



## Like the Wind

MAHARAJJI WAS MOVING, always moving—from one city to another, from one house to another, from one room to another, from one position to another. Until the final years of his life he was in continuous movement. Like a river. Or, as he said of himself, “I am like the wind. No one can hold me.”

*There was no way to capture Maharajji—he had much guile in escaping. When Maharajji was in a group and wanted to leave, he would say that he*



*needed to go to the bathroom, and he'd run away. Later we old devotees figured out this ruse and he had to find new ones.*

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*I think I cried and laughed—and sang—all the time I was with him. I saw him seven or eight times in 1965, never for more than a day at a time and always in a different place. He operated differently back then. He was traveling back and forth across northern India from Calcutta, but he would be*

*off like a thief in the night in a devotee's Mercedes. He just never stayed anywhere for long.*

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*Whenever Maharajji would get out of the car, his eyes would be incredibly open, sparkling. Everyone said that when he traveled in a car, he'd be very attentive, hanging halfway out the window, looking at everything. And when he'd get out of the car, his eyes would be wide open, looking around at everything. I remember Dada once laughing about a car ride with Maharajji. Dada said that Maharajji just wouldn't stop talking—wanting to know everything, asking about everything—just like a child. You had to give him total, constant attention. And he would give step-by-step instructions to the driver, all along the way: "Turn right, turn left, turn around, go back."*

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*We left about two hours early to catch the train. Still, he said, "Oh, we're going to be late, we're going to be late! We should have left earlier!" Maharajji was talking like that constantly—"Oh, der ho gai, der ho gai—it's late, it's late!" This time he was just frantic. Everyone was sitting there, unable to say anything. Maharajji was saying, "We should have gotten our tickets earlier. We won't get on the train . . ." It was so funny! We got there about an hour and a half early.*

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*HC said that on the long train rides when the Mothers were traveling with Maharajji they would often sit around him. Maharajji would sometimes sit on the floor of the private compartment and they would chant for hours in rhythm to the clacking of the train. One favorite (which even now I've heard a Mother reciting as she worked) is from Kabir: "Dina Bandhu, Dina Nath, Mere dore tere hath [Compassionate friend, compassionate Lord, my puppet strings are in your hand]."*

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*Maharajji was right next door to us on the train. Around three o'clock he came pounding on our door, hammering on it with both fists. I knew immediately it was he. I leaped up and threw open the door to find Maharajji was standing there with his arm along one edge of the door and his other hand*

on his hip. He said, "Kya time ho-gaya [What time is it]?" It was almost time (3:30 A.M.) for us to get off. In Mathura station everyone was asleep on the floor, and as we stepped among the sleeping people, Maharajji said, "Sub sota hain [Everyone's asleep]. Sub sota hain." He kept looking back and forth, saying it over and over. "Kyon [Why]? Why is everyone sleeping?"

Shiv Charan said, "Baba, it's 3:30 in the morning. Bohut der ho gai [It's very late]. . . ."

I was thinking, Well, we're all asleep, you know how it is. Asleep in illusion. It was a beautiful moment. Especially beautiful was his waking us up. That was the only time that ever happened to me. Maharajji wakes you up with "Let's go!"

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Maharajji would often have tickets purchased for one destination and, then, knowing that the devotees would wire ahead, get off at a station preceding that stop. Maharajji would say about Ananda Mayee Ma, another great saint whose travel schedule was published and who always had crowds around her, "It's terrible what her devotees do to her, keeping her locked up within the eight gates," referring to the way in which they kept her a captive of their love.

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Maharajji is like Ganga: It flows down to Haridwar and they build a pilgrimage center, but the river is not concerned about the pilgrimage center. It just flows on. At Allahabad the same thing, and again at Benares . . .

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Maharajji was visiting the city of Bareilly when a devotee told him that he had to go to England for a few days on business, and he asked Maharajji to accompany him there. Maharajji said, "Let's go!" They went by air and spent three days in a good hotel. After three days, Maharajji insisted that they return immediately to India. The devotee argued that his work wasn't finished. He'd need only two more days. Maharajji said, "No, let's go." Then a telegram arrived saying that the devotee's wife was very ill. They left that night. Afterward, when asked about the trip, Maharajji would laugh and say, "I went. I drank milk and ate fruits."

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Maharajji once accompanied his devotee, the Indian ambassador to Saudi Arabia, on a Haj, a pilgrimage to the sacred Moslem shrine at Mecca. They flew from India to the capital city, Jeddah, and stayed in the Indian embassy. From there they visited the sacred places of Islam. Maharajji later told people that when some Moslems discovered he was a non-Moslem, he was beaten. "Then I came back right away," he said.

