

"Want some?" "Okay," she was cute enough that you didn't mind. Her mom told her not to take too much. After I let her have a few Peanut M&M's, she kept trying to see into the bag of candy. Atmananda asked her what her name was. She held up three fingers.

"Not how old are you. What's your name?"

She looked at her mom. "Tell them your name, dear."

"Pam," she said. "What's your name?"

Atmananda explained that she probably couldn't say his name.

"What's your name?" she repeated.

"Atmananda."

"Atma-ama?"

"Forget it. I have another name. You can call me Doctor Lenz."

"Doc?"

"Doc" is good. Call me Doc."

"Are you a doctor?"

"No, actually I'm a teacher. Want some more raisins?"

Pam took the raisins and wandered off somewhere, to see what anyone else was eating. I suppose, we talked with her mom about nothing in particular for a while. We discussed the center meeting between the two of us a little bit before Pam came back. She went straight to Atmananda to see what he was eating now. He gave her some peanut-butter crackers. Pam climbed up on the empty seat next to him.

"My mommy loves me very much."

"That's good," Atmananda said.

"Can I have another cracker, Doc?"

"Sure. Here."

"I love my mommy, too. And my daddy."

"That's very nice."

"Do you love me, Doc?"

"Sure. I love you."

"I love you too, Doc. What's he eating?"

I was eating some malted milk balls. "Want some?" I said. She held out her hand, I gave her a couple. I thought Atmananda might be getting tired of this little three-year-old hovering around after food. But he didn't seem to mind.

"I really love you, Doc."

"That's good, dear."

"Do you love me?"

"Sure. Want some more candy?"

"Okay, I love you so much, Doc."

She put her arms around his neck and hugged him. She started giving him little kisses on the cheek. She had a real tight hold on his neck. He turned to me, "It's the light," he said. "She's in love with the light." He just let her hang there around his neck. I had thought she loved him because of the candy. But I realized she wasn't just saying it to get fed, she really did love him. She saw, or felt, something in him that I have only glimpsed from time to time. And she responded with love.

"Are you going to stay here, Doc?"

"No, I have to leave in a few minutes to fly to Los Angeles."

"I wish you would stay." She gave him another kiss. "I love you."

This went on for about five more minutes. Then the announcement came that it was time for our flight to board.

"Are you going now?" Pam asked.

"Yes, we have to go now. Goodbye."

We said goodbye and good luck to her mother and headed out the door.

"Goodbye, Doc."

"Goodbye, Pam."

On the way to the plane I said, "That was really something. Wasn't it?"

Atmananda said, "Usually I don't like little kids too much. But she was all right. She just fell in love with the light."

I asked him if he thought it would make any difference in that little girl's life, to have had such an encounter with someone who was Self Realized. I thought that maybe when she was grown she might remember what had happened and it might somehow change her life for the better.

"No," said Atmananda. "It won't make any difference."

"None at all?" I asked.

"None at all."

We were going up the stairs to the door of the jet. From there, we could see into the window of the waiting room. Pam was standing on a chair next to the window, waving goodbye. Atmananda waved back to her. She kept waving. Atmananda waved goodbye to her again. "You should wave to her, Gerry," he said.

And so I waved to her.



Frank

You study Literature and Computer Science at UC San Diego, but comes lunchtime, you jog home, fix yourself an avocado and swiss cheese omelette and see your housemate and friend Atmananda sitting out on the back lawn, in Samadhi. A bright lattice of golden light swirls all around Atmananda and you just polish off the eggs. You glance over at the cover story in the Los Angeles Times and look back outside. You see Atmananda still, with the Pacific as a backdrop, poised and totally motionless, until you are well into your second dish of ice cream. Atmananda faces the ocean and bows. He stands up and strides over to the house, still glowing.

"Hi, Atmananda."

"Hi, kid. How were classes so far today?"

"Okay, I guess."

Atmananda disappears into the pantry. After you hear some crumpling of paper, Atmananda emerges and sets an impressive array of cookies in front of you on the counter.

You help yourself to a Pecan Crunch, starting to say something like, "We discussed *Canterbury Tales* today," but you switch trains of thought. Atmananda has suddenly started hopping around the kitchen area like a kangaroo. So you grab two mystic mint cookies and hop along right behind him. You stop thinking about school now because you're laughing too hard, or you're too tired.

