

# About Meditation and Service

## MEDITATION

MAHARAJJI OFTEN spoke about the value of meditation as a spiritual practice—and he himself appeared to be in a meditative state much of the time—yet he made it difficult for most of us to meditate while in his presence. But when we did, the effects were indeed dramatic.

*WORLDLY PEOPLE GO OUTWARD, BUT YOU MUST GO INWARD LIKE THE TORTOISE, WITHDRAWING WITHIN YOUR SHELL.*

*MEDITATION IS GOOD. ONE CAN ATTAIN A PURE MIND BY ONE-POINTEDNESS AND DETACHMENT. MEDITATE UPON ONE POINT AND YOU WILL KNOW GOD.*

*CLEAR THE MIND OF ALL WORLDLY THINGS. IF YOU CAN'T CONTROL YOUR MIND, HOW WILL YOU REALIZE GOD?*

Maharajji would sometimes say, "What do I know? England is so far off." But sometimes he'd talk of England as if he'd been there. M asked him for a portion of the power that enabled Maharajji to see as far as England and farther. Maharajji laughed and said, "No. Gradually and by practice you can get that. It is not impossible; regular sadhana and putting up with any difficulty you come across."

M started doing puja and meditation as instructed by Maharajji. Maharajji had given him a mantra and told him to start any way he wanted; it didn't matter. After some time, when M and Maharajji were traveling by horse-drawn carriage, M asked Maharajji about the wandering mind during meditation: "It won't stand on one point; but many ideas come in. What do I do?" Then suddenly a small child ran across the road and the driver pulled the reins to stop the horse just in time to save the child. Maharajji said, "Like that," pointing to the driver holding the reins. "As the mind will travel here, there, and all directions, you should always try to pull it to one point. You should center it with continuous practice, then automatically it will go to the one point on which you want to meditate. Ultimately, after years, the mind becomes quiet."

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One time he called me into his "office" in Kainchi and had me sit up on the bed with him. I was under the impression in those days that meditation was "something," and here I was with the guru. It was, I thought, time to meditate, to really "tune in." Not with words, but with, well, nonreaction, Maharajji kept breaking down these false concepts of meditation. Each would fall away until finally there was nothing left and I was just sitting there, feeling nothing transcendental, only emptiness. At that point, as soon as I got it, he jao'ed me.

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All the time he was talking to you he was in meditation. You just felt it.

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When Maharajji sat with us we could see that he was in a deep state of samadhi. With a nod of his head he was off to a distant place; another nod, and he was back again. We always felt this way about him, that he could be

anywhere. This is what we saw; despite the fact that he totally hid himself, we couldn't help but see it.

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We were once in the back of the ashram after everyone had been sent away for the day. The sky was very beautiful—red and purple. Maharajji was definitely in a samadhi. It was not a silent one, but it was surely some sort of samadhi. As he leaned way back he said, “Are there skies like this in America?” And, somehow, I knew that there would be some connection with this moment when I was back in America. Today I thought of that.

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On one occasion, KK invited me to join him and his cousin ML in an evening drive out to Kainchi to deliver some lamps and supplies that had been purchased at Maharajji's instructions for a forthcoming holiday ritual. This opportunity was a delight, for never, when Maharajji was present, had I been allowed to be at the temple at Kainchi in the evening after the gates were closed.

It was a quiet time of deepening dusk and all was gentle and silent. Maharajji was sitting alone on his outdoor tucket when we arrived. ML and I joined him while KK went about his business of storing the things that we had brought. For once there was no banter or conversation of any kind. This was what I had really yearned for—the opportunity to meditate in Maharajji's presence—for the constant drama of words and apples that usually surrounded Maharajji kept all consciousness focused on the physical plane. Although the yearning to meet him on the other planes was always strong and persistent, when the drama was in progress I lacked the discipline to ignore it thoroughly and draw my mind within, to focus on the ajna (third eye) in such a way as to bring consciousness to other planes.

