

Krishna Play

IT SEEMS AT ONCE surprising and obvious to note that Maharajji was quite different in the quality of his relationship with men and with women. With men he hung out and gossiped, scolded, and guided—as friend, father, and sage. With the women, on the other hand, in addition to those roles, he seemed frequently to assume roles like that of Krishna (one of the forms of God in the Hindu pantheon), as child and playmate and lover. Such play on Maharajji’s part of course created some consternation and confusion among devotees and also grounds for criticism on the part of people who did not like or trust Maharajji. But for the women devotees who were directly involved with Maharajji in this way, his actions served as a catalyst to catapult them to God.

WITH WOMEN

Once, when Maharajji was entering a room, the Mothers decided to hide behind the door so he wouldn't see them. He said, "Where are they? How could they leave? How can they leave me? They cannot leave me. How can I

go on? How can I bear to be without them?" He was trying to pull on a sock. Finally they had so much pity, they rushed out to him.

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When Maharajji went to another plane of consciousness and came back, the Mothers would kid him like a daddy coming home from work: "What have you brought us, Maharajji?"

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Several Mothers went to the temple for darshan, only to find Maharajji and a male devotee sitting behind a barbed-wire fence. Maharajji said to them, "Oh, you women say that Baba is nothing and only has his feet rubbed by women—but now you see you can't get behind the wire." The man was rubbing Maharajji's feet and began reciting a verse from the Ramayana. One Ma answered his song with another verse from the Ramayana. This pleased Maharajji and he asked them to come closer. Then the Ma said, "You have come as an incarnation in mortal form into the world for us!"

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One man said, "My wife just wanted to sit and be with Maharajji. She didn't want to talk. She was too shy."

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R's wife was very reluctant to speak of Maharajji and her feelings about him. But she had a loving look on her face, and with her eyes and small nods she responded to comments. When asked if Maharajji ever seemed like her own child, she looked especially warm, and she nodded, smiling.

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We'd be sitting outside and Maharajji would pull my hands under the blanket and make me massage his legs, almost pulling me under the blanket. I loved touching him, but I was not sure how far you can go in touching Maharajji. I'd be working on his feet and calves, and he'd grab my arm and pull my hand up to his thigh. So I'd do his thighs for a little bit and then my hands would start wandering down to his calves again, because all of a sudden I'd look around and see all these people staring at me. An Indian woman would be gasping, and I'd get real embarrassed, so I'd start working on his feet again. Then his hand would come sliding down and grab mine and pull it up again.

He would often perform this puzzling ritual with me. And if I tried to explain it to myself, no sooner would I have the thought than he'd turn to me and yell "Nahin!" and then go on with his conversation.

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One Indian widow who had no children came to Maharajji, worried about who would take care of her. Maharajji said, "Ma, I'll be your child." She started to treat him like a child and then he said, "You know, Hariakhan Baba used to suck the breasts of women. I'll sit on your lap." And he sat on her lap and he was so light and small, just like a child. He sucked on her breasts and milk poured out of them, although she was sixty-five. Enough milk came from her to have filled a glass. After that she never missed not having children.

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I felt a great deal of fear of Maharajji and experienced a kind of awkwardness with him, wanting so much to do the right thing yet afraid that I wouldn't know what that was. He called me into his room in Kainchi one day. (Of course it always happened on the days when you really needed it.) He had me close the doors. He was up on the tucket, I was sitting on the floor, and he leaned down to hug me. I reached out to hug him back and he meant for me to come even closer. He said, "Come closer, come closer, you're not close enough." And he just lifted me off the ground, onto the tucket, and into his arms. He put his arms and his blanket all the way around me. He absolutely covered me with his blanket and with his being. He swallowed me whole! I

melted—all my fears, all that stuff totally vanished into the sea of Maharajji. I was completely out of my body, totally immersed. So that's how he answered all those questions: Just by one hug!

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I was kneeling before Maharajji when he grabbed at my sari and started pulling at it. Then he was holding my breasts and saying, "Ma, Ma." I felt for the first time as if I were experiencing an intimate act free of lust.

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There are stories about gurus doing things with women. But somehow around Maharajji there was a feeling of such purity that people could tell me anything he had done, and it never shook my total trust in him at all. It was clear that he needed nothing; he had no desires of his own.

I believe that he would do things with women for whom the sexual part of their lives was not straight. In retrospect, it looks as though it served a very direct function for them.

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We were singing in front of Maharajji and I was massaging his arm when suddenly a sexual thought with regard to him came to my mind. I was embarrassed, because he was looking into my eyes. So I immediately quit massaging his arm and started writing Ram in Hindi with my finger on my own arm, over and over again—still holding his gaze the while. At that point the thought faded. Maharajji reached over right then and pulled gently on the ring I was wearing at the time in my nose, turned my head sideways, and pointed out my nose-ring to an Indian nearby. "See," he said sweetly, "she's very good."

