

Maharajji's Teachings: About Attachment

MAHARAJJI GAVE NO formal teachings. Yet his every manifestation—every word, glance, gesture, movement—taught those of us who were open to him in ways that often bypassed our intellect and were heard directly by our hearts.

Many topics came up in Maharajji's dealings with his devotees: truth; money and poverty; anger; drugs; sex, family, and marriage; pilgrimages, rituals, saints, and sadhana; service and surrender; and, of course, love. In Maharajji's infiniteness we found messages about all these matters—messages to guide us, not always without confusion, on our journey back home to God.

Because Maharajji, in his mirrorlike way, responded from moment to moment to those around him and to their unique karmic predicaments, someone seeking a general teaching about a topic through a collection of his utterances and the stories about him would undoubtedly be confused. At one moment he would say one thing and a moment later the reverse.

But each person was on a different stage of the journey and thus needed a different teaching. And in this river of contradiction that flowed from him, in these teachings that are no teachings, there is more profound guidance than a simplistic "do this" and "do that." There is the continuous reminder of the existence of the spirit—and that what appears to us in this world is not as it seems.

To see, to hear, even to know about such a being who is "in the world but not of the world" is more than teaching; it is grace.

Maharajji was talking in a room with only a few people, and to one man the talk appeared meaningless. He said, "Babaji, you should give instructions and lessons to people." Maharajji didn't answer. "Sometimes," the man went on, "give us answers and teach us something." Again Maharajji didn't answer him. The man repeated his statement a third time.

Obviously irritated, Maharajji shouted, "What are the instructions? What is this? What are the lessons? This is all foolishness! Lessons!" Turning to the men standing there—one was a goldsmith, one a shopkeeper, one a clerk, and one a teacher—Maharajji asked each how he would pass the following day. Each man gave a similar reply, saying that he would go to work as usual, would pass the day in his habitual manner. Maharajji said, "So many people are here and they'll all do what they have to do tomorrow and they have all preplanned it. What's the use of giving a particular teaching? You'll do what you want. So what are teachings? There is no use forcing anything on anybody. No matter what I say, you'll still do what you want to do. Yet you want me to dictate something. These teachings have got no meaning. There is no use in teaching people. It is the Almighty who teaches everybody—they all come well taught. There is one Supreme Teacher and he has taught everybody. Teachings are nothing. One who poses as a teacher does so only to satisfy his own ego."

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In 1970 or 1971, K complained, "Maharajji, I have been with you all this time and I haven't learned anything."

Maharajji replied, "All right, I'll tell you." But he always avoided telling him.

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Once a Mother came to Maharajji and said, "Maharajji, you always talk about worldly things—how many children, how much education, which job, how much money. Why don't you teach us about Brahm [the Formless]?"

Maharajji said, "Okay, I'll teach you." The Mother went off to do her work at Kainchi, and when it was time for the last bus to Nainital she was making her pranams and was going to the bus. Maharajji asked her, "Now you are going?"

She said, "Yes, I have to attend to my family, prepare meals and all."

Maharajji said, "Listen, don't go just now. I'll teach you about Brahm. You sit here." She insisted she had to go home and look after her family. He

said, "No, no. I'll teach you about Brahm. You sit here. Don't go home today."

"How is it possible? I must go."

"But first you wanted Brahm, and now you ask how it is possible?"

After she left, he said to me, "Look at her. First she was talking about Brahm and now she is thinking about home. One person cannot do two things at one time. Brahm is not a thing, a toy that you can play with. You have to sacrifice something."

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Maharajji always allowed people to do what they wanted, and would seldom tell anyone not to smoke or drink. He never lectured a person but would arrange the circumstances whereby he or she would want to give up a habit.

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When asked about the process of devotees giving up their desires, Maharajji would say, "When the time is right."

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In compassion for the smoking habit of one devotee, Maharajji would stop the car while they were traveling on the pretext of needing a drink or to urinate, thus letting the devotee have time to smoke.

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M had a betel (leaf chewed for digestive purposes) habit but would chew only the finest quality. Once, when I was going to Nainital, M gave me two rupees for betel, and Maharajji found out about it. The next morning a lady brought betel for prasad to Maharajji (not a frequent occurrence). "What's this?" Maharajji asked. "Oh, betel. M! Here is your betel!" And every day during M's stay at Kainchi, a different person would bring fresh betel as prasad. Maharajji had never ordered it, but in its natural course it was brought.