Now all was silent; this was the opportunity. I sat in the lotus position and brought my attention to my forehead. Almost immediately I entered into deep meditation and felt the physical plane drifting away. At this point I was vaguely aware that Maharajji had suddenly lain over on his side and was snoring. I recall a vague surprise, because from the position he was in it seemed obvious that he was not really asleep. There was little time to reflect upon this, however, for suddenly my body was shaken by violent and powerful shocks of energy, which literally made my teeth rattle. The shaking seemed to grow in intensity and the focus on my forehead faltered as the attention was drawn

down to the shaking body. Immediately Maharajji sat up, turned to ML, and said, "Ask Ram Dass how much money Steven makes."

I heard the words from a great distance and also heard ML's reply that he didn't want to disturb me because I was meditating. However, Maharajji insisted, and ML gently shook my knee. I could feel great resistance in me to "coming down" and I tried to come down just enough to answer, "thirty thousand a year," hoping to be allowed to go back "up." But once down, the experience was over. It was, however, enough to show me that my discipline of mind wasn't sufficient to work with the huge energies that Maharajji could release in me with but a snore.

Shortly afterward we were "jao'ed." Just at the corner of the temple I looked back. There sat Maharajji in his blanket in the darkness, immobile as a statue. There was something unearthly about him at that moment. It wasn't the Maharajji of the warm intimate moments; it was the remote Shiva who sits atop Mount Kailash in eternal meditation. This was that aspect of Maharajji which, like the Himalayas, seemed vast and impersonal and touched a place of great depth and innocence within me. This was the force that drew me. It was love beyond love. (R.D.)

MEDITATE TO RAISE THE KUNDALINI.  
THINK ABOUT GOD; IT WILL GO RIGHT UP.

TO SEE GOD, YOU HAVE TO HAVE SPECIAL  
EYES. OTHERWISE YOU CANNOT BEAR  
THE SHOCK.

When I was a little child he used to cover my head with his blanket. I used to get some sort of vibration—from head to toe I would shiver. You can call it sensation, but sensation is a cheap word for what I felt. I cannot express that pleasure.

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One Ma was talking about wanting to go to Chitrakut. Maharajji said, "You want to go to Chitrakut," and he grabbed her by the wrist. The next

thing she knew, she was in Chitrakut. Then, back at the temple again, she was groggy for eight hours.

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At the mela, the first time Maharajji put Gurudatt Sharma into samadhi they had to watch him carefully, because he was in so much ecstasy they were afraid he would fall into the fire.

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I put my hand on his head when I was bathing him, and my whole body got charged with electricity.

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On our way to Jageshwar we stopped in Almora, and Maharajji asked me to meditate. I experienced the sensation of flying and thought of Mount Kailash before I lost consciousness. After some time I returned to normal waking consciousness, and we continued on. Later my wife and others reported having seen Maharajji and me in Delhi at that exact time. They wondered why we had left so quickly.

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During one of his visits to our ashram, Maharajji asked one of his devotees to meditate. The devotee sat down and immediately went into samadhi trance. Maharajji asked the ashramites to look at his eyes and to shake him back to life. They tried without success, because he was like a stone. After ten or fifteen minutes, Maharajji turned to the devotee and shouted loudly, "Get up! Get up!" Immediately, the devotee opened his eyes and got up. Maharajji had never touched him. Later Maharajji asked the swamis of the ashram, "Do you sit in meditation? Can you sit like that?"

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Maharajji's process of teaching concentration and meditation was unique. He'd somehow shake you out of it the moment you began to feel some pleasure. I once asked him why he'd stopped my samadhi, and he answered that the

mind has its limitations, that I was in a physical body, and that these things are achieved slowly, slowly—otherwise I'd become a lunatic. He understood the capacity of your body.

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Maharajji never allowed meditation on him when I was in his presence. Even now the worst mischief will disrupt my meditation if I try to concentrate on him. But there is no dearth of bliss for me.

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Maharajji often foiled our attempts at meditation. Many times when we'd be sitting there, someone would start meditating and Maharajji would send over his two "meditation spoilers." One was his driver and the other a little boy who was the driver's friend. He would send them over to shake people out of meditation. One time we were all sitting there and he said, "Okay, meditate," and after about a minute he started telling jokes and making everyone stop. Another time Maharajji called us into his office and told us to start singing. We started singing but no one was really into it so after a while it died down, and then he yelled from the other room, "Keep singing." We picked it up again and it died down again, and he yelled, "Keep singing." And finally after about three hours the singing caught on and got really great. When it ended everyone just naturally fell into meditation, and as soon as that happened we heard from the other room, "Take dinner," and we were all ushered into the other room. We were never able to cling to that meditation space.

