

Jao!

I had heard about him in America and saved my money so that I could make a pilgrimage to India to meet him. I arrived at the temple with fruit, which somebody had told me to bring as an offering. The gatekeeper let me in to the back, where I saw him sitting on a wooden bed, wrapped in a plaid blanket. There were a lot of Indians and Westerners sitting on the ground around him. I was a little nervous so I went along the side of the courtyard up to the bed and put down the fruit while he was looking the other way. I bowed the way I saw someone else doing it, and when I raised my head he was looking right at me. Everything just stopped for a minute. Then he said, "Jao!"

My Hindi was poor but I knew that word! It was the one I used to get rid of the beggars who had crowded around me in Delhi. It meant "Beat it!" or "Get away!"

I was stunned and went through disbelief, embarrassment, anger, and guilt. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Here I'd come all this way from America and the first thing he'd said to me was "Beat it!" But then I thought, "Okay. You know best." And he threw me back one of the pieces of fruit and said "Jao" again. Only this time it was okay; this time I heard something else. It wasn't "Get lost!" but "Everything's fine. I love you. Go."

Now I can see that it all happened in those few minutes. He did whatever needed to be done; I got what I needed to get. All the times afterward when I was with him were wonderful, but they were just frosting on the cake.

THE VARIATIONS IN Maharajji's use of the word "jao" were infinite—from a bellow (sometimes preceded by "Ap [You]!" for the recalcitrant) to a tender, "Jao, Ma . . ." as he gently patted a woman devotee bowing at his feet.

Usually as devotees would come before him during the day, he would hand them a piece of fruit or some sweets, or ask them a question or two, and then jao them. Others would be allowed to sit with him while he gave darshan off and on through the day. It is interesting that a word seeming to imply rejection—"go away"—could be said with so much love that it came to mean "go with blessings" or "go with grace" or "go with my love."

There was jao to another part of the ashram; jao to take food or rest; jao to go carry out some indicated duty or service; jao that might be postponed, if one could think of a good question—or even ignored, if some distraction occurred, such as new arrivals. There was the jao of disgrace and banishment for some misdeed (often followed by a giggle once the culprit had passed out of earshot).

The word became Zen-like in its all-encompassing quality and, when roared inexplicably at first sight of a devotee entering the ashram, totally Zen in its effect.

Jao could be for a moment or forever—to the nearby city of Nainital for the night or, most dreaded by the Westerners, *maha-jao* (great jao) to America. Jao could even be questioned, if one was willing to play that perilous game. For a jao might be disputed successfully; but also a jao of a week to go visit Holy Benares might, on the response of a groan, be transformed to a jao of a month for a pilgrimage to Rameshwaram at the southernmost tip of India. Never was it simply "Go!" but always, "Go with love."

We were sitting on the hill opposite the ashram with some binoculars watching Maharajji, who was sitting on the roof of the building in the back of the ashram compound. We saw an Indian man who was trying to be with Maharajji sneak up along the stairs, hold his head really low, and rush across the roof toward Maharajji. And even from that distance, though we couldn't hear, we could certainly see the jao and the man go right back down again. "Oops, there he goes!" We were up there smoking dope and eating yogurt and

having darshan with binoculars. When Maharajji found out that he was being watched with binoculars, he looked through them and he liked them.

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We'd be sitting with Maharajji and he'd tell us all to go, and I'd be the only one to get up and go. My whole training was to do just what the teacher said. Then I'd be the only one outside. Everybody else would be inside laughing and talking with him as if he had never said jao. Chaitanya used to brag about how many jao's he'd survived, like battle scars. But I had a very hard time hearing the jao and not leaving. Then I would hide behind something and see if he really meant it. Later I saw that sometimes he'd say it to you and you knew he meant it; other times he'd say it and it wasn't the same.

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Once Maharajji was jao'ing us all to Delhi for a week to hear Krishnamurti, or "Ram-Murti" as Maharajji would call him. I didn't really want to go, so I was hiding out, but as I came around a pillar I ran right into Maharajji, who was standing there alone. He looked at me and his whole body started to shake and he let out deep sobs: "Oh-ho-ho-ho," as if he were wracked with grief, crying crocodile tears. And he kept sobbing out the words, "Delhi, Delhi." Of course I burst out laughing and ended up going to Delhi. One of the things Krishnamurti said with great soul-force while we were in Delhi was, "I abhor all gurus!" Perfect!

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After a month on pilgrimage in southern India, we returned to Allahabad in the early morning hours, anticipating another long gentle round of being with Maharajji. When I came into his room at 6:30 in the morning his first words were, "Has your visa been renewed?"

"I don't know, Maharajji. I made application."

"No, it hasn't. Jao! Go to Delhi."

"Now?" I was a bit taken aback to be thrown out before I'd even been welcomed home.

"Go by the 9:30 train this morning."

Once this devastating piece of business had been transacted, Maharajji

became tenderness itself, rolling around on his tucket, handing out the rudraksha beads we had brought from Rameshwaram temple, and playfully pulling my beard and patting me. Although I tried to get him to change his mind about sending me away, I found myself back on the train at 9:30.

In Delhi Maharajji had arranged for me to receive help from a minor official in the government. And so began another round of entanglement in bureaucratic red tape. The prospects seemed to go from bad to worse. Earlier in the fall I had tried to take care of the visa extension with KK, up in the mountains. He had arranged for me to speak with the head of the visa bureau in that community. Those proceedings had gone awry and now made the work in Delhi more difficult. These machinations with KK, more or less behind Maharajji's back, were not ignored by Maharajji, who kidded me mercilessly about how KK was now my advisor, my guru, and if I had not tried to get the visa done through KK, everything would now be all right.

As the end of February approached and the visa situation looked hopeless, I suddenly recalled the previous February when I had first seen Maharajji on this visit to India. "How long do you want to stay?" he had asked.

"Forever."

"March?"

"You mean next month?"

"All right, a year from March."

And now, early in March a year later, despite all the apparent attempts of KK and Maharajji to help me, I received my "quit India" notice from the government. There was no doubt about it: Maharajji was using the government to do his dirty work. All I could do was laugh and surrender once again. He had covered every angle.

Generally I tend to cry in the presence of purity or dharma. I'm not quite sure why that is, but the feeling is that such purity is too much to bear. I also cry when I am ecstatically happy and, in rare instances, when I am very depressed. At the leave-taking from Maharajji I cried and cried, and, again, I'm not really sure why. Mrs. Soni felt great concern about my crying and said, "Don't cry. You will be able to come back—won't he, Maharajji?"

Maharajji said, "He can come in a year . . . or six months." But I wasn't really crying because of sadness; if anything it was from joy, for Maharajji had instructed me that serving people was my dharma. My work was clear. And he seemed to be telling me to get on with it.

Maharajji said two more things that day that I can remember. First he said, "I will always be in communion with you." And the second thing was "Jao." (R.D.)

DUE TO INDIVIDUAL KARMA, PEOPLE
MUST BE SENT AWAY FROM A SAINT.
HOW THIS IS DONE VARIES. WHEN THE
TIME FOR THE ASSOCIATION ENDS,
THE SEPARATION MUST OCCUR.

Within a month, I went back to America, with absolutely no regret. I was really happy to be going. Maharajji could give you that kind of energy, so that you really didn't mind leaving, so that you were really exuberant about going.

I SEND PEOPLE AWAY BECAUSE ATTACHMENT
HAPPENS BOTH WAYS.

I WILL NEVER ALLOW ONE OF MY PEOPLE
TO ESCAPE FROM ME.