On M's final day he went into Maharajji's room and found him waving a flower, which M thought Maharajji would give him for his wife. M invited Maharajji to come to his home on the plains, and Maharajji said he'd come in November and bring all the Westerners. "Where will they stay?" asked Maharajji. "How will you arrange for their food?" And M replied, "They'll cook their own." With tears in his eyes, Maharajji sent M away, without giving him the flower or the now-customary betel. A few moments

later, someone came in the room with sweet betel. Maharajji called M back: "M, here's your betel for your journey." Then Maharajji gave him sweets, fruit, and the flower for his wife as well.

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Regarding one devotee's habit of drinking liquor, Maharajji commented, "What friends do is all right."

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One day in Vrindaban, Dada was so busy serving that he could not find a moment free to sneak a smoke. Maharajji turned to him and said, "You go and take your two minutes and finish," and made as if he were smoking.

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Maharajji said of people who had bad habits, such as smoking, drinking, or even eating fish, eggs, or meat, "They have their habits. They enjoy them. Why should I stop them?"

NONATTACHMENT FOR sense-objects is liberation; love for sense-objects is bondage. Such verily is knowledge. Now do as you please." This quotation from an ancient Hindu text, the Ashtavakra Gita (XV:3), most succinctly conveys Maharajji's teachings about attachment. He showed in his own life that what pleased him was to have nothing to be attached to and thus be free to be with God. In his earlier years he had wandered about wearing only one cloth, carrying a piece of broken clay pot that served both as a water pot and an eating dish. In later years he still wore only a simple dhoti, but with a blanket, and now and then an undershirt or sweater or socks in the freezing mountain nights. The rooms in which he stayed were a stark reminder of nonattachment. There was only the tucket and a water pot. Nothing else.

He reminded us to be unattached to things, to people, to our work, and even to righteousness. Some he goaded to more and more renunciation, while others he counseled to be patient and gentle in the process of becoming free.

MAHARAJJI QUOTED: "Aye thei Hari bhajan koo, oothan lage kapas [I had come to realize God and sing his praises, but as soon as I came out of the womb I began collecting cotton fruit (the fruit that when ripe and good-looking distintegrates at the touch)]."

ATTACHMENT IS THE STRONGEST BLOCK
TO REALIZATION.

IF YOU DESIRE A MANGO AT THE MOMENT
OF DEATH, YOU'LL BE BORN AN INSECT.
IF YOU EVEN DESIRE THE NEXT BREATH,
YOU WILL TAKE BIRTH AGAIN.

HE QUOTED, "IF THE CLAY IN A POT IS
UNBAKED, THEN WHEN THE POT BREAKS, THE
CLAY IS REUSED. BUT IF THE POT IS BAKED,
THEN WHEN IT BREAKS, IT IS THROWN AWAY."

LUST, GREED, ANGER, ATTACHMENT—
THESE ARE ALL PATHS TO HELL.

IF YOU DO NOT MAKE IT EMPTY,
HOW WILL YOU FILL IT UP AGAIN?

IF YOU WANT TO SEE GOD, KILL DESIRES.
DESIRES ARE IN THE MIND. WHEN YOU
HAVE A DESIRE FOR SOMETHING, DON'T
ACT ON IT AND IT WILL GO AWAY. IF
YOU DESIRE TO DRINK THIS CUP OF TEA,
DON'T, AND THE DESIRE FOR IT WILL
FALL AWAY.

SAINTS AND BIRDS DON'T COLLECT. SAINTS
GIVE AWAY WHAT THEY HAVE.

HE CHIDED: "THIS WORLD IS ALL ATTACHMENT.
YET YOU GET WORRIED BECAUSE YOU ARE
ATTACHED."

Maharajji said to Dada, who was the head of a family of devotees, "You have become entirely mine. What is family to you? You are a fakir. You need only two chapattis a day and those I will give you. What is attachment for the saints and mahatmas?" The family became upset at this, but Maharajji said that if Dada realized the truth of what he said, then there was no need for him to leave them.

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Maharajji said to a devotee, "Why are you attached to this cat? I keep telling you to give up all attachments and still you are attaching yourself to a cat!"