You used to think that Atmananda hopped because he enjoyed hopping, the way Snoopy of the Peanuts Cartoons dances for the pure joy of dancing. But you learn otherwise: after entering into an advanced state of meditation known as Samadhi, Atmananda becomes so charged with energy that his entire body tingles as though it were on fire. So it is to dissipate this excess power that Atmananda hops.

But you ask, "Atmananda, aren't there other ways to dissipate that kind of energy?"

"Sure there are, kid," he replies, "But I just enjoy hopping around."

Now you have to get back to campus so you're not late for that course on Assembler language. You say goodbye and leave. You are going to hop to the building with the Terak Micro Computers but instead, you walk, just to blend.

Lynn

After the San Francisco and Berkeley Public meditations, I would drive Atmananda back to the Hyatt Regency, where he would spend the night before flying back to San Diego the next day. Often, I would go in with him, to have dinner or to go up to the bar at the top of the hotel, to have a Perrier and look at the view.

At the Public Meditations, Atmananda would expend an incredible amount of energy. He would meditate on each person attending and merge his consciousness with theirs. As he brought light and energy into their being, he would take into himself a lot of their negative energy, problems and doubts. By the time he left the meditation he would be in a lot of physical pain from this exhausting exchange of energies. He had found that eating or involving himself in some vigorous exercise such as running was a good way to dissipate this type of energy and the pain associated with it. This would also bring his consciousness down enough to be able to function in the physical world. Because he would not return to the hotel until midnight, the option of going out for a run was ruled out.

I remember one night we went to the bar at the top of the hotel. The bar was circular and constantly rotating. As it moved you could view the city's buildings and lights below, then your attention was drawn to the bay. You saw the wide, dark expanse with the lights from Oakland twinkling on the other side, off in the distance. By this time of night the bar was very quiet and almost empty. It was designed and furnished in an elegant, slick, modernistic style. We were led to a table against the curved outer glass wall of the building. We sat in silence for a few moments absorbing the stillness of the environment. I felt the world going on around me, yet my contact with it was minimal. I looked at Atmananda, and all I could see was bright golden light exploding in all directions. I could not even see his physical form. I looked around at the other people in the bar, they appeared to be shadows in comparison. Then Atmananda began to speak.

"I felt a few of the people at the meditation tonight were students of mine, from my past lives in Tibet."

Throughout the Spring Public Meditation Series 1982, Atmananda had put a heavy stress on the importance of finding students from his past lives.

"I feel it is very important to gather as many of them as is possible before 1985. The world is beginning to enter into another dark age. After 1985, the Maya will become so thick, it will be difficult to advance spiritually without a strong foundation. This will be my last incarnation in this particular world. When I leave the earth I will return to the world I originally came from."

He said that if he had enough time in this life to meet his former students from Japan, Tibet, India and other places and awaken them to their true identities, then at a later time they would be able to leave the cycle of their earthbound incarnations and join him in another reality.

He said this would be our last chance, that we had tried to attempt this feat of power long ago and had failed. And that we must not let ourselves fail again.

Sara

One clear, moonlit night, early in the spring of 1981, I went on an adventure with two of my wildest friends, Atmananda and Mark. We were housemates at the time, and the three of us seemed to wind up together at certain auspicious moments. On this particular evening we found ourselves buzzing — Atmananda said the power was up. He suggested a trip to Torrey Pines; it would be an excellent opportunity for the two of us to learn to "see."

We rode down together in his little Le Car, and parked at the beach. The three of us walked about half a mile along the beach below the cliffs. The air seemed alive to me — it literally sparkled, and I felt my head spinning and my palms tingling. I was a little nervous — I had no idea what to expect.

We stopped at a point where a big flat rock extended into the water. We climbed up onto it and walked to the end where the waves were crashing against it. Atmananda walked away from Mark and me and turned and meditated on us for a minute. He said that he had opened our third eyes and we could now see what he had to show us. Mark and I looked at each other. We had witnessed Atmananda's light shows before, but always in a larger group. With just the two of us, we weren't quite sure what to expect.

Atmananda pointed towards the cliffs behind us and said, "Watch this." He raised both his hands and I saw the sky above the cliffs rapidly fill with light. Light spilled over the edge of the cliff, and began pouring down the side in rivers. The silhouette that before was fixed against the sky now started rippling and undulating in waves.