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I valued meditation very highly, so when I found out that an essence meditation teacher was going to spend the summer rainy season in Kausani, a small remote village in the Himalayas, I made elaborate plans to join with three other Westerners for a quiet, intense summer of practice. When I told Maharajji of my plans, all he would say was, "If you desire." Then he said, "Go! I'll call you."

The house in Kausani was perfect, and we settled in with great delight, our summer meditation fantasy seemingly assured. We dug a toilet, took turns fetching water and cooking, gazed blissfully at the Himalayas, and awaited the arrival of our teacher, Anagorika Munindra.

*It was at the beginning of the second week that we heard a few Westerners had arrived in the village and were staying at a small hotel below. We all agreed that they shouldn't be invited up to our house, for we should protect this space for the work we would commence with Munindra's arrival. But the Westerners continued to arrive in Kausani, and they were not at all pleased to be excluded from the mountaintop. After all, Maharajji had told them to come. He had said, "Go be with Ram Dass in Kausani. That's a beginner's course. Not for Ram Dass."*

*I was furious. Maharajji knew we wanted to be alone, yet he had deliberately sent what now amounted to twenty people. We decided to stick to our original plan, no matter what!*

*But we had underestimated the extent of Maharajji's lila, for on Friday of the second week a letter arrived from Munindra: "Due to several administrative matters I must take care of here in Bodh Gaya, I shall be unable to come to Kausani this summer." There went the fantasy. Once we had surrendered the fantasy of a quiet summer of meditation, we joined with the other Westerners who had arrived in the village, moved into an ashram across the valley, and had a productive and intense summer ashram experience.*

*We returned to Kainchi at the end of the summer, at the call from Maharajji. As we came before him for darshan he was laughing. He said, "Ram Dass teacher, Ram Dass teacher. Buddhist teacher never came. Ram Dass teacher, Ram Dass teacher," and he cackled and pulled on my beard. No doubt about it—the events of the summer had not been just a chance misfiring of our plans. There was a paw in the pie. (R.D.)*

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*Maharajji had instructed me to be by myself and not to speak much. He had also told me to focus upon my ajna and think of him; so one summer when we were in Kausani, some fifty miles from where Maharajji was, I remained in my room alone, fasting for five days. I had many pictures of Maharajji with me.*

*As I was beginning this retreat, I read a story from the Mahabharata about the Pandava brothers, of whom Arjuna was the most skilled. The brothers, so the legend goes, were jealous of Arjuna's skill and asked their guru why he was so much more proficient. The guru said, "There is nothing so special. It's just that he wants it more than you do." To demonstrate, the guru gave them the task of shooting the eye of a bird with their bow and arrow. Arjuna did the task easily. Afterward, the guru asked each of the brothers what they had seen.*

One described the tree on which the bird sat; another described the bird and its coloring. When Arjuna was asked, he said, "I see the eye of a bird."

I wanted to see Maharajji the way Arjuna saw the eye of that bird. I needed only to make Maharajji my meditative focal point, for focusing on Maharajji would simultaneously focus the eye, the mind, and the heart. After a day or two, the pictures of Maharajji seemed to lose their value and I put them all away; yet I felt Maharajji's presence in the room. By the fourth day I felt him so close that it was as if he were standing right behind me.

The fasting made me emotionally very sensitive, so when I began to feel that he was no longer behind me and absent from the room I became very upset. Then I realized that the absence was of Maharajji as a separate entity; for what had happened in the course of those meditative days was that Maharajji had come closer and closer, until he had gone inside of me. I felt alone; not lonely, just alone. It was a feeling of strength and clarity and fullness, but also of aloneness and silence even in the presence of sounds. It was a little like being the last person on earth. When I finally emerged from the room and was with people again, the feeling slowly left me; but I now knew that in the path of merging with Maharajji lay my freedom. (R.D.)

