

## Under Maharajji's Blanket

THE WAY IN WHICH guru and devotee relate to one another varies immensely from devotee to devotee. In the holy books it is said that a devotee might see the guru in the roles of father, mother, child, friend, master, lover, or God. And there were devotees who saw Maharajji in each of these ways. But the essence of the way in which Maharajji's Indian devotees felt toward him is perhaps better captured by the word *baba* than by the term *guru*. *Baba* can mean "grandfather" or "elder." It is a term of respect used with either an older person or a spiritual person. The sadhus, or wandering renunciates, of India are usually called *baba*, and so is the old street cleaner. Its softness and familiarity better capture the quality of the play between Maharajji and his devotees.

FOR SOME of them, he was seen primarily as the grandfather of the family:

*The fatherly affection he'd give can't be gotten from anyone else.*

FOR OTHERS their “baba” was their dear friend:

*When you love somebody you play anything with them. That’s what I did. I never thought differently.*

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*We’d travel together often and just talk about this and that.*

FOR MANY he was a wise advisor:

*I’d just come, ask him my questions, and go.*

TO SOME he was just another saintly sadhu:

*He was just an ordinary baba. He’d come often, and we would give him a little sweet or a glass of water. He’d sit on a bare cot. And we felt so much bloated with pride because “we fed a baba today.”*

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*My family has always had saints like Maharajji connected with them.*

BUT FOR many he was a guardian angel, as if from another realm:

*While with him I always felt protection, from anywhere, from all things.*

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*Maharajji picks us from one spot and places us at another.*

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*Whenever we feel difficulty from any ordeals in our life, we always remember him. Then he always helps us, either directly or by giving some strength to others to help us.*

AND FOR some, God:

*Whoever had his darshan, even from behind, is saved.*

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*Maharajji is the havan (sacrificial fire) accepting and burning my karma.*

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*He's beyond anything you could say of him.*

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*You see, he is God. That's of course who he is.*

ALL THESE categories are too specific. Really, for most devotees he was now one and now another of these, or he was all of them. Quite simply, he was their "baba."

*I didn't care about his miracles. I only knew that he was my baba.*

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*One woman never thought of Maharajji as a great saint with powers. He said that he didn't have them, so she believed him. She thought of him as a saintly, good, and kind person, who gave her love and affection and peace of mind. Her husband thought that Maharajji was God himself. In Maharajji's presence both of them would forget their problems.*

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*I have never been afraid of him. Never. It was not out of fear of him that I was tense and alert around him—but out of fear for him. For instance, if you*

have a flower garden and are caring for it, you are not afraid of the flowers but of the horse and the cow who may trample or eat it or of the gardener who may forget to water it. I was afraid, you see, that someone's carelessness might cause him inconvenience or pain; like your mother would feel if you came home from school and she was not there—she'd worry about who would feed and take care of you. It was like that.

AMONG THE Westerners there was also considerable heterogeneity in the ways of seeing Maharajji and being with him. Although many of us had extremely intimate relations with Maharajji, nevertheless, the more formal term "guru," with its emphasis as a vehicle for spiritual liberation, would seem a more appropriate label than "baba." Because gurus were not commonplace in the culture from which we had come, we tended to invest more heavily in the guru mythos. We didn't particularly want a grandfather or another friend. We wanted God or at least a divine intermediary. And that's how most of us saw Maharajji. In these quotations some differences among us become apparent:

*(One Western devotee speaks to another.) I didn't need to be around him a lot. It was okay for everyone else who had to be around him constantly. I think that my traveling with you was good because you were a perfect complement to me. You had to be near Maharajji, you had to sit at his feet; you had to pick up every little detail, hear every little story. And I really loved that; it was really beautiful—but for me all of that got in the way; that was not what I needed. I just needed the essence, the seed, the feeling.*

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*I remember one day we had eaten very well, as usual, and we all napped afterward. But there was a feeling of what the Sufis call baraka (blessing or spiritual power). When we woke up we were disoriented, but it felt so delightful. A lot of the real work for me was in that feeling I got after coming and taking prasad and relaxing. It was in this way that I experienced the actual baraka, or blessing, taking place.*