MARRIAGE IS MORE ATTACHMENT. YOU
NEED MORE DEVOTION AND DISCIPLINE
TO HAVE UNION WITH GOD WHEN
YOU ARE MARRIED.

I was sometimes busy tending to the orchard. One day Maharajji said, "Well, that orchard belongs to me. You work like a manager. It is my property. A manager has no attachment. The moment he is turned out from a place, he will just go. So you live like a manager."

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Maharajji told me the following story: "Samarth Guru Ram Das was the guru to the king and lived in a small mud hut next to the palace. One day the king came out of the palace and did obeisance to the guru. Then the king handed him a scroll in which he had bequeathed all his kingdom to the guru. The guru took the scroll, read it, accepted it, and then said to the king, "Now you run it for me!" (R.D.)

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Maharajji asked one old devotee with a big pocket watch why he was so attached to it. The devotee threw the watch against a stone and broke it.

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Once a sadhu offered me some land that he had, so that I could have an ashram for fellow Westerners. I asked Maharajji about it. He said, "He wants to give you his attachment. It's not a pure gift. If it were pure he'd just give it to you instead of talking about it." (R.D.)

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He kept admonishing me: "Ram Dass, give up attachments." I often tried to put the onus on him by replying, "It's all your grace." But he was reminding me that I had to make the effort, for he just kept repeating, "Give up attachments. You should have no ashrams. No attachments of any kind." (R.D.)

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Once Maharajji was reiterating to me for the hundredth time that I should give up attachments. I told him that another teacher had told me the same thing. "Does he have desires?" asked Maharajji.

"Yes, I think he still does," I replied.

"Then how can he free you of desire?" (R.D.)

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Kali Babu told Maharajji of a utensil made of various metals that was good for keeping water and was supposed to make you healthy. Maharajji hounded him until he finally had such a utensil made. Maharajji used it all day, drinking water. Then he told Kali Babu to lock it up overnight and that he would use it again the next day. Suddenly Maharajji said, "What? Am I getting attached? Give it away."

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One devotee said, "Was he involved with worldly matters? I don't think he had attachment for anything or anybody. He was just a mirror of your attachments."

I AM IN THE WORLD BUT NOT CONCERNED
WITH THE WORLD. I AM GOING THROUGH
THE MARKETPLACE, BUT NOT AS A PURCHASER.

—MAHARAJJI QUOTING KABIR

Maharajji was totally unattached. From the moment he left Hanuman Garh temple he never repeated its name; from the moment he left Kainchi temple he never turned to look back. "When I have left, I've left," he used to say.

TEMPLES ARE BUT PILES OF STONES.

ATTACHMENT HOLDS YOU BACK.

I DON'T WANT ANYTHING. I EXIST
ONLY TO SERVE OTHERS.

I had purchased a mohair blanket for Maharajji in Australia and was very excited about giving it to him. When the day for the presentation came, a group of us were ushered into the small room we humorously called his "office" and we knelt before him. Somewhat pridefully I placed the blanket on the tucket next to him, and we all waited for whatever lila would follow. It would be fun to watch him put it on and maybe he'd give us his old blanket, or . . . There were a thousand maybes. But none of our speculations prepared us for his actions. First he ignored the blanket, then reached down and with three fingers picked it up as if it were a dead animal. He brought the blanket across in front of him and gave it to a woman in our group who had come to meet Maharajji for the first time. Then he turned to me and said, "Was that the right thing to do?" We were all stunned.

It took me a moment to reorient, to appreciate what he had just done. Then I said, "Perfect." (R.D.)

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One devotee said that Maharajji did not need anything and didn't like to receive gifts.

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Two long-time devotees were told that they would be able to find Maharajji at a certain temple on the banks of the Ganga, so they went there immediately and found him. He acted as if he'd never seen them before. A few minutes later Maharajji suddenly got up and said, "Let's go! Let's go!" The three of them ran until they found a tonga (horse carriage), which they boarded and continued on their way. While they were riding along, the two devotees asked

Maharajji why he had run off so quickly. "Don't you know?" he replied. "That rich lady is coming to see me. She has an English blanket that she wants to give me, but I don't want it." Just then a limousine passed them by, going in the opposite direction. Maharajji laughed and said, "Look! There she goes now!"

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As a special gift for a holiday, a devotee worked long and hard making very beautiful garlands out of silks and satins, made to resemble flowers and leaves. When he presented them to Maharajji he tried to slip one garland over his head but Maharajji adamantly refused to allow this. He said, "Take these away. They were made for the world to admire."