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The first time he took me in the room alone I sat up on the tucket with him, and he was like a seventeen-year-old jock who was a little fast! I felt as if I

were fifteen and innocent. He started making out with me, and it was so cute, so pure. I was swept into it for a few moments—then grew alarmed: "Wait! This is my guru. One doesn't do this with one's guru!" So I pulled away from him. Then Maharajji tilted his head sideways and wrinkled up his eyebrows in a tender, endearing, quizzical look. He didn't say anything, but his whole being was saying to me, "Don't you like me?"

But as soon as I walked out of that particular darshan, I started getting so sick that by the end of the day I felt I had vomited and shit out everything that was ever inside me. I had to be carried out of the ashram. On the way, we stopped by Maharajji's room so I could pranam to him. I kneeled by the tucket and put my head down by his feet—and he kicked me in the head, saying, "Get her out of here!"

I was unable to move for the next three days, but after that I felt perfectly well again. And I had worked through a lot of my reactions to that darshan: revulsion, confusion, and so forth.

That was the first time, and I was to be there for two years. During my last month there, I was alone with him every day in the room. There was a progression of comprehension. He seemed in one way to be turning me into a Mother, helping me to understand that sex is okay. Sometimes he would just touch me on the breasts and between my legs, saying, "This is mine, this is mine, this is mine. All is mine. You are mine." You can interpret it as you want, but near the end in these darshans, it was as though he were my child. Sometimes I felt as though I were suckling a tiny baby. Although he didn't change size physically, he seemed to become very small in my arms. It was a beautiful transformation.

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Maharajji had called me into the small room in the Kainchi ashram and asked me to sit on the tucket with him. He then began calling me "Ma, Ma," and said to me, half in English, half in Hindi, "Meri Mother, meri Mother." As he did so, it seemed as if his body had shrunk to the size of a baby's in diapers before my very eyes. I held him in my arms and rocked him like a baby.

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I was sitting on the floor looking at Maharajji and he was on his tucket looking back at me, when he started talking to me in a way that I could understand totally everything he was saying. Then he pounded on the tucket, because he wanted me to sit up there with him. And I was trying to figure out where to sit. How were you supposed to sit on the tucket with him? He pounded on the tucket closer to him, and so I moved over a little bit and then I decided, well, go for broke, and I sat right in front of him, cross-legged. I was understanding everything he was saying, but as soon as my mind would start working, naturally I wouldn't understand anything.

Then he kissed the palms of my hands, grabbed me, and pulled me toward him, hugging me. The famous hug. Then it was as if I were looking through his eyes. I could see everything in the room, including everything behind me. I seemed to be sitting inside him, totally immersed inside him. I don't know how long we were in there.

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Maharajji was the only being I've ever met who would seem to do anything to get you free. It wasn't as if he had an image to maintain; his teaching was beyond any form or structure. Every other teacher is either a Hindu or a Buddhist or something else, but Maharajji wasn't like that.

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Just before Maharajji left his body an old woman came to the temple with her children and grandchildren. She put her hand on Maharajji's head and gave him a blessing of very long life. She did it twice in Sanskrit: "May you be blessed with many years of long life."

Maharajji was crying. "Did you hear what she said, did you hear what she said?" His delight was that of a child.

WITH MEN

MAHARAJJI OFTEN SPOKE to the male devotees about women. Through many conflicting statements he seemed to be spelling out a most subtle teaching.

One of the cosmic questions he asked me, totally out of the blue, was, "What is a woman?"

CHRIST AND HANUMAN SAW ALL
WOMEN AS THE MOTHER. YOU
HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THE MOTHER
TO REALIZE GOD.

About a school for girls being built, Maharajji commented, "Educate the girls and they will educate society."

ON THE one hand, he said:

SEE ALL WOMEN AS MOTHERS,
SERVE THEM AS YOUR MOTHER.
WHEN YOU SEE THE ENTIRE
WORLD AS THE MOTHER, THE
EGO FALLS AWAY.

A PURE WOMAN IS BETTER THAN
A HUNDRED YOGIS. WOMEN ARE
MORE OPEN TO LOVE GOD.

IT IS NECESSARY TO BE
BRAHMACHARYA [CELIBATE], BUT THAT
CAN BE LIVING WITH ONE WOMAN.
A PURE WOMAN SATI [WIFE] CAN
TAKE YOU TO GOD IN A MOMENT.

WHILE, ON the other hand, he also said:

WOMEN AND GOLD ARE STUMBLING
BLOCKS ON THE PATH TO GOD.

A WOMAN IS A SNAKE; YOU
SHOULDN'T EVEN TOUCH HER.

PERHAPS IT was a matter of, "If the shoe fits . . ."

Once a devotee expressed his feeling that it was embarrassing to have such attractive women around, and Maharajji replied, "Your vision should be faultless."