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*I was crying all the time because Maharajji wouldn't take me to him, inside his arms, into the temple and fly me up into the sky. After that first contact with him I became extremely eager, almost crazy, to be inside his blanket.*

*So I always tried to bargain, to find some way that I could get him to take me. And I realized very quickly that there was no way to do anything that could make him take me.*

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*I never felt that the words were really important. The true guru is within. And Maharajji was a manifestation that I needed to see in order to understand that truth.*

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*Because of the longing for him and the sense of being in the presence of my own divine holy God-Mother—I always felt Maharajji to be as my Mother; Maharajji was like the Ma for me. Maharajji's relation to God was totally internal and subtle.*

*It was just so fine to be who you are—to be yourself. The playfulness was so infinite, the heart-opening so wide.*

IN THE FOLLOWING comparison between the behaviors of two of the devotees, another dimension of difference becomes clear.

When Devotee A was in the temple it was predictable that if any Westerner were allowed near Maharajji, he would be the one. There was no limit to the ingenuity he employed to remain in Maharajji's presence for every possible second. If Maharajji told people to go away, A would be the last to leave and then might go immediately around the back of the building, pick a flower off a tree, and arrive from the other side, as if he were just arriving for the first time. When others were being told to go, he would often hide so as to avoid being included in the expulsion edict. It developed into an elaborate game, in which Maharajji was a participant.

A was a master of his game. He seemed to have a special sense that told him where Maharajji would be any moment, and he managed to be there, waiting. Others tried to compete in this game but none ap-

proached A's totally one-pointed (or, depending upon how you saw it, totally selfish) behavior. Others were hampered by guilt or compassion for others—feelings which, if mentioned, elicited only an uncomprehending look from A.

Devotee B was an entirely different story. If Maharajji sent us to help in the kitchen, B would remain peeling potatoes long after others had given up and drifted back to Maharajji. He would stay until the last potato was peeled and then look for more work. Although he had been trained as an attorney in the United States, his service and humility at the temple were so outstanding that soon he was in charge of kitchens and storerooms. He remained in the temple performing the purest service for five years, until he was evicted by the government. No job was too menial and there was no evidence of personal pride about his humility, nor any effort to get attention for his work. It was truly as if he came closest to God through his service. He hardly ever came near Maharajji, and when he did it was usually only to touch his feet and then go back to his duties.

Devotees like A often infuriated other devotees because they seemed to be monopolizing Maharajji, while devotees like B aroused respect and sometimes guilt in others. Yet intuitively we knew that each in his own way was a pure devotee, and Maharajji obviously loved them both.

As varied as were all the ways of seeing and being with Maharajji, so were his reactions. He responded to each according to his or her capacity to absorb. In the infinitely changing nature of Maharajji's behavior, each person found what he or she needed. Because he stood nowhere he was like a mirror, showing each devotee the baba or guru that they projected. Often with one act he fed simultaneously the disparate needs of a dozen devotees.

*Who can say with these saints? They are like the sky. Maharajji's mind was completely clear. He would seem to have no thoughts; only that which Bhagavan (God) willed would come into his mind. Like a cloud it would come and then—whup—oh, such action that thought would produce! And again, like a cloud it would pass. His mind was always clear.*

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*He used to speak to the devotee according to the person's own depth, according to what line of devotion the person was following.*

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If you were clever or deceptive Maharajji ignored you, but if you were simple and open he'd help you.

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Maharajji, when he liked a person, expressed it from the heart. When he didn't want to see the face of a person, he would cover his face with a blanket.

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Maharajji did not reveal himself to everybody. He could see into the soul of a person; where we would see a nice sort of chap, he would see the person's inner workings. To some people he would just give prasad and send them away.

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Whether a person had been with Maharajji for twenty-five years or was a rank newcomer, all were given the same consideration. There were no favorites, and no one was indispensable.

