

## Afterward

*Maharajji went to the Shirdi Sai Baba temple in Madras. He sat there quietly. A woman with a baby sat crying before a picture of Shirdi Sai Baba, who had left his body many years before. Maharajji said, "You know what she is doing? She is asking him to cure her child, and he will do it because a guru never leaves his devotees. A guru is indestructible, immortal, and immune to old age and death."*

WE DEVOTEES WHO knew Maharajji and were familiar with his lila are none too sure exactly what happened on September 11. We know a body was burned, but we are uncertain as to which of Maharajji's bodies it was. Perhaps he had just made a thought of himself solid, so that it could be burned. He taught us not to trust our senses and minds regarding him, and we have learned our lesson well. Now we are wary of accepting even the reality of a cremated body. Thus it is not too surprising to many of us when stories start to appear suggesting that all is not as it seems.

*A few weeks after Maharajji's mahasamadhi, a stranger came to the Hanuman temple in Lucknow. He questioned the priest about the beads he*

wore around his neck, and the priest replied they were tulsi beads that Maharajji had given to him. The stranger said that he knew Maharajji and thought that he was a great soul. He asked to be shown around the ashram, and upon entering the bedroom kept ready for Maharajji, the man pointed to an urn sitting on the bed and inquired about it. The priest realized that the man didn't know about Maharajji's mahasamadhi. He told him that the urn contained ashes from Maharajji's cremation. The man was shocked and he said that this was impossible, since he had just seen Maharajji a few days earlier in Amarkantak. He said that Maharajji had worn only a burlap sack around his waist and no other clothing. Maharajji had told him that he had left his blanket in Kainchi and that from then on he wouldn't wear expensive dhotis. He had said that ashrams were prisons and that they caused attachment to creep back into the minds of sadhus, who were supposed to have cleansed the mind of attachment. Maharajji had said that he had run away from the ashrams and that he'd never return. From now on he would live in the jungle and have time to sing and pray without disturbance.

The priest was taken aback by the man's revelations. A moment later he turned to question the stranger and he discovered that the man had disappeared.

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Maharajji told me two or three years ago that he would bring me three things. He didn't, and I never reminded him because he does what he does. I never asked him anything. Whatever he did for me came from his own mouth. The three things that he wanted to give me were: rudraksha beads from Pashupatinath, a Shiv-lingam from the Narmada River, and a special conch.

After Maharajji's death, a sadhu came and gave these to me. He said, "These are being sent for you." This young sadhu came three times. The last time he made it clear: "Everything is being done according to the orders of Baba Neem Karoli!" Outside of these three visits, I never saw him, and he came only to this house.

I never searched or inquired after the sadhu. If we inquire, that means there is curiosity and that we want something, and that is not our duty. Whatever Maharajji is doing, he is doing. The sadhu came to me and fulfilled the words uttered from Maharajji's mouth. I suppose that it is he. Since that day I am confirmed that he is with me.

You and I have some thoughts, and a third person fulfills them. How is it possible? That power is working. The sadhu hardly looked twenty-one or twenty-two years old. He last came ten days ago, in the morning. A great fire

was raging out of control and I was rushing down the path when he came walking up. He sat in my office and I called for tea. I told him about the fire and even though the smoke could be seen from the house, he wouldn't allow me to go.

I told the sadhu that Maharajji used to behave like this. He bowed his head and smiled. I thought that most likely he was Maharajji and that's why he was smiling. I told him that I had to go to the fire, but he wouldn't give me permission. Then he told me, "I have sent Pawanasuta (a name of Hanuman) there. He will control it. Hanumanji is there. Don't worry." About twenty-five minutes later the fire was extinguished. He said, "You can go if you want, but the fire is out." I went to the fire and he went another way. The fire was out.

Prior to that day he had come before the Kumbha Mela, after which he had told me that I'd get darshan. He wore Hanumanji's clothes (red)—one dhoti and a small blanket. I told him that if Maharajji would give me darshan, he would have to tell me that it is he. Maharajji, I said, had never kept anything secret from me. I finally made my implication clear and the sadhu said, "Everything is being done under his orders." If it is he, he should make it clear.