When the cliff began to return to its original state I looked back at Atmananda and he was lowering his arms. Then he pointed up to the stars in the sky and I saw lines of light shooting out from his fingertips. They connected with each star, and between the stars, creating a glowing network of lines. The lines connected with the ocean and the cliffs, and with the three of us standing on the rock. Everything was connected by these lines. When Atmananda lowered his arms, they were less visible, but I saw them still there.

We walked back and sat down at the foot of the cliff. Atmananda pointed out to sea. He asked us to look out at the horizon for a while. We stared across the water. At first I saw nothing, but after a minute or so I realized there were giant waves of colored light rolling towards us one after another. They were like large clouds, just above the water, but they behaved like waves. There was a bit of a wind blowing and they seemed to be blown by it.

I looked over at Mark. He was gazing out to sea with half closed eyes. I wondered if he felt as intense as I did. My stomach was tight, and my third eye — the area between my eyebrows — was tingling.

Soon the waves of energy were passing right through us and into the cliff. They seemed to get more and more visible. I started to see forms, like ghosts, moving through the air around us. Surprisingly, I didn't feel nervous any more.

I asked Atmananda about the forms. Although they lacked clear definition, they appeared to be in various shapes and sizes.

He said that they were non-physical beings that existed in other dimensional planes. Atmananda said that Torrey Pines was a place of Power and acted as a gateway between these worlds. Many of the beings would move from one plane to another; he said that Torrey

into a large bird. It was an gold, and shining like the sun, and it grew larger and larger until it filled the whole sky.

I started wondering if it was all my imagination. I found if I squinted and used all my concentration I could see Atmananda standing on the beach with his arms outstretched, but my eyes felt very awkward and uncomfortable. Which view was real? As I was pondering this question, I noticed four

Jane

One cold, foggy late afternoon at the end of December 1980, Atmananda took Mark, Chris and I to the Del Mar beach. The fog was so thick you could not see twenty feet ahead. The beach seemed deserted. The only sound was that of the waves crashing on the shore, sometimes softly,

into this ancient world of fog and warriors. As I walked further, I saw a large orb of white light in front of me. It must have had a fifteen-foot diameter. As I approached it, it dissolved and reappeared further down the beach. I walked further, and again as I approached it, it dissolved and reappeared still further down the beach. This happened a few more times; it was becoming almost comic. Then suddenly it exploded into a shower of light. We moved on, I felt the air thickening. I knew we, in a sense, were completely alone in this timeless and boundless world.

At this point, Atmananda stopped and told us to sit down on some large rocks in the sand. We sat, with about six feet between us, facing the ocean. It was quite strange hearing the waves pounding, yet not being able to see them. Atmananda walked into the fog, we could not see him; a moment or two later he walked back out, he was fifteen feet away from us. He was different in appearance and feeling. He was now pure power, he felt and looked like one of the ancient warriors I had seen on the cliffs above. He stood before us, awesome and powerful.

His body began to shrink, then grow to tremendous heights. He raised his arms and a shower of energy rushed down onto us while lines of power pushed up through my spine. His body turned gold, then it turned into a doorway. It became an absence. I felt myself drawn into it and through it into other realities. I felt myself spinning, floating, turning in various directions, then expanding and contracting. Then gradually, I found myself back on the beach in a peaceful, calm, yet very electric state. Atmananda then stood in front of each of us and meditated on us. I felt myself merge with him. The level of energy in my being began to rise in intensity — I knew he was dissolving my human form. I felt my being had no boundaries and my mind was not able to conceive of myself as a fixed being in a solid body.

Atmananda told us to try to dream ourselves back to this place on the beach, back to this reality. He said these moments were eternal and powerful, that we could enter back into them in our dreams. We then walked back up the beach in silence. My whole being was tingling with energy. Both Mark and Chris were glowing brightly, they did not appear to be solid. They both looked like masses of swirling energy. Atmananda was completely golden, there was no form to him. He was clear energy and power. As I continued down the beach I saw more warriors on the cliffs. As we reached the stairs that led us from the beach up to our car, I noticed it was dark. We must have been there for a few hours, yet it seemed no time had passed. While at the same time, I knew an eternity had passed. Everything was unfamiliar to me, it was as if I was seeing this place for the first time. We stood beside Atmananda, I felt his energy, I scanned Chris and Mark. I realized at that moment we were not of this world of men and women. We were different, neither better nor worse, yet our energy and radiance were not the same as the people of this world.