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On one occasion a caravan of army trucks stopped at the gate, and hundreds of soldiers came and stood in line. Maharajji was talking to a farmer sitting beside him. One by one the soldiers and officers came forward, bent over and touched Maharajji's feet, looked at him for another moment, and then turned away. That experience was all most of them seemed to want. But every so often one would come forward who seemed different—perhaps seeming to have a bit more light or perhaps seeming to suffer more. Many times I watched as such a person bent forward. Maharajji would hit him on the head, or give him a flower, or interrupt his conversation to say something to him, such as, "Your mother will be all right," or "You shouldn't fight with your superiors," or

*“You love God very much.” We could see only the tiniest fraction of what Maharajji saw.*

*The soldiers wanted pictures of Hanuman (the protecting deity of the Indian army) and of Maharajji, to carry as protection in war. Maharajji said, “The army has good and simple and spiritual men.” It was not as if Maharajji were “deciding” to do this or that; rather, the nature of the seeker was eliciting from him, as from a mirror, this or that response. (R.D.)*

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*The first time I saw Maharajji was at a mela, and I was asked to come to Chitrakut. The first thing that impressed me was that he was like a mirror. In Chitrakut there were so many people and they were talking about all his doings, and I was never interested but said that I thought he was like a mirror. When they then told Maharajji, he was very happy to hear that I thought this.*

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*I would talk with Maharajji about all matters, including such things as science or humans going to the moon. He was like a mirror; he had nothing to do with any of it. But he showed interest, and the next time you spoke of it he would follow what you were saying. He used to say, “I remember everything.”*

**M**AHARAJJI DID not seem to be “deciding” how to react to any devotee and in fact advised others to . . .

SEE GOD IN EVERYONE. IT IS  
DECEPTION TO TEACH BY INDIVIDUAL  
DIFFERENCES AND KARMA.\*

**N**EVERTHELESS, when pressed, he could “explain” his behavior:

*Once I was chastising Maharajji for giving photos to people who were worldly and didn't care about him. He said, “You don't understand me. If I*

\*This quote, and those set in this manner throughout the book, are direct quotes of Maharajji.



tell a man he is a great bhakta [devotee], I am planting a seed. If a person already has the seed planted and growing, why should I plant another?"

I said, "You are telling these drunkards, liars, and dacoits that they are real bhaktas. They will just go home and carry on their old behaviors."

Maharajji said, "Some of them will remember what I said of them, and it will make them want to develop this quality in themselves. If ten out of a hundred are inspired in this way, it is a very good thing."

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A devotee once said to Maharajji, "Maharajji, why do you tell people to do something and then blame them for it?"

"If I tell them to jump off a cliff, should they do it? I just tell them what is going on in their minds."

ALL OF THIS seemed to be a process whereby Maharajji was using devotees in the service of the awakening of one another.

When the Indians were feeling resentful of the Westerners, Maharajji would say, "They are very sincere and very pure, and that's why I love them. The Westerners all test me. You [Indians] all have blind faith."

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Maharajji once said of the Westerners, "For Westerners, just being in India is a form of renunciation. They have given up so much to be here. Once they believe, they believe fully, with their whole hearts and souls, like children."

NOT ONLY DID his response differ from person to person, but it varied over time for each individual as well. It was as if each time you came before Maharajji were the first time. And if the same conversation happened again and again, which was often the case, it was because the devotee remained caught in the same place, visit after visit. But each time the devotee would let go of the aspect of his thinking and behavior in which he or she was stuck, then he or she would find a whole new Maharajji.

One of Maharajji's favorite styles of dealing with devotees, especially

the Indians, was abuse. And he was a master of it. Most of the Westerners did not understand Hindi well enough to appreciate the peppery language Maharajji used, and most of the translators took it upon themselves to clean up his language for him. The Indians had become accustomed to his way of talking and actually interpreted it as a form of endearment.

