

About Drugs

IN INDIA THERE is a long tradition of the use of charas. Smoked in a chillum and mixed with tobacco, charas is used extensively by a large percentage of the millions of wandering sadhus. For those who are followers of the god Shiva, smoking is part of the religious ritual. For others of a devotional bent, it is used to accentuate the emotional fervor of the devotional practices.

In his earlier years, when Maharajji was also a wandering sadhu, he undoubtedly sat in the jungle around many a fire with other sadhus and may or may not have used charas himself. And in his later years, although he himself did not use such things, he was supportive of those who did. In many instances he helped sadhus to obtain charas or arsenic (another substance used, in tiny doses, by sadhus). He took a dim view, however, toward the use of hashish by householders (i.e., those with families), often directing at them a stream of abuse, or at least kidding and constant prodding about the matter. He said that it made them forget their responsibilities. For the Westerners he generally discouraged the use of such drugs as hashish and opium as means for altering consciousness ("Food is the best intoxicant," "love is the best medicine").

However, to some of the Westerners who were genuinely pursuing the renunciate life of the wandering sadhu and who were habituated to smoking hashish for devotional practices, he did not discourage its use.

While charas was a product native to India, LSD was not. Because so many Westerners had experienced the awakening of the spirit through ingesting LSD, it was inevitable that Maharajji and LSD would someday meet. And this meeting produced, over a six-year period, much lila.

Maharajji knew I smoked—he knows everything. But Maharajji never told me to quit this habit, never said it was bad, never said anything about it.

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Sometimes other babas and I would be in my room below the temple, smoking chillums. If Maharajji would come by, he would never come into the room when we were smoking. Sometimes he'd pass by the doorway and mutter loudly to whomever was with him, "Let those sons-of-bitches [literally, "sons-in-law"] be!" and pass on by.

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Maharajji would even obtain charas for me. If a man came to Maharajji for darshan, Maharajji would ask him to hand over to me whatever charas he had. Maharajji filled many people's desires in this way. Whether it was charas, money, sweets—whatever they wanted—Maharajji would be the agent to procure it for them.

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Oftentimes at Kainchi, if a sadhu who was a chillum-baba came for darshan, Maharajji would send him to the back of the ashram to smoke with me.

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I have seen Maharajji give hashish to people with his own hands.

WHEN PEOPLE SMOKE HASHISH TOGETHER
THEY FORGET EVERYTHING—FAMILY, DUTY—
AND THEY THINK THAT ANOTHER PERSON IS
THEIR CLOSEST BROTHER.

HASHISH IS BAD FOR THE HEALTH. IT GIVES
YOU LUST, ANGER, GREED, AND ATTACHMENT.
IT IS BAD FOR THE HEART AND BREATH.

YOU SHOULD SMOKE HASHISH LIKE LORD
SHIVA, ONLY TO BE WITH GOD. SMOKING
HASHISH IS NOT NECESSARY. IT DOES
YOU NO GOOD TO SMOKE. IT ONLY LASTS
A SHORT WHILE AND IT ISN'T GOOD FOR
THE HEART. DEVOTION TO GOD IS AN
ADDICTION THAT LASTS ALL THE TIME.

In his earlier days, Maharajji frequently visited a certain sadhu at his dhuni (open fire) outside the city of Aligarh. This sadhu habitually smoked charas and ganja (marijuana), along with any other intoxicant he could find. One day he showed Maharajji a new drug that he said gave the most intense and blissful intoxication. Offering some to Maharajji, he warned that only the smallest amount was needed, but Maharajji took the whole piece and swallowed it all. Moments later Maharajji fell unconscious and collapsed. The sadhu knew the remedy for overdose—four kilos of milk—and when this was brought from the bazaar he poured it down Maharajji's throat. Maharajji revived and sat up. Seeing the sadhu seated across from him, Maharajji slugged him in a moment of fury. "You tried to kill me! He poisoned me! Hap! Wicked person," he shouted as he ran away.