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A devotee was embarrassed when Maharajji came to his room at the university and discovered a pin-up calendar on the wall. Maharajji asked who she was, and the devotee said no one, going to turn the picture to the wall. But Maharajji stopped him, saying, "She's a Ma. Don't dishonor her."

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I had almost no sexual thoughts the whole time I was in India. It wasn't being suppressed; it just wasn't pertinent at that time. When we'd go back to the hotel, I wouldn't spend much time with other people. I didn't notice women as women at all, though perhaps some of the men did.

I don't remember Maharajji doing the kind of teachings with men as he did with the women. I don't remember any direct sexual teachings. He would talk about women and gold a lot; about how lust was poison, and how one of the greatest poisons for yogis was lust.

When I was in the middle of an affair with a man I was traveling with, Maharajji put a quick stop to it. The first time we saw him after the affair, Maharajji told us to be brahmacharya.

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Usually since I spoke Hindi we would just rap together about this or that—sort of "man to man." And often he'd let me take photographs. Sometimes, though, he'd just reach down and pull me up into him, into the Cosmic Hug.

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One morning after I had been physically intimate with another devotee, we were with Maharajji. Not expecting to be with Maharajji so soon, I felt much guilt in the close juxtaposition of the two events. Maharajji pointed to this other person and said to me, "To that one you are giving your best teachings." Then he told us to be brahmacharya and he turned to other topics. I was left guessing. (R.D.)

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At all the temples, women and men slept separately unless they were married. One night Maharajji sent one married couple and a single man and woman to stay at a two-room forestry guest house we sometimes used. I assumed that the Westerners would appreciate the temple policy, the women sharing one room and the men another. (At that time I was feeling responsible for the Westerners' behavior.) The next morning I found out that a man and woman had slept in each room. I was angry with them and told them that they were insensitive to this culture. We were all immediately called to Maharajji, who asked how everyone had slept, and, turning to the people who had stayed at the guest house, he asked them who had slept in what room. They told him and he simply said, "Very good."

Maharajji repeated a number of times, "Ram Dass should not touch women. Women are like a snake for Ram Dass." Apparently he was well aware that I, for one, could not see all women as the Divine Mother; in fact, my own fear of women had led me to seek out relationships with men. His warning didn't help in this matter.

But his strongest injunction, which he repeated over and over again, with much finger-pointing, was, "Ram Dass, kanchankamini [gold and women]." Each time Maharajji would say this phrase—often used in the literature and by other saints such as Ramakrishna to warn people about the pitfalls of attachment to sex and money—I would review the ways in which I was still clinging to those desires. And though the desires were deep, deep within me, it was apparent that they were on a collision course with the desire for

enlightenment and that sooner or later they were bound to lose. But I guess I was (am?) like the abbot of a monastery who prayed, "God, let me be free of desires so I can be like the desert fathers—but not just yet." I wanted to play with the sex and money just a bit more.

But Maharajji wouldn't relent. Often I would be called from the back of the temple compound many times a day. Each time I would kneel before Maharajji and he would look pointedly at me and intone "kanchankamini," and then send me back. It almost sounded as if he were warning me about something specific, but at that time I interpreted it as a general admonition to get on with it. I tried a variety of ways to free myself from the bonds of lust. I offered the lust into the fire in various rituals and asked God through a variety of religious metaphors to take this attachment from me. But apparently I was not ready to be free, for the attachment to these desires remained.

In 1974 I met a woman spiritual teacher who explained to me that she was sent by Maharajji (astrally) to help me with my inner work. The major part of our work together turned into sexual tantric practices. It proved very helpful in loosening the bonds of attachment to desire with which I had been struggling.

In the course of our work together she seemed to have a difficult time staying in her body. Her consciousness kept floating away. Because it had been suggested that the precious metal gold would help to "keep her down," I decided to buy her a bracelet and ring of gold. It was in the jewelry store that I recalled Maharajji's repeated admonition to me about "women and gold." Shortly afterward I felt that much of my fear of women had been dissipated through this relationship, allowing my attachment to lust to be loosened so that I would get on with my spiritual journey, and I left those teachings. It felt like Maharajji's grace had brought me to this woman, and it was through his grace that I left her. (R.D.)

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Maharajji once visited us while a sculptor was staying in our house. All over the living room were huge sculptures and paintings of nudes. I was a bit concerned that Maharajji might not like them and wanted him to go straight into the bedroom, but he sat on the sofa, looked around, and admired everything. He said, "How wonderful! These are good." He began to talk like a connoisseur, putting me at such ease that I forgot all about the nudity. He appreciated, admired, and asked questions about the art pieces. "Where does the

wood come from? How do you do it? At what time do you do it," and so on. Maharajji could fit into any situation.

SEXUAL ENERGY IS THE POWER
TO CREATE GOD. IF YOU RAISE
THE ENERGY THEN YOU CAN FEEL
AND MEET BRAHM.