*Maharajji always hit the people he liked.*

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*If he called you names, like saying you were wicked or depraved, you knew he liked you.*

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*He'd abuse people, calling them troublemakers, telling them they danced naked, drank too much, were rowdies or sherabis (winos).*

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*A relative used to give me trouble all the time, but I would say nothing. Troubled, I went to Maharajji and he knew right away, saying that this man was bothering me. He said, "It is good if somebody abuses you, good in a spiritual way also. A person progresses if someone abuses him. Don't be worried. A day will come when this man will come and bow his head before you."*

*One day it happened. He came to me, saying, "I made all these mistakes; I gave you unnecessary troubles . . ."*

**B**ESIDES THE abuse there was a great deal of teasing and chiding.

*"Dada has his God today! Tea and cigarettes," said Maharajji to Dada, who only laughed.*

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*Dada used a corner of his own dhoti to wipe Maharajji's mouth. Someone criticized Dada and said he should not do this. Then a woman brought milk and there were a few drops around Maharajji's mouth after he drank. Maharajji turned to Dada and asked, "Why are you leaving this?" and grabbed Dada's dhoti himself to wipe his mouth in front of everyone.*

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*One woman laughingly remembered the intimate friendship she had with Maharajji. She told how he loved to tease and "pull people's legs." She described how he would play in this way with the Westerners. Before a large group of Indians he would ask them some questions, and they would give some reply. Then Maharajji would turn to the woman and wink, saying in this way, "See how naive these people are; they don't know anything." And the Westerners would be taking everything he said as deep mysterious truth, while he laughed at their simple innocence.*

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*A family came for the darshan of Maharajji. They had bought a box of sweets for him in Nainital, and during the drive to Kainchi they began saying to each other how much they would like to sample a sweet or two. Finally they did so and then rearranged what was left so it would not appear that one was missing before the box was presented to Maharajji. Immediately Maharajji recoiled and refused even to touch the box. "Take it away, take it away, it is contaminated! Throw it out! Let the dogs eat it! No, the dogs wouldn't even touch this—it is polluted. Throw it out!"*

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*There was a sweets-maker who used to come to Maharajji full of devotion and bring many sweets for all whenever he visited. Maharajji praised him and rewarded him. After some time he began to become inflated with pride and self-importance. One day in particular, after an absence of some time, he brought a prasad—a small box of sweets, half the size of what people usually bring—and this from a sweets-maker. Maharajji looked at him askance, emptied out the*

sweets, and gave the small box to a devotee nearby and said, "Don't give him a big box of puris. Here, put some puris in this instead."

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"Would you like to drink this water?" Maharajji asked me. It was unclean and from a Moslem source. He knew I was a Brahmin and would not drink it, and he never forced me against my nature. Often he would say to people, "Offer that to S," knowing I would not take it. Then Maharajji would say, "No, don't give it to him, he won't take it."

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I had been in Bombay on a religious pilgrimage, where I stayed with a family in their home. The head of the family had to take a drink of alcohol every evening for his heart condition. He offered me some, and I ended up getting quite drunk on Scotch.

Later, when I returned to Maharajji, he was talking to me about a sadhu who had gone to America. Maharajji asked, "What do they feed him in America?"

"I don't know, Maharajji, but I'm sure it's very pure food."

"They feed him milk," said Maharajji.

"That's good."

"Do you know what they put in the milk?"

"No."

He leaned forward and said to me in a mock conspiratorial voice, "Liquor!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"Oh, no!" I exclaimed as though he had just described the most horrendous breach of behavior.

To which Maharajji replied, "Oh, yes," and looked at me significantly.

I broke up. He had just nailed me to the wall. (R.D.)

ONE OF THE beauties of the relationships between the abusing, chiding Maharajji and the devotees was that many of them weren't afraid to fight back. And he seemed especially to enjoy those who stood up to him.

I was able to speak in this brutal way because, knowing him since I was six, I never reflected about the respectable way to talk with him; there was no feeling of "bigness" or "elderness" between us. Once, for example, he was just pulling on my nose and I said to him, "Don't do that! If you can make it longer, then you can do it; otherwise, don't touch my nose."

Maharajji said, "Okay, I won't touch it. But I can bless you on the top of your head."