He stretched his arms out to the sides and I saw him turn into a large bird. It was all gold, and shining like the sun, and it grew larger and larger until it filled the whole sky.



THE OCEAN

Pines was like busy airport with interdimensional traffic constantly coming in and out.

This was a little hard to accept, however I couldn't doubt my own eyes. These forms were not my imagination. I tried blinking several times, and rubbing my eyes, but I could still see those luminous forms appearing and disappearing around us.

Mark pointed out some particularly large shapes which were standing on top of the cliffs. I looked for a while and saw them too. They looked like old Indians and stood there like they owned the place. Atmananda said they were guardians of the doorway between the worlds.

At this point, Atmananda said we'd had enough for one night, and standing up he walked to the water's edge. He turned and faced us, and as we watched he began to disappear. I totally forgot about anything else. He was standing there, the moon directly above, and the next thing I knew I could see right through him to the water.

This only lasted for a few seconds, and then his face appeared, smiling. All I could think of was the Cheshire Cat in "Alice in Wonderland." I still couldn't see his body and then his face disappeared again. Next, his arms appeared — still no body — and then his legs. I could tell he was having fun. He completely disappeared again and then he was all there, grinning.

He stretched his arms out to the sides and I saw him turn

luminous balls of light moving towards us in the sky. I focused my attention on them, and saw they were giant fiery pinwheels which were throwing out thousands of colored sparks. I became totally entranced. They seemed to be performing an intricate dance, lines of golden light like delicate dewy spider's webs formed and reformed from one end of the sky to the other. The stars left their positions and traveled between the lines, and the moon sent out rings of light like waves after a pebble has been thrown into a pool. I lost all awareness of being at the beach.

I don't know how long this lasted. All sense of time had disappeared. Eventually, I looked down at Atmananda and he was just standing on the beach with his hands clasped behind his back. I couldn't tell if his eyes were open or closed, but it didn't matter. I thought perhaps he was in samadhi, an advanced form of meditation. He stood like that for a while, and then slowly started moving again. He walked over to us and asked what we saw. These were the first words he spoke since he had walked to the water's edge. It seemed strange to hear him talk.

We both described what we saw. When Mark talked I remembered more of what I saw, and there were things I spoke of which he did not mention. Atmananda said we were seeing fairly accurately that night, and there was a lot more he did that we did not catch, but we would learn to see more

other times roughly. Nothing seemed real or constant, even the waves broke at strange intervals. The beach that I knew so well looked totally unfamiliar to me.

We walked down the beach in silence, scanning with our subtle vision. We were fog gazing. Atmananda had taught us how to fog gaze before. He said the fog was a powerful elemental and that it could be used to see and enter into other realities. The advanced mystic could manipulate the fog and other elementals in various ways to change levels of awareness. As we continued, Atmananda told us to practice our fog gazing.

I looked up at the cliffs above the beach and there I saw ancient Indian warriors on the rim. They were ancient, wise and powerful. They radiated light. As my attention shifted back down to the beach, I saw different forms or beings of light. I had the sense they were scanning us, as in turn, we scanned them.

I felt acceptance and detachment as we moved down the beach. I no longer felt I was a person. I could not feel my body walking or my mind thinking. I was being absorbed in time.

My mind felt quite at ease, and walking back to the car I could hardly feel my body. As we drove away I took a long look behind us. The beach was glowing with light, and looked very different than it had when we arrived.

At Home With Atmananda

Nanci

One Saturday night about twenty of Atmananda's women students gathered in his living room. He had asked us over because he wanted to make a tape on the subject, "Why Don't More Women Attain Enlightenment," and he felt that having us present would inspire him. Also, we would record a question and answer session at the end of his talk.

Atmananda said to us, "I've got dozens of books about Enlightened men throughout history, and only a couple books on some women saints. Now what's going on here?" He looked around the room, narrowing his eyes as he does when he's "seeing" psychically. "There are lots of beings here for this one," he added. I looked around and saw sparks of light here and there, which is the way I see astral beings

sometimes. Atmananda entered into a meditative state before beginning his talk. We all meditated as we listened.

He discussed the factors that hold women back spiritually, the things that drain our power. He gave a lengthy explanation of the delicate nature of a woman's subtle body and the harmful vibrations that can injure it. One of the greatest sources of injury was the aggressive sexual energy that many men project onto women. It seemed ironic to me as I listened that so many women dress and act in a way that attracts this type of energy. How self-defeating!