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A guard who was in charge at the Indian-Tibetan border said at one point that Maharajji had crossed the border, gone into Tibet, and returned.

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Who can say why he goes to these places or what he does there?

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I had become very comfortable in the hotel in Nainital. I had my "cave"—a small room on the top floor where, with Indian prints and holy calendar pictures, some books and candles and incense and a heater, I had made a cozy retreat into which I anticipated burrowing for several months. But when it was finally "just right," the edict came from Maharajji: "Tell Ram Dass he should go now. He shouldn't stay so long in one place. He can return again." The next day we left for Delhi.

At other times he'd say, "The whole universe is your home." And: "All are your family." Once when we wanted to stay with him he said, "You don't need to stay here. The light is everywhere." (R.D.)

FOR A SADHU TO STAY IN ONE PLACE  
MEANS TROUBLE. A MOVING YOGI,  
AND A MOVING RIVER . . . IMPURITIES  
AND SEDIMENTS AND FILTH CAN NEVER  
SETTLE THERE. IF I STAY HERE,  
ATTACHMENT WILL FORM.

Previously, before Kainchi was built, Maharajji used to visit Nainital frequently. He often came to our home in the government house either in a car

or a dandi (litter). All the family, neighbors, and many Nainital devotees would gather. Maharajji would eat a meal, then go. Whenever he came, there was a sort of bhandara. Food was prepared and people brought sweets and so forth. In those days he was always roving about—sometimes in Nainital, sometimes Bhowali, here, there. People were always after him, taking him home.

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Maharajji came to Ajmeer to my father's house. He said, "Give me a dhoti. I want warm water, and I want dal and chapattis. I'll eat them in your kitchen."

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Mrs. Soni first met Maharajji when she was only about twenty-four years old. She was very shy. Maharajji was at a neighbor's house, and when she went for his darshan she brought along her three toddlers. As soon as she entered, Maharajji said, "I'm going to your house." She kept quiet. In her heart she didn't want him to come, because she felt too shy. Other women urged her, saying that people begged him to come to their home and he wouldn't come, and here he was asking to come to her home. Still, she didn't want him to come. Finally Maharajji said, "Get up! Let's go!" and off he went to her house. Fortunately it was some feast day, and she had prepared the traditional foods. Maharajji ate everything he was offered.

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In speaking of the yatras (pilgrimages), R said that Maharajji would always sneak away to visit devotees when traveling in the south. He said Maharajji would never speak of them. "He has devotees everywhere. You can't know how many and where they all are."

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I first met Maharajji in about 1930, when I was a schoolboy. Father was a great devotee. Maharajji visited our family in Faizabad (near Ayodhya). After my father's retirement, I became superintendent of police of jails. Maharajji would come visit wherever I happened to be posted—Agra, Bareilly, Kanpur, Lucknow, and so on. One room in our home was always kept vacant for Maharajji. From the 1930s on, I detected no drastic change in Maharajji's

appearance. We prepared his favorite foods daily—loki (squash) vegetable, mung dal—in case he should come. When Maharajji didn't come, we would take it as his prasad.

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For more than twenty-five years Maharajji visited our home in Lucknow. He came at least once a year, for a few hours or a few weeks. He was both guru and grandfather to everyone in our family. All the children were born and raised under his guidance. He referred to them as his own children, and they in turn were very free with him.

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It was such a pleasure to take Maharajji to a house. He didn't neglect anyone in the house—he would play with the kids . . .

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I asked what it was like to be a child around Maharajji. She answered, "Oh, he became a child himself. It was so wonderful. I used to bring him milk and press his legs. I would just sit there by the tucket. We never knew when he would come to our house or when he would leave. He would just arrive. Sometimes he would leave in the middle of the night, and so, in the morning, we would look into his room and it would be empty—except for devotees sitting there." And she laughed, especially as she thought of the devotees waiting there.

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Maharajji seldom used to stay more than a few hours in any one place. Sometimes devotees would press him into staying overnight or even a few days and he would relent. When he finally left the place, he would heave a deep sigh of relief and say, "Oh, I've come out of the jail." Maharajji once stayed for six days in the home of a devotee. When he left he said, "Oh, today the force of desire has released me. That fellow had locked me behind bars."

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Once we invited Maharajji to visit our house, and he said he would come. We made our house ready, cleaned it, and laid out the special things for his

visit—prasad and all. For five days we waited for him but he never came. Later when we saw him again we asked why he hadn't come, and he said, "I didn't feel like it."

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A man said to Maharajji, "You've promised for years to visit my home and you have never come. I'm not going to come to see you anymore, because you won't visit my home."

Maharajji said, "Oh, I didn't understand! It's your home. I had thought it was my home and so I didn't need to visit."

