

## *Remembering Mukunda Tom Stiles*

*2/24/1949 - 2/18/2014*



Mukunda Stiles had a profound connection to the Divine Mother. Through her radiance, he touched every person he came in contact with - be it his mother, a student seeking his guidance, or a stranger on the street. He met each one right where they were in the moment, and by listening completely, without judgment and without attachment, each one felt loved, honored and respected. When they parted, they were transformed.

Mukunda's spiritual journey started when he was enrolled at West Point Military Academy. That's when he had his first awakening that changed the course of his life. He decided to dedicate himself to the yogic path, teaching and being of service.

Mukunda was deeply impacted throughout his life by the guidance of his guru Baba Muktananda. The first time they met, Muktananda looked him straight in the eyes and initiated him into Shakípat. Spirit was ignited within and his life was never the same. It was Baba Muktananda who later gave him his name, which means 'compassionate liberator'. Swami Prakashananda became his spiritual teacher conveying the Divine Mother's subtle and profound experiences to Mukunda. That presence resonated deep within and the formless Mother would reveal herself to him, up to the very last breath he took.

In his twenties, Mukunda's spiritual focus was on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, the subject of his college thesis. For the next 30 years he continued to study these

sutras, seeing the world more deeply through the eyes of Patanjali. That darshan led to experiences and insights on how yoga could alleviate suffering and lead to transformation in all yogic body layers. In 2003 he published his first book, a poetic Bhakti rendition of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Mukunda's ongoing contemplation on Patanjali's darshan provided the foundation for his development of Structural Yoga Therapy (SYT) – the practice and his second book. He was invited to conduct workshops around the world, training hundreds of future structural yoga therapists in America, Europe, and Asia.

Mukunda was considered internationally to be a Master Yogi. He was deeply respected and revered by seekers, colleagues and swamis from diverse lineages. He stood out in their view because to him lineage was not what mattered. Mukunda never pushed his beliefs or convictions. He was here to serve, share his teachings, experience and insights. He embraced all.

Mukunda studied with renowned teachers in Yoga and Ayurveda, training with Indra Devi, B. K. S. Iyengar, Rama Jyoti Vernon, Dr. Vasant Lad, David Frawley and Robert Svoboda. He was the first graduate of the Institute for Yoga Teacher Education, the first professional yoga school, in 1976. In 1995 he and Rama Jyoti Vernon co-founded the American Yoga College. Mukunda was on the staff of the Siddha Yoga ashram in Boston (SYDA), the Rocky Mountain Institute for Yoga and Ayurveda and the International Ayurvedic Institute (IAI). He also taught at the Mind, Body Medical Institute headed by Herbert Bensen, MD and Joan Borysenko.

Mukunda wrote two other books: *Ayurvedic Yoga Therapy* and *Tantra Yoga Secrets*. Through his writing he shared his insights and experiences into the secrets of the Yoga, Tantra and Ayurveda trilogy. With each successive book his teachings deepened, taking seekers to unexpected levels of knowing, revealing the layers of the koshas. Mukunda was the living embodiment of these teachings.

Baba Muktananda considered *The Supreme Yoga of Vasistha* to be the highest spiritual text to help seekers toward enlightenment. This text became daily nourishment for Mukunda and his consort and wife Chinnamasta. The profound darshan of Vasistha would come alive to them, leading to spontaneously arising bliss.

The first time Mukunda looked Chinnamasta in the eyes he said, "Finally you have come." They spontaneously merged as if they had always been One. Vasistha became their teacher, giving them spiritual food to share, as they became each other's teachers.

The last five years of Mukunda's life were the most fulfilling, both worldly and spiritually, the most complete, living a consort relationship and effortlessly serving the community together with his Devi. As asked, Chinnamasta will share his teachings and legacy with those who are willing to step into profound transformation, just as they had done teaching together sitting side-by-side.

Chinnamasta held her Beloved Deva in her arms in their home, surrounding him in unconditional love beyond his last breath on February 18th. He was complete.

Om Tat Sat