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One family had been in the habit of making khir and placing it in a small room before the picture of Maharajji. Once, several years back, the niece had found the khir dripping down the picture, starting at Maharajji's mouth. Now, some time after he left his body, khir was again made and left before the picture. Later the family found that three-fourths of it was gone and that the spoon had been used. The room is so situated that no one could have been in it without their knowledge.

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A young fellow came weeping from Masiribhad in Rajasthan and when questioned, said he had just been told that Maharajji had left his body two years previously. But he didn't understand how it could have been two years before, since only three months earlier Maharajji had arranged for the marriage of his daughter and had come to the wedding.

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Dada does puja to Maharajji each day by creating an extraordinary floral offering on Maharajji's tucket. On many days, after the puja is prepared and the room vacated, Dada returns to find indentations of footprints on the bedspread and some disarray. Maharajji has come and accepted the offering of love.

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One devotee, while reading the Ramayana on the occasion of Ram's birthday, felt Maharajji's presence. The next day when she opened the book, the name Ram was written in, just where Shiva says to Uma (his consort), "It's all illusion except the name of the Lord."

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In August 1977 I had walked to Kainchi from Nainital, since the rains had washed landslides onto the road. When I arrived, Siddhi Ma told me of a baba who had just left fifteen minutes before, who she said was so much like Maharajji in behavior and speech and feeling. He looked to be about sixty years old and very tall, over six feet. I stayed in Kainchi for some time and felt faith that somehow I would get a ride back to Nainital. Maharajji brought me to Kainchi and he would care for my return. At the gate I got a ride in a white car. Less than two miles up the road I saw a tall sadhu. I stopped the car and touched the baba's feet, saying nothing. The baba said, "We didn't meet at the temple and so we have met here." I enjoined the baba to come to Nainital, and, despite his protests of much business on the plains, he came. That evening at my home the baba asked a young boy if the boy recognized him—but he didn't wait for an answer and went on talking. Everyone who met the sadhu remarked how very much like Maharajji he talked and laughed. As the sadhu was leaving he told me not to try following him, that I wouldn't be able to.

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One night three of the workers at the ashram stayed up late talking about Maharajji. Around midnight they went to sleep. K slept on the verandah of

the Hanuman temple, the chaukidar across from Maharajji's room, and the cook outside the kitchen.

Some time after 1:00 A.M., the chaukidar was awakened by crying sounds—a male voice—inside Maharajji's room. Yet the room was locked from the outside. He was very frightened and so ran to K for help. K was in a deep sleep and only after they had poured cold water on his face did he awaken. K said he felt, upon awakening, as though he had the strength of fifty men. They told him of the crying sounds and he felt completely calm as they were telling him. He said that as he stood outside the locked room, listening to the sounds, he felt no fear whatsoever—he knew with his whole being that it was all right. He felt that inside that room was Hanuman (which to K is synonymous with Maharajji). So they didn't unlock the door to look inside.

**N**OW MAHARAJJI comes in visions to many of the devotees.

There was a fairly wealthy man in Gujarat. He gave all his money away to his daughters, came to Vrindaban, saw the Hanuman murti, and said, "I'm never going to leave here." He became a cook in the ashram. He was the most sincere, simple man imaginable, working from early in the morning until late at night, scrubbing and cooking. He had never seen Maharajji but was deeply devoted to him and told one of the Westerners that several times he had seen Maharajji (in a transcendent form) in the ashram.

One such time it had been late at night and he was still working in the kitchen. When he had finally finished his work, he just felt like sitting for a while before the samadhi. While he was sitting there, he had felt someone tap him on the shoulder. Turning to see who it was, he had beheld Maharajji standing behind him, wearing a blanket but glowing in radiant white light. He fell down at Maharajji's feet, and Maharajji touched him and made him cry. He said that there were two other occasions when Maharajji had come to him in this way. As this man was telling the story, he was crying and went over to the spot on the ashram grounds where he saw Maharajji. "He was right here! I saw him right here."