After an hour of talking, Atmananda looked at his watch and asked Prema, our sound engineer for the evening, to shut off the recorder. We all sat quietly for a few moments reflecting on his words and ab-

sorbing the energy in the room which had grown increasingly high and luminous. I saw more clearly why I often felt like I lost touch with my deeper self, my source of power, when I was involved in a relationship with a man. I understood why I intuitively felt the need to avoid relationships these past two years that I've been studying with Atmananda. I'm becoming strong and whole again.

Then Atmananda said, "Women think they're supposed to be passive. They deny their power. But don't let men or society tell you what it is to be a woman. Go deep inside your being and you find out what a woman is. Atmananda's face had a soft glow. A very feminine aspect was coming through him.

Lelia voiced the question that had just occurred to me:

"Were you ever self-realized as a woman in a past life?"

"Yes," he replied softly, and leaned over to fiddle with the tape machine.

"Where, when?" came my immediate question.

"Now, come on, I can't tell you everything. You have to discover these things on your own."

On rare occasions Atmananda has told us about some of his previous incarnations as a Self-Realized teacher in India, Japan, and Tibet, usually when prompted by a student who had a past life remembrance of their relationship in former times.

This new revelation touched us all very deeply. I had wondered why Atmananda cared so much about the liberation of women, why it was a major focus of his time

and energy. He had told us recently that we were beginning to see the dawn of the Age of Women.

It was late, about three a.m., time to go home. Atmananda closed his eyes for a moment, filling the room with soft golden light, in a final brief meditation. He swept the room, stopping to meditate on each of us for a few moments. As I looked at him I saw that he was neither man nor woman. His image glowed with a golden radiance. Some part of myself pulled back from the intensity of the experience. Perhaps some day I'll be brave enough to keep going.

"Well, goodnight, and thank you," he said. As usual no one moved, so he had to stand up and leave the room to get us to go.

Lelia

It was late one Sunday evening when I arrived at the Lakshmi offices to finish up a project I had been working on. I was informed that we would be having a women's staff meeting.

Atmananda arrived at the office, and we all assembled in a very beautiful conference room. He began the meeting by asking, "So, what's been happening to you ladies out in the world? What kinds of experiences have you been going through?"

The women responded honestly and openly. As Atmananda is concerned with the spiritual liberation of women, he affords us every opportunity to assess and evaluate the different situations that we face in the world as women. This way we can learn directly what has held women back from attaining enlightenment for centuries, and how we can overcome these obstacles. The discussion was enlightening.

Afterwards Atmananda looked outside and decided to have an outdoor meditation. The sky was very clear and the stars were shining brightly. We formed into a semicircle on a point

overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Atmananda was standing near the edge of the point with his back towards us facing the ocean. As the meditation began, he completely disappeared. White light was emanating from his being, expanding throughout the sky. It fell into patterns of fluid motion and the movement of each molecule was clearly discernible. He raised his arms. As he did this, his subtle body spun out through his head and was hovering above his body. Time was standing still. He shot out his arms towards the ocean and then toward the sky. Huge beams of light extended out of his hands and he moved them through the sky, as though they were beacons of light shining forth from a lighthouse on a cliff. Once again, his body disappeared and there was nothing left but two brilliant focal points of light at the end of what used to be his hands. They were vibrating and flickering and had great force to them. The ocean, sky and everything around me began to disintegrate into the light, as though it were melting. In one sense it was awesome, and in another sense it was very much like

child's play.

The magical show proceeded and the drama continued to unfold. The next act on the bill was a juggling and balancing routine. It was all done with manifestations of light and manipulations of energy. It was as if he was working with a physical entity such as putty or clay. It seemed very solid.

As we stood, mesmerized by this explosive light show, Atmananda rose up very high and his being extended up into the sky. Once there, he "seated a crack or opening. This was something I had never seen him do before. He was creating a doorway and everything around it was different from the rest of the scenery.

After finishing these manipulations, he told us to close our eyes because he was going to come around the circle and touch our foreheads. I closed my eyes and meditated. I felt him drawing closer. His presence was awesome. It wasn't the "man" that I always see sitting in front of me, but rather a totality, an encompassing of all of eternity, focused and concentrated in this one being. Since this event, it has been dif-

ficult for me to see Atmananda as a human being. He simply no longer is.

He approached. He was with the person right next to me. My being was getting bombarded with a forcefield of energy. It was becoming very hard to stand up. He was now in front of me.