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A sadhu named N Baba, who usually lived beyond Bageshwar on the glacier side, considered Maharajji to be his guru and would sometimes visit him. Maharajji would offer him a place on his bed, but the sadhu always sat on the floor. The sadhu ate arsenic to keep out the cold. Five or six years earlier, the baba had come for a visit and Maharajji asked him, "N, what do

you eat?" and the sadhu replied that he ate arsenic. Maharajji said, "Let's see." The sadhu took out of his bag enough to kill two people. Maharajji grabbed it and ate the whole thing. Everyone was shocked, but Maharajji only asked for a glass of milk. He showed no effects.

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One day Maharajji was walking alone along the Ganges. He encountered some sadhus in their small kutis there. They asked him who he was, where he stayed, what and where he ate. Maharajji explained that he was just a wanderer with no home, that he stayed where he could and ate when food was available. They asked him to come stay with them a while. "Will you feed me?" he asked. They told him of course they would, so he sat with them a while. A sadhu came along and began preparing a chillum for everyone. It was passed around, and when it was offered to Maharajji he became very abusive, calling them bums and fakes and accusing them of trying to ruin him and of ruining themselves. Then he stormed away. Shortly afterward another sadhu came into the kuti and asked them if they hadn't been able to recognize Maharajji. What kind of sadhus were they if they couldn't even recognize a siddha mahatma (highest saint) who visits them personally. They mumbled, "How could we recognize him, the way he behaved!"

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Some of the Westerners had another kind of drug karma, for they had been involved in smuggling hashish. When Maharajji found this out, he embroiled them in a complex smuggling operation that necessitated their being away from the temple and thus from his presence for long periods of time.

The proceeds from this venture were to be used for charitable purposes. Offering now to God the results of what they had done previously for personal gain was a powerful lesson, which they appreciated. However, they were very unhappy at being banished from the gatherings around Maharajji.

That their guru should be countenancing and even encouraging such activities led them into deep reconsiderations of their own models of good and evil. His involvement also led to a bravado in the operation for they felt that with his protection they could not get caught. However, when it occurred to them that it was not necessarily Maharajji's way to interfere with karma, and that it might be

their karma to go to jail, the unique exhilaration was lost. By the time they had finished the project they had had more than enough of these illicit activities.

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In 1967 when I first came to India, I brought with me a supply of LSD, hoping to find someone who might understand more about these substances than we did in the West. When I had met Maharajji, after some days the thought had crossed my mind that he would be a perfect person to ask. The next day after having that thought, I was called to him and he asked me immediately, "Do you have a question?"

Of course, being before him was such a powerful experience that I had completely forgotten the question I had had in my mind the night before. So I looked stupid and said, "No, Maharajji, I have no question."

He appeared irritated and said, "Where is the medicine?"

I was confused but Bhagavan Das's suggested, "Maybe he means the LSD." I asked and Maharajji nodded. The bottle of LSD was in the car and I was sent to fetch it.

When I returned I emptied the vial of pills into my hand. In addition to the LSD there were a number of other pills for this and that—diarrhea, fever, a sleeping pill, and so forth. He asked about each of these.

He asked if they gave powers. I didn't understand at the time and thought that by "powers" perhaps he meant physical strength. I said, "No." Later, of course, I came to understand that the word he had used, "siddhis," means psychic powers. Then he held out his hand for the LSD. I put one pill on his palm. Each of these pills was about three hundred micrograms of very pure LSD—a solid dose for an adult. He beckoned for more, so I put a second pill in his hand—six hundred micrograms. Again he beckoned and I added yet another, making the total dosage nine hundred micrograms—certainly not a dose for beginners. Then he threw all the pills into his mouth. My reaction was one of shock mixed with the fascination of a social scientist eager to see what would happen.

He allowed me to stay for an hour—and nothing happened. Nothing whatsoever. He just laughed at me.

The whole thing had happened very fast and unexpectedly. When I returned to the United States in 1968 I told many people about this acid feat. But there had remained in me a gnawing doubt that perhaps he had been putting me on

and had thrown the pills over his shoulder or palmed them, because I hadn't actually seen them go into his mouth.

Three years later, when I was back in India, he asked me one day, "Did you give me medicine when you were in India last time?"

"Yes."

"Did I take it?" he asked. (Ah, there was my doubt made manifest!)

"I think you did."

"What happened?"

"Nothing."

"Oh! Jao!" and he sent me off for the evening.