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One woman devotee was staying in the ashram after Maharajji's mahasamadhi. Around 3:00 A.M. she awoke and went out of her room, and there, in a huge form, at the entrance of the inner room of Maharajji's samadhi temple, was Maharajji himself. Such a huge form! She was in a state of ecstasy on seeing him and rushed back to her room to get kum-kum (red powder) to tilak him.

When she returned outside he had vanished, but she was still in such ecstasy that she went over to the temple and wrote "Om Ram" on the wall of the samadhi building. It was just the ordinary kum-kum they use every day to write on the samadhi—and then they wash it off daily. But this time it didn't wash off—and it is still there. You can see it, and it's been over three years since she had this darshan. Whenever I return from a visit to Vrindaban, she inquires if it is still there. It always is.

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The day of Indra's mother's death was about a year after Maharajji left his body. She spent all afternoon at Kainchi talking about the flower Maharajji had given her when she was sick, which disappeared when she got well; how Maharajji had named her children; and so forth. Earlier in the day she kept asking, "Do you think anyone could see Maharajji's large form and continue to live?" That evening she was sitting with the other Mothers in Maharajji's room and suddenly she leaned over toward the bed as if she were doing a pranam—and died. Her fingers were still doing her beads.

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After Maharajji's mahasamadhi, a woman from Allahabad wanted to have his darshan. She was in Haridwar in bed with her husband when suddenly she sat up and started to speak incoherently. "He's come, he's here." She got very frightened and then she said Maharajji laughed and asked, "Why are you getting so frightened? Didn't you desire to touch my feet and massage my body like you used to?"

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In 1976 a devotee who had come to the temple wanted to go in to Maharajji's room, but the keepers wouldn't let him in. He started looking around for a key when he heard Maharajji's voice saying, "What nonsense are you doing? This is not the way. So-and-so is here. He will open the door." Just then that person came and let the devotee in.

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A local baba, when helping with the building of a temple for Maharajji, wondered how it would be built. Then he had a vision of Maharajji piling stone upon stone and saying, "I will build the mandir."

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After Maharajji died, a man and his family were passing by the temple, when their car broke down. They asked to be put up for the night. Just at this time, there was much concern at the temple as to where money would come from for the samadhi temple. All that night the man cried and felt he must do something for this temple. The next morning he gave all the money needed for the murti.

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My husband feels Maharajji talks to him all the time. Once he told my husband to get land and build a house; another time he told him that the local baba at the temple had no rice. My husband went immediately with supplies and found that, indeed, the baba had no edibles in his house.

FOR OTHER DEVOTEES, Maharajji comes in dreams.

One afternoon in May around two o'clock, a year or so after Maharajji's mahasamadhi, I was deeply asleep in my room at the ashram. In a dream, Maharajji came to me and slapped my face five times and yelled at me to wake up immediately and water the trees in the ashram because they were dying of thirst. I indeed woke up immediately and my cheek was red and stinging as if it had just been slapped!

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Maharajji gave darshan to my wife in her dreams. He said that he was living in America now and that he was also working in a factory in Feradabad, where my brother is ailing.

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Once I had a dream, after Maharajji's death, in which he was taking me higher and higher into the sky. I was growing afraid and I said, "Maharajji, now I want to go back."

He said, "No." But I was so afraid. Then he said, "Okay, then you go back." And as soon as he said that, I woke up.

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One night I dreamed that I was sitting with Maharajji again. All the Ma's were around, and I was just crying there at his feet. The next day I wept from love the whole day long.

EVEN WITHOUT encounters on the physical plane, visions, or dreams, most of the devotees continue to feel Maharajji's presence and protection. But why should that be surprising? After all, Maharajji had again and again assured us that he would always be in communion with us and that we didn't need to be with his physical body.