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In 1937 Maharajji came to the home of a family of devotees. He paced up and down the verandah for a while, then looked into the big room that was the office of the head of the family. He asked that the office be vacated. "You take another room—leave this one for me." He remained in the room for three to four months, coming out only for an hour, both morning and evening. He allowed no one to come in.

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Maharajji would suddenly appear at a devotee's house, any time, day or night. Once in the middle of the night in the early 1940s he came pounding on the door of a devotee's home. He roused the man of the house and told him he was being chased by other devotees. They would leave him no peace and so he was asking for shelter. The man said, "How can I help you? They will come here as soon as they miss you."

"It will be all right," said Maharajji. "I'll hide under your bed. Lock the doors and windows, give me a mat and a blanket, and when they come, tell them you haven't seen me." The man did as he was told, and when they came he abused them soundly for waking him, and then he angrily sent them away. Maharajji slept under the man's bed, pulling the bedsheet down to the floor to hide himself. The man awoke at 4:00 A.M., and not seeing Maharajji, he looked in another room and then another. Although the doors and windows were still locked, Maharajji was nowhere to be found. Later he learned that Maharajji had returned to the house from which he had escaped the night before. Concerning the locked doors and windows, Maharajji only said, "Oh, I didn't want to disturb you."

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Maharajji would take to the shortcuts and jungle roads whenever he had to hide from his followers. There remains no culvert in the area under which he has not passed at least part of a night—especially those between Gethia and Bhumiadhar, because he used to run away from Nainital to Gethia every night. Back and forth he went. He would make devotees anywhere, and anyone would be turned into a devotee—in this art, he was an expert—but when the time came to leave, he'd leave his new devotee.

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At Bhumiadhar, after everyone had gone to sleep, Maharajji would go out to the road and sit in the middle of it with two or three people. As others would awaken, they would join the group. Then Maharajji would have them stop a truck, and he'd hitch a ride a few miles down the road and the process would start all over again.

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Brahmachari Baba began reminiscing about Maharajji's exploits in the Kumoan Hills. He gestured enthusiastically, pointing out places in the vast panorama before us as we sat below the Bhumiadhar temple. He spoke quickly, one description following another: "That's the tree he used to sit under before there was ever a temple here. It was like a darbar (a king's court). So many people came to see him. We would walk all over these hills, never staying long in any one spot. Maharajji would sleep anywhere. He'd lie down on those cement pilings by the side of the road to sleep and would tell me to stay awake. If I happened to drift into sleep, he would immediately chastise me and then go back to sleep. This would go on for days on end. He wouldn't let me sleep and we'd travel everywhere. Wherever he went, so many people would gather and trail along. The Mothers would come whenever they could. There were many feasts because of the Mothers."

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I had been given an inside room in the home where Maharajji and I were visiting. Late in the evening Maharajji said to the older couple whose house it was, "What are you doing letting a young man sleep inside there? How do

you know what they are like? These days, you cannot trust young people." So they finally moved me to an outer room. About two hours later Maharajji came and woke me, saying, "We must go quietly so they won't awaken." He explained that this was why he had had me moved to an outside room. Maharajji would insist on opening the doors, so that they wouldn't squeak.

We went down the road in the dark, holding hands. We came to a crossroads where a rickshaw walla was asleep. Maharajji started to cajole him sweetly to take us in the rickshaw, but the walla refused. After some persuasion he finally agreed, and then Maharajji started to barter about price, one anna at a time. The walla finally agreed to make the ride for twenty-six annas. It took at least twenty minutes. Finally Maharajji asked me to get down and wait while he and the walla went on farther. Maharajji went to some house and then returned and had the walla take us to the train, which was just ready to depart as we got there. At the station, Maharajji gave the walla his blanket and a lota and twenty or thirty rupees. The rickshaw walla cried.

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Maharajji was in the hills going from one place to another when a devotee from Almora found him. He said that Maharajji had stayed away from their place for so long, and now that he'd been found, he wasn't going to let him go so easily. He took Maharajji home, fed him and gave him a room upstairs, and said he was locking Maharajji in the house for the night so that he wouldn't run away. After the family had gone to bed, Maharajji said to JB, "Let's go!" Maharajji had JB take off his dhoti and tie one end to the house and throw the other out the window. First Maharajji, then JB, climbed down and ran away. Outside the city they came upon a small hut with a small lamp burning. Maharajji knocked and a little old lady answered and started abusing Maharajji for coming so late. She said that she was expecting him hours ago and had food all ready at that time. Maharajji went in and ate.

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He was a nomad, you see that. He would go on roaming about. . . . He would visit the devotees. You don't go to him. He comes to you.