I felt his thumb touch my forehead and instantly, as though hit with a bolt of lightning, I was jolted into a new and deeper awareness. I became aware of the movement of each atom of my being. Every part of me woke up and came forward. Neither Atmananda nor myself had a form any longer. He had hurled me into some deeper "inner" universe. I was unsteady, and found it very difficult to keep my balance. Then he put his entire hand on my forehead. He channeled a river of light through my entire being. He removed his hand, but I could still feel it on my forehead as though he had never taken it away.

I opened my eyes. I felt like I was 10 feet tall. There seemed to be no ground under my feet. I felt different and the world in which I live has never been the same.

Francis

On a clear Sunday afternoon, in the summer of '82, while we were painting a fence, Atmananda asked us to gather on his lawn for a meditation. It was around 4 o'clock and we had been painting for just a few hours.

When we all sat on the grass, forming a half circle, Atmananda strode casually toward the center of the circle and sat down in a half-lotus position facing us. He was wearing blue shorts and a blue sports shirt. We were sitting in a mini amphitheater with trees and low bushes all around. It gave me the feeling that we were in the middle of a forest.

After the 15 of us made ourselves comfortable on the grass, Atmananda started to turn his head slowly from side to side and glanced at each of us. There was a bright grin on his face.

"So, we're going to start a major spiritual movement, huh?" Atmananda broke the silence with laughter. We chuckled, not knowing what else to do.

"And you guys are supposed to be the leaders of a major spiritual group?"

Looking over at us again, Atmananda began a series of comical gestures, laughing, bending over, covering his mouth with one hand and beating his thigh with the other.

Seeing his expression, we all convulsed with laughter.

"The Infinite has a true sense of humor," Atmananda continued. "Here we are, trying to start a spiritual organization and some of you can't even get through the day."

For months now, Atmananda had been trying to get us to change our various daily habits so that our physical lives would be more together and efficient.

"In order to enter into supraconscious states of awareness, your physical lives must be absolutely tight and together." Atmananda had told us this many times, nevertheless our lives were still basically untidy and sloppy.

After bending over and chuckling some more, Atmananda looked up at the sky and shrugging his shoulders said, "Why me?"

His helpless expression was so hilarious that we all started to laugh again.

"However," Atmananda said, suddenly changing his tone. "The Goddesses have decided to show they can succeed in bringing light into this world even with a spiritual teacher who is as absurd as I am, and a group such as we see here."

This time we just nodded our heads in smiling agreement.

Atmananda then began to tell us a series of very funny and absurd parables about freeways, buses and roadrunners. The parables were so ridiculous that soon we were all rolling on the ground with laughter.

By the time Atmananda finished his parables, the sun had reached the edge of the trees that surrounded us. It was near sunset. Atmananda, looking at his watch, said, in an even voice, "I have kept you all entertained until this moment. It's now exactly 4 o'clock and the energy of the world is starting to improve. Let's meditate for a while." After these words, Atmananda sat up straight and closed his eyes.

While sitting with my back straight and gazing at Atmananda, the scenery around him began to change. The motionless image of Atmananda became opaque and bright. The surrounding trees

and bushes all began to glow with a bright greenish fluorescent color. Everything within my sight was soon outlined in this light. A feeling of warmth developed around the center of my chest. I could hear noises from the neighbors and the street, but these sounds seemed to come from a far-away place. The world had become a two-dimensional painting and I felt that I could take a knife and cut through it.

As our meditation deepened the world dissolved. I was looking at a continuous medium of shifting white light, like the image one would see on the surface of a rippling lake during sunset. Atmananda's face had turned into a glob of golden light and it became difficult to distinguish him from everything around. I felt a very powerful sensation of being pulled in Atmananda's direction, as if I were falling into the opposite of a black hole. Overwhelmed by a sensation of stillness, my body became still and I began to no longer feel it.

It was difficult to judge how much time had passed during the meditation, but when Atmananda folded his hands and bowed, indicating the end of meditation, I noticed that the sky was darker.

"This is what it's like when I meditate by myself," Atmananda said.

"This is what Eternity is like, perfect silence, perfect stillness," he continued. "You see, I never understand why people always want powers and all that stuff. I was never interested in those things. All I ever wanted was to listen to the silence of Eternity."

We sat around in silence for a while. The sun had set behind the trees now, but the world was still luminous and shiny.

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