KUNDALINI RESTS BELOW THE NAVEL.  
IT CAN BE RAISED BY THE GURU'S  
GRACE, BY THE GENTLE, SIMPLE TOUCH  
OF THE GURU'S HAND.

### SERVICE

WHEN ASKED WHY he was surrounded by so many badmash, Maharajji said, "Only sick people come to a doctor." And like an old and trusted family physician, Maharajji was available day and night for his devotees, and he made "house calls." Thus Maharajji's own behavior was a perfect model for that sadhana he most encouraged in his devotees: selfless loving service. For the householders, who composed the largest percentage of his devotees, Maharajji did not generally encourage severe austerities, nor extensive meditation practice, nor complex rituals. Rather, he guided us to *karma yoga*, a way of coming to God through living life as an act of devoted service. In this way Maharajji mirrored the teachings of the greatest devotional literature, as in the Ramayana, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Bible. But Maharajji made it clear that hard work alone was not the essence of the matter. Rather, it was work carried on with remembrance of God; that is, work done with love in the presence of God's grace.



One man worked so hard in the ashram that he almost never had Maharajji's darshan. But late one evening it so happened that, one by one, all the devotees left and Maharajji was alone on his tucket. The man then went over to sit with Maharajji. Maharajji appeared surprised, since the man never seemed to have time to have darshan. So Maharajji said to him, "What would you like?"

The man merely answered, "Atma-gyan [knowledge of the self]."

Maharajji replied, "Service to all is atma-gyan."

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Maharajji would sometimes quote the Gita about purifying the heart: "You can get one-pointedness through work; the Gita says and then you get insight."

SERVE THE POOR AND REMEMBER GOD.  
YOU BECOME ONE WITH CHRIST.

"Did Maharajji give you any special teachings?"

To this, Brahmachari Baba smiled sweetly and said, "He taught me service."

We were all silent for some time after that.

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Maharajji asked HC how he thought a man succeeded in the world. HC said by diligent, sincere work. Maharajji countered, saying that God's grace was also necessary. Without God's grace no amount of hard work will succeed.

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Once I asked Maharajji how it is possible for a man to remember God all the time. He told me the story of Narada (the celestial sage) and the butcher: Vishnu (one of the aspects of God) was always praising the butcher and Narada wondered why, since the butcher was always occupied and Narada spent twenty-four hours a day praising Vishnu. Vishnu gave Narada the task of carrying a bowl of oil, full to the brim, up to the top of a mountain, without spilling a drop. The task completed, Vishnu asked how many times Narada remembered Vishnu. Narada asked how that would be possible, since he had to

concentrate on carrying the bowl and climbing the mountain. Vishnu sent Narada to the butcher and the butcher said that as he works he is always remembering God.

Maharajji said then, "Whatever outer work you must do, do it; but train your mind in such a way that in your subconscious mind you remember God."

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Maharajji had often instructed me to remain alone, to have little to do with people, and at the same time to serve and feed people. Once I was staying in my room because he had said I should eat alone and not spend time with others. That night a Western couple had a fight, and later Maharajji looked accusingly at me as he asked them, "Where was Ram Dass? Why wasn't he there to help you?" (R.D.)

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I asked Maharajji about my sadhana, and he said, "To serve human beings is the only way for your salvation. You need not do dhyana (meditation) or puja. Serve all living beings."

WHOEVER WORKS FOR GOD, HIS WORK  
WILL BE DONE BY ITSELF.

WORK IS GOD. WORK IS WORSHIP.

THE MIND SHOULD ALWAYS BE ENGAGED  
IN WORK.

Maharajji, how can I know God?

"Serve people."

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Maharajji, how can I get enlightened?

"Feed people."

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*Maharajji, how can I raise kundalini?*

*“Serve and feed people.”*

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*Maharajji opened us to the true joy of service as a way of being with God. It's interesting how critical people get around us because they don't understand why we work so hard, so joyfully.*

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*Maharajji allows you the privilege of doing his work.*

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*Said one devotee, “It's an honor to be allowed to serve Maharajji.*