

Dear IYNAUS Members,

We hope that many of you who use Facebook have been able to read several of the moving stories that have been posted there about the ceremonies in Pune yesterday. For those of you who are not on Facebook we would like to provide accounts we have received from John Hayden, who is Executive Director of IYISF, and Victoria Austin, who is a senior teacher there. Both are in Pune currently.

John writes, "This morning there was Darshan at the Institute Residence from about 8:30 AM onward to 2:00 PM. I arrived at the Institute at about 9:00 and the Iyengar family was allowing people to pass through the apartment and view Guruji in his passing. He was beautiful and powerful. Geetaji and Prashantji were both strongly present, Prashant sitting on the floor in the room with Guruji for the entire time. There was a steady stream of students, locals, and teachers throughout the morning and into the afternoon." John adds that "by 12:30 PM today they closed the road to the Institute as there were, by some reports, a thousand people in the vicinity."

Victoria writes, "the family opened the house to hundreds or even thousands of people one by one. The women were sitting in the living room, mostly in white, and Guruji's body had been laid out in the smaller ground floor room, lavishly covered with flower garlands. Prashant was sitting at his feet; wearing lungi and thread, a symbol painted in white on his forehead. One by one we came in and did our pranams, then sat or stood quietly in the garden. While we were there, TV reporters spoke with Geetaji. Pandu pulled me aside to speak with some other media representatives, along with other people who had been coming for many years. Mostly they wanted to hear about Guruji's impact on practitioners in our home countries. All of this took about 3 hours, then there was Vedic chanting for an hour, finally a last quick look with bigger crowds this time. The men bore Guruji's body to a stretcher that had been made of freshly cut bamboo, lashed together, padded with straw, and covered with a sheet. Everyone chanted mantras as the pallbearers made their way to an ambulance."

John continues, "At about 2:30 PM Pune time today 8/20, Guruji's body was taken to the cremation facility. There was a beautiful ceremony, ritual and chanting, and Guruji's body was cremated. I observed the entire ceremony."

Victoria notes, "we reconvened at the cremation grounds, where they had set up an open pit with stacks of sandalwood and cow patties as kindling. The kindling and wood, along with the flowers from the garlands, got passed around so that people could touch them and hand them back with good wishes to go into the pit. Chanting, lighting, "everyone back!" while the flames got bigger. Someone loaded Prashant up with a large water vessel that had holes drilled into it, and he circled the pit, with the water pouring over him and the edges of the pit. Then with a very final sounding clunk they broke the pot."

Victoria's final observation about the ceremonies is that "I think Guruji would have enjoyed it, if he could have seen and heard this all."

John notes that “The Institute has posted a notice that they will remain closed through 9/2. I understand that this coincides with a Vedic Ritual of 13 days of mourning.”

We have also just heard from Cathy Rogers Evans, also in Pune, that things feel quiet in Pune today, Thursday. There are posters of Guruji to be seen around the city, and wonderful photos in the India Times. Cathy tells us that during an interview at the last rites, Geetaji observed: “Like rain, he touched all of us equally.”

We know that many of you have been, or will soon be participating in local gatherings commemorating Guruji. We will be writing you again shortly regarding plans for a way for all of us across the country to commemorate together.

In grateful memory of Guruji’s life,

Michael Lucey, Vice President and President Elect