The next morning I was called over to the porch in front of his room, where he sat in the mornings on a tucket. He asked, "Have you got any more of that medicine?"

It just so happened that I was still carrying a small supply of LSD for "just-in-case," and this was obviously it. "Yes."

"Get it," he said. So I did. In the bottle were five pills of three hundred micrograms each. One of the pills was broken. I placed them on my palm and held them out to him. He took the four unbroken pills. Then, one by one, very obviously and very deliberately, he placed each one in his mouth and swallowed it—another unspoken thought of mine now answered.

As soon as he had swallowed the last one, he asked, "Can I take water?"

"Yes."

"Hot or cold?"

"It doesn't matter."

He started yelling for water and drank a cup when it was brought.

Then he asked, "How long will it take to act?"

"Anywhere from twenty minutes to an hour."

He called for an older man, a long-time devotee who had a watch, and Maharajji held the man's wrist, often pulling it up to him to peer at the watch. Then he asked, "Will it make me crazy?"

That seemed so bizarre to me that I could only go along with what seemed to be a gag.

So I said, "Probably."

And then we waited. After some time he pulled the blanket over his face, and when he came out after a moment his eyes were rolling and his mouth was ajar and he looked totally mad. I got upset. What was happening? Had I misjudged his powers? After all, he was an old man (though how old I had no idea), and I had let him take twelve hundred micrograms. Maybe last time he had thrown them away and then he read my mind and was trying to prove to

me that he could do it, not realizing how strong the "medicine" really was. Guilt and anxiety poured through me. But when I looked at him again he was perfectly normal and looking at the watch.

At the end of an hour it was obvious that nothing had happened. His reactions had been a total put-on. And then he asked, "Have you got anything stronger?" I didn't. Then he said, "These medicines were used in Kulu Valley long ago. But yogis have lost that knowledge. They were used with fasting. Nobody knows now. To take them with no effect, your mind must be firmly fixed on God. Others would be afraid to take. Many saints would not take this." And he left it at that. (R.D.)

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When I asked him if I should take LSD again, he said, "It should not be taken in a hot climate. If you are in a place that is cool and peaceful, and you are alone and your mind is turned toward God, then you may take the yogi medicine. (R.D.)

LSD IS GOOD FOR THE WORLD BUT
NOT SPIRITUAL.

LSD ALLOWS YOU TO COME INTO THE ROOM
AND PRANAM TO CHRIST, BUT AFTER TWO
HOURS YOU MUST LEAVE. THE BEST
MEDICINE IS TO LOVE CHRIST.

LSD IS NOT THE TRUE SAMADHI.

Once a Westerner asked me to translate for him. He wanted to ask Maharajji how he could help his friend back in America. The friend was in a very confused state through so many LSD trips. Maharajji said to tell the friend to remember God all the time.

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I had brought a picture with me of a boy who had died in America under strange circumstances. In 1968 he had come to see me in New Hampshire and had become one of my first students of yoga. He would come and visit each week and he immediately absorbed everything I shared with him of what I had learned in India. I had eventually wanted to send him to Hari Dass for further

training, but he had preferred to go to live in a cave in Arizona to continue his sadhana. I had taught him all I could, but he wrote me letters and checked in every few months during the winter of 1968/69.

I didn't hear from him for a while and later learned that he had died in the cave. His mother had shared with me his final diary entries, which were most unusual. I suspected that the final diary entry had been written while he was under the influence of LSD. The story was that he had been found dead with blood coming out of his nose and that there was blood on the wall. Perhaps he had been doing pranayam (yogic breathing practice) and had burst a blood vessel. The entries were as follows:

Ramana Maharshi and my guru are both navigating
my maha samadhi . . . no worry . . . I am in
infinite bliss . . . and will guide you from within
. . . write Ram Dass and tell him the good news that
I have no longer to undergo sadhana . . . am there.
. . . Love, love. . . . I know what is happening,
also the guru is with me inside . . . know that I left
the body completely identified with Jesus. . . . Jesu
está conmigo. Yo estoy en su corazon . . . con
guru.

I had promised his mother that when I was next with Maharajji I would ask him about her son. At the appropriate time I fetched what had been his high-school graduation picture and handed it to Maharajji. He peered at it closely and then said, "He's not in his body."