One afternoon I was sitting across the temple courtyard from Maharajji. He was surrounded by devotees who were massaging his feet, laughing and talking about this and that, and sharing fruit and sweets. As I watched, the scene suddenly appeared to become static, as if I were watching a tableau. I felt a remoteness from it all. In my mind I thought, "My relationship with Maharajji is not in time and space. I don't need to be at his feet in physical form. It wouldn't really matter if I were to never see him again. He is in my heart." Just the thought made me feel guilty, but at that moment it all came back to life and I saw Maharajji turn and whisper to an old Indian devotee standing at his side. The man immediately came rushing across the courtyard, came up to me, and touched my feet. Then he said to me, "Maharajji told me to come over and touch your feet. Maharajji said, 'Ram Dass and I understand each other perfectly. His heart is open.'" At that very moment I knew that Maharajji had freed me from attachment to his form. (R.D.)

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Once in Allahabad, Maharajji said to M Ma, "I must go. I have much work." She replied, "What work have you to do?"

"I have plenty of work to do, but I'll come soon."



Four months passed and he had not returned. The Ma's were talking about how Maharajji was not truthful. When they saw Maharajji again, the Ma's told him, "Baba, you speak lies."

"Why, Ma?"

"You said you would come, and it has been almost five months."

"I never speak lies. Where could I go? I am always here with you. Believe me, Mother, where could I go?"

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YOU CAN LEAVE ME. I WON'T LEAVE  
YOU. ONCE I CATCH HOLD OF YOU,  
I DON'T LET GO.

MS and I were discussing stories of how Maharajji is said to be alive and well in a rejuvenated body, that of a youth in Amarkantak. He said that actually what is important is to know that Maharajji is guiding us each moment. "I really mean that. I know it sounds like sweet poetry to speak in this way, but he is with us all the time. I say it from my heart."

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When he was in a body, I was always visited by him in dreams. Even now he comes in dreams, but they are not so vivid unless he has to instruct me in something. In the mornings when I sit close-eyed, I feel that he is in front of me. That used to happen and it still happens. I don't attach great importance to whether his body is there or not there. He is everywhere. When you meditate on him and think of him, he must come. He has always been here and will always be. There is no need to go anywhere special to find him. All places are equally good.

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From the first time I sat with him, I didn't have to be around him long before he was in my heart. He is in my heart all the time. I don't have a lot of pictures of him around. I don't often talk about him. He's still here—not in words, but in a feeling.

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*For months on end I'll forget about Maharajji's leaving his body, and then I'll have a very powerful experience of his presence. But I don't try to keep him in my mind anymore, which at one time was one of my practices. Yet sometimes spontaneously, or as a result of some input from somewhere, a real experience of his presence arises. And in that way, for me, it seems to be more a matter of grace.*

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*Maharajji has been coming to me lately—as the father, which is exactly what I need now in my life. He comes as a huge teddy bear, who throws his arms around me and loves me in a very physical way—caressing and hugging—in a way that I've never known in my life before.*

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*Still he is doing his work. We needn't do anything. Our problems are being solved by him. Physically we can't see him, but if we think and meditate, he is always with us. In my case I know that everything is being done by him. Still today if I have any problem, I meditate on him and he does it.*

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*Just a few days back I was riding the bus from Bhowali to Nainital. As I was sitting there by the window I felt the warmth of Maharajji, as if he were sitting beside me. I went into some sort of trance and was talking to him. It wasn't until the bus pulled to a stop with a jerk that I realized I was having this trance.*

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*My wife is from the Punjab and they greatly believe in family astrologers. Our astrologer said that her fifty-ninth year would be very difficult. A few*

weeks ago it began and she was not feeling well and was worried. While moving a packet of ash and flowers that had been given to her by Maharajji three years earlier at a yagna (he had scooped up the ash himself) she opened it and found inside a pearl ring she had never seen before. (It is believed that if you have a moon affliction in your horoscope, a pearl will help you.) Maharajji is there, so why worry? He will take care of everything.

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Just coming to visit the temple brought me back into his presence. Later, as we discussed this, one of the Mothers told me that Maharajji had said, "When a saint leaves his body, the temple becomes his body."