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One devotee observed that it was not what you gave Maharajji but the spirit with which you gave it. He could delight for a long time in something so simple as a leaf, if you gave it to him from your heart.

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Late one night Maharajji gave me this big Kashmiri apple. I had missed supper for some reason that night and I was hungry. As I was walking up the trail I thought about eating the apple. Apples are juicy and clean, and anything clean in India is important. I also thought about how there are no stones in an apple (something you can appreciate after you have eaten rice with stones in it). Just the fact that something can be born without a stone in it—there's a nice quality to it, kind of friendly.

When I finally reached the kuti the desire had become manifest, something really tangible. We tend to think that a desire is somehow much subtler than a table, but at that time it struck me that desire was the most real thing in my universe. Suddenly I understood about the process of bringing what's called *prasad*, or a gift, to a saint. In the Gita it is said that if you offer only a flower in the heart of devotion it's like the purest gift you can give. At that moment I wanted to offer the desire as my *prasad*.

I saved the apple, and the next day, because I came to the temple earlier than most people, I put my apple on the tucket. In the course of the morning,

before Maharajji came out, many people arrived and soon the apple was buried under other fruit, flowers, sweets, and so forth. But I kept my eye on the apple. About a half hour later Maharajji came out, shuffled through all these offerings, pulled out my apple, and flipped it to me.

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Once I was feeling damned frustrated and I told Maharajji that I didn't want to remain in the world, that I just wanted to be a sanyasi (renunciate). "You can't be a sanyasi just now. Look at these people here," Maharajji said, indicating the Westerners sitting all around. "These devotees here have enjoyed the material life up to the limit—and you haven't yet. If you became a sanyasi now it will be very difficult for you. You should first taste these things, and then you can leave them."

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I was just saying to Maharajji that this maya (worldly illusion) is very difficult to transcend. My father was a devoted bhakta all his life and still he would worry about the health and welfare of his children. So I said to Maharajji, "This maya is very hard to overcome."

Maharajji said four things to me: "Maya? Kya hai? Kahan hai? Nahin hai [Maya? What is it? Where is it? It is not]!" That was all. Such a peculiar day that was.

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU ARE MARRIED
OR NOT, IT ONLY MATTERS HOW MUCH YOU
LOVE GOD.

Maharajji would sit out in the back in his chair, looking up at the hills, saying, "Look at those trees on that mountain. Who waters them? Who takes care of them? Those are the assurance that God exists for people. Those are what people can look to, to know about God."

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Maharajji had no inhibitions. He would sit sweating in the dirt. "It's Mother Earth I'm sitting on and I'm made of earth," he would say. "Every land is God's."

IT'S BETTER TO SEE GOD IN EVERYTHING
THAN TO TRY TO FIGURE IT OUT.

IF YOU HAVE A TOOTHACHE, YOU DO WHAT
YOU DO, BUT THE MIND REMAINS ON
THE TOOTH.

A devotee asked, "How can I be unattached if I have a baby?" and Maharajji replied: "Just have faith in God and remember God and it will happen gradually and you will be living unattached like the lotus flower."

IF YOU ARE FREE OF ATTACHMENT, YOU
WILL LEAD A SIMPLE LIFE IN A SIMPLE
ENVIRONMENT.

Once Maharajji called a young Western devotee into the room with a local sadhu. The girl was dressed in a nice sari and was wearing jewelry, the sadhu, in typical sadhu dress. Maharajji pointed to the Westerner and said, "She's a sadhu."

The sadhu objected: "How can she be a sadhu? See how she is dressed."

Maharajji rebuked him and said, "She doesn't care for any of these things. It doesn't matter to her whether she wears silk or rags. She will even wear diamonds. She is not attached to these things. She has no lust, greed, anger, or attachment. She will wander about all her life. She has no home in the universe."

Then he sent the girl out of the room.

GOD WILL GIVE YOU EVERYTHING YOU
NEED FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT.
HOLD ON TO NOTHING.

LOVE THE POOR. SERVE THEM. GIVE
EVERYTHING TO THE POOR, EVEN YOUR
CLOTHING. GIVE IT ALL AWAY. JESUS
GAVE AWAY ALL, INCLUDING HIS BODY.