"That's right, Maharajji."

"He died from taking medicine."

"Aha, I thought so." (This implied to me that he had not indeed entered true samadhi but had probably done pranayam while on LSD.)

But then Maharajji, apparently understanding my doubts, said, "No, it is all right. He will not take rebirth. He finished his work. Now he is one with Christ. He loved you very much. He cried about you." Maharajji was silent for some time and then he added, "You should tell his mother she should not worry. He is with Christ. He is watching over her. He finished his work." (Maharajji had quoted exactly the words of the diary, and he had showed me that under certain circumstances LSD could be the vehicle for returning to God.) Then Maharajji sat silently with eyes closed. The moment was one of great power. (R.D.)

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One morning a number of us who had taken acid decided to break into the ashram early and get front-row seats, so we all went tramping through the potato patches, over the stream, and across the wall. We took our morning baths amid calls of "Sitaram [salutation using the names of Sita, Ram's consort, and Ram]!" put on our fresh clean clothes, and got our front-row seats in front of the tucket. We got centered, did our meditations (or whatever else one does while waiting for Maharajji to come out). We were all lined up, tripping; I was sitting at one of the short ends of the tucket. All of a sudden the door burst open—bam—and there was Maharajji in a brand-new psychedelic blanket that one of the devotees had given him. No one had time to leap to his feet. He was just suddenly there, twinkling like a star. Everyone was trying to get up and he just kicked his way through, sat down on the bench, and ignored us all.

He just sat there, occasionally looking at someone, then he'd continue to look at the sky. But he went down the line, checking everyone out, sometimes for no more than an instant. That lasted for about ten minutes. He had come out early—and when the rest of the ashram realized that he was out, and came running, he returned immediately to his little room.

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I'd find the scene really indescribable when we were with him while tripping. The experience of seeing him sitting there, looking and talking, was as if there were nobody there at all. It was nobody playing a game of being somebody! That morning [described above by another devotee] was incredibly blissful; that whole day was like that.

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At the time of that acid trip [see above], D had gotten Maharajji a new blanket—blue and yellow and red and green. I have a photograph of that

colorful blanket. A lot of people were stoned on acid, sitting around the table waiting for him to come out of his room. He almost leaped up on the table when he came, he had so much energy. Out he came! There he was! He poked some woman right in the front row in the chest and said, "Do you like LSD?" It was the first thing he said. He started laughing, and soon everybody was laughing. Then he got serious. Everybody started crying. It was as if he were pushing our buttons. At one point everybody was crying, and he said, "What's all this crying? I can't stand crying. Stop all this crying!"

ONE DRAMATIC LSD incident profoundly offended the sensibilities of Maharajji's Indian devotees. A young Westerner had taken LSD and had come to the temple with only a shawl wrapped around him. Then, as Maharajji was walking, holding the arms of two devotees, the young man came up behind Maharajji and attempted to embrace him from the rear. As he raised his arms to do this, his shawl covered the heads of the devotees and at the same time revealed the young man's nakedness. This incident, which might have seemed scandalous to an onlooker, was seen quite differently by the young man himself, as is indicated by the following dialogue between himself and another devotee, who had been present at the time of the incident.

S: Well, you know my own experience with your trip that day was watching you grab Maharajji from behind . . .

R: Yeah, I wanted to kiss him. I wanted to hug and kiss him.

S: And Maharajji was laughing. You had covered Dada's face, and whoever else was walking with Maharajji, with your red blanket as you reached over to grab him from behind. You were naked under the blanket. Maharajji was all giggly and twinkling, wagging his head. When he went alone into his room, you went off to pranam to the sweeper . . .

R: He was the lowest guy in the ashram and he was there, on my way out. I was such a nobody I didn't even have a body. And this guy was God! Standing there with a dirty broom, he had nothing—and I had to pranam to him. The sweeper was only about twelve, you'd never notice him. He was always there, but really he was invisible.

S: While that was going on, Maharajji was in his room, locked in there alone but laughing a lot. I happened to be right there at the window.

Maharajji was asking us all, "What happened? Why is he like that? What did he do?" I said, "Maharajji, I don't know." Then Maharajji said, "He ate too many jelebees." Then he started about LSD, asking "Do you take it? Do you take it? Do you take it?" to all of us outside his window. There was one Westerner who said proudly, "Yes, I do."