This year when I walked back into his room in Vrindaban, just as I crossed over the threshold, I felt as though everything I'd done in the last four years was irrelevant and meaningless. It was the same experience as having one of Maharajji's glances—it would bring you to right here, right now.

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During the return trip to India that I made this winter, as I was walking into the back part of the Vrindaban ashram, I was filled with the awareness that all the things I'd done over the entire past five years, including those that would be considered adharmic, were absolutely insignificant. I've read this in the scriptures, of course, but this was the experience—re-experience, I should say—that when you turn your heart totally to God, everything is forgiven; it is absolutely nothing. And that's what I felt when I went in there. I just sat for a long time in Maharajji's room. It felt as though the shakti from Maharajji's tucket were pouring off the blanket and into my heart, as if I were literally bathing in it, drinking the coolness of it.

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One cannot understand what he is. Physically he is not here, but he is listening to everything.

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*It is very disturbing, you see. I start talking about Babaji and then it feels as if he is here or something. What can be done?*

MAHARAJJI, LIKE THE wind, belongs to no one. People who never knew him when he was embodied also report seeing him in visions and dreams, sensing his presence, and feeling that they are called by him. Obviously his ability to touch people is not limited by physical contact.

WHEN PEOPLE THINK ON ME,  
I AM WITH THEM.

There is no way to generalize how it has been for the devotees since Maharajji left his body. Each of us has gone on with life. Some of us cling to the memories of the form, the stories, the photographs, the rituals, the names, and each other. Others among us have let the form go, knowing that we need not necessarily cling to Maharajji, because he clings so strongly to us that, even if we tried, we could not forget. The legacy that he has left each person who acknowledges his existence is a faith deep within the heart. He reawakened that faith through mirroring for us a place in ourselves so deep that we rarely, if ever, had touched it before. It is a place of light, in which we truly share the brilliant, wondrous loving-living spirit. And seeing such a light has made it all different.

*Before I met Maharajji I was doing the same things I do now but out of orbit. He got me into orbit.*

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*I have seen the best entertainment. So I don't get any pleasure from the things of this world—fancy foods, cinemas, adventures. I have no will for them. One friend invited me to see the cinema in Nainital. I said, "Why? I*

*have seen the biggest cinema here. That Nainital cinema will bore me. The biggest entertainment is Maharajji."*

BY LEAVING US with so few guidelines that are free of confusion, so few practices, he has protected us from getting caught in more superficial levels of our being. For example, we cannot hide in righteousness, because he was a rascal—nor can we hide in rascality, because his every act was dharmic. In no form can our egos hide, for Maharajji is always there, like Hanuman, to "spot a tyrant and pull his beard."

*Sometimes I have flashes of it. I keep a couple of little pictures of Maharajji around the house. Every once in a while, when I'm rushing through things—like I'll get up late and have to rush to work, so I'll go speeding through the house—every once in a while he'll jump out and grab me. Either I'll see the picture and I'll think, "Whooo, right! Don't worry, I still remember"—or I won't see the picture but I'll have some kind of flash, like, "What are you doing? What's happening? Are you still there? Where are you? What's happening?"*

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*When I was a young kid, I always dreamed of becoming a racer—cars, motorcycles, or whatever. And after Maharajji died, I began to race motorcycles. I would concentrate my energies on driving as fast as I could, but all that time I couldn't forget! No matter how fast I'd go, in a motorcycle or even in a plane, beyond that there is still the speed of light, and if you go that fast you don't exist anymore. That speed I could never reach. And that is the speed of Maharajji. He is like the speed of light.*

Now the stories have been told, the form has come—and gone. And here we are, you and I and Maharajji, each just as real as our minds and hearts allow.

At this moment, as I write these words, I am here.

At this moment, as you read these words, you are here.

In this "here" that we share, beyond time and beyond space, Maharajji is. Always.

*I am like the wind  
No one can hold me  
I belong to everyone  
No one can own me  
The whole world is my home  
All are my family  
I live in every heart  
I will never leave thee.*

*—from the words of Neem  
Karoli Baba, known as  
“Maharajji,” adapted by  
Jai Gopal*