Then word came back that you had nothing on at all. There was silence for a while. Then, as we were all looking at Maharajji, he leaned right up against the screen of his window, looked straight at an Indian devotee, and said, "Naked!" The shocked devotee put his hands over his crotch and hunched over a bit, exclaiming, "Maharajji!"

You were sitting outside, singing with everyone. Dada looked out and exclaimed, "There he is! It's him!" Maharajji looked and said, "I don't know. I don't think so. I don't think that's him." This went back and forth for quite some time. Dada would say, "I know it's him. I'm sure it's him." Maharajji just would not recognize you. Finally, after about twenty minutes, Maharajji said, "Well, maybe it is him." And then he called you over and told you to leave.

R: Yes. It was translated as "Maharajji says you're wicked, and you must leave right away." I said, "Okay, Maharajji," but I don't see how it could possibly have upset him. I saw him that day as very loving, all the way through. When I was being carried out—I couldn't walk, I had no legs—I was in complete bliss. I felt as if I were being carried by angels. There was so much love all around me that I didn't feel any confusion.

S: About a month later you came back to the ashram for the first time after the acid trip. All dressed up in a dhoti, with a vest, you came and joined the satsang, sitting outside the window, singing.

R: I don't know what he called me, because my Hindi was really poor then. It was something that he always called Dada. Something like badmash but different. He said, "Fool! Jao!" And it blew my mind. I was so hurt. It was like the rejection of the ultimate lover; it was really painful. I staggered out of the ashram, thinking, "He can't do this to me. I'm going to come back a million times." But the incident created in me the desire to change myself. I started feeling guilty for things I'd done when I was two years old. I was so full of remorse at what a badmash I was that I felt a kind of determination to win his love back.

When I finally did get back in, after I went to Lama Govinda, I came back in with Anata. (This was not long before Maharajji died.) Everyone was sitting around and he was giving darshan. I was so afraid that he was going to throw me out, but I appeared very calm. He looked right at me and said, "Did

you come with her?" I said, "Yes." And he said, "You came from Lama Govinda." "Right." Then he said, "How long," and he rolled his eyes back and looked away—and all of a sudden he whirled back and looked right at me and said, "Jao!" And then some guy right behind me jumped up and ran away! I realized that he'd yelled it right over my head. Then he looked at me and laughed! I was forgiven. After that he looked at me several times and just laughed. It was just bliss!

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After this incident Maharajji started saying, "LSD causes one to become naked and dance around." And he called us all together in the back of the Kainchi ashram. We were all sitting around in a big circle; there were perhaps thirty-five Westerners there. Maharajji went around to each person, naming them by name and asking, "Have you ever had LSD?" And everyone said, "Yes, Maharajji." Every person. (There was in fact only one of the group who hadn't had LSD—a Frenchman who had lived in Israel for some time.) Maharajji thought about it for a while. He was just sitting there, meditating on it.

Later that day four young men came to the ashram. They'd just come. Maharajji said, "Doctor!" I went into the office and he said, "Four young men have come. Go to the gate and evict them from the ashram, because they have taken LSD." I went to the gate of the ashram and I said, "Um, hello. Have you guys, by any chance, taken LSD?"

The four of them said, "No, we've never taken LSD."

And I said, "Excuse me. Let me go check." I kept them at the gate and went to see Maharajji. "Maharajji, they've never taken LSD."

He said, "Go kick them out of the ashram. They've taken LSD."

I went back and asked them again. I said, 'Maharajji says you can't come in. You have to leave the ashram. You've taken LSD.' They argued very vigorously. They said they'd never taken LSD. I went back to Maharajji and pleaded for them. I said, "Maharajji, all of us have taken a lot of LSD and, really, I've taken quite a bit! We've all had quite a bit of LSD."

And he said, "Those four boys have taken LSD. Go kick them out of the ashram. That's an order!" So I went out and kicked them out of the ashram. They never came back. I don't understand anything about that incident!

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KK once had the desire to try LSD but felt it only proper first to ask Maharajji's permission. When he put the question to Maharajji, Maharajji replied, "What? Is something the matter with your mind?"