I said to him that whatever he did with me, he must do in the right way. So he patted me on the head. This was the way I could talk to him. This is what I am missing these days, since he left his body.

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The last time I saw Maharajji was in Vrindaban. We had traveled since early morning to get there and arrived shortly before noon, but he didn't come out of his room until after 3:00 P.M. When he emerged he immediately began yelling at me, telling me to go away, saying that he didn't want to see my face. "Jao [Go]!"

I yelled right back at him, asking what had I done to him. I had traveled all morning and waited all day to see him and this was his greeting. "No!" I said, "I won't go."

He kept on yelling and finally called the chaukidar to throw me out. The chaukidar came, hands folded, speaking politely but persistently. I yelled at Maharajji: "Just let me see how this man will touch me! How he will throw me out! I won't go."

You know, finally Maharajji called me to him. He patted me on the head and said a few mantras, just as he had done the first time I saw him. Now he was smiling so beautifully. He told me that his shakti (spiritual energy) would always be with me and that now I should go. By then I was filled by him, and I said that he didn't have to tell me to go. I was leaving on my own now, because I had received his darshan.

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My mother is a great devotee of Maharajji, and she even rebuked Maharajji when she thought it proper. Maharajji said of her, "See, she can do this. Only people with a pure heart can do such things!" Then again, sometimes

Maharajji rebuked her for coming. "Oh! Why have you come? You should go home. You've come without the permission of your son!"

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I never knew who Maharajji was. Once when I wouldn't leave, Maharajji said, "You have eaten my brain. Please go from here." Maharajji would insult me: "Go away. I won't talk to you." I would reply, "I won't go until my work is done."

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I didn't want to go to Madras with Maharajji. He asked me to go, but I had no clothing. Maharajji said he was going, and I said I would only go to the station and say good-bye. So I went inside his railroad coach because I wanted to pranam. But he just wouldn't talk to me; he turned away and wouldn't even look at me. I wouldn't get off, and after the train started, Maharajji began laughing. Then I had to go with him.

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In those days Maharajji never stayed too long in one place—seldom more than two or three days—so I wasn't able to get his darshan more than a few times. Then I left Kanpur for Calcutta for twenty years, where I was very busy and had no connection with Maharajji. When I returned to Kanpur I remembered Maharajji, wondering where he was and growing annoyed at myself for not seeking him. I left my meals for two months. My wife asked me why I was angry, why I wouldn't eat grains, but I never told her the reason. I was deeply annoyed with myself.

Once in Allahabad a man asked that I have the darshan of a very good saint. Without knowing the saint's name, I was taken to Dada's house. Maharajji saw me and said, "Why have you not eaten your meals for two months?"

I replied, "Why have you not given me darshan? I may be mad, but you are a saint—you shouldn't be mad." Like a child I spoke very rudely to him.

Someone asked me, "Are you going to have a fight with Maharajji?"

I said, "Yes, of course. Why shouldn't I fight? He is like my father and I his son. Why shouldn't we fight? Don't interfere."

Maharajji said, "Please don't interfere. He is my very old devotee."

The people went away and Maharajji turned to me and said, "Now go home. I will come to your house tomorrow morning and I'll take my meal there."

I said, "All right, when you take your meal at my place, only then will I start taking grains. If you don't come, I will not."

Maharajji said, "Come tomorrow."

I said, "No, Maharajji. I have no reliance on your words. You tell me to come for you tomorrow, but you may not be here then. Then what will my position be? I won't go. I'll sleep tonight here on the verandah or on the grass."

Maharajji said, "No. There's no place for you to sleep here."

I said, "It doesn't matter, Maharajji. I'll sleep outside the gate on the public road with one or two bricks for a pillow. Then in the morning I'll catch hold of you."

Maharajji said, "Oh, no. You must rely on me. I will definitely go with you. You go!"

Maharajji insisted, giving me his firm word. He then sent someone after me to drive me home. This man asked me to wait for half an hour. I sat down. Several people who had overheard my discussion with Maharajji told me that Maharajji often gives a blank check that is never cashed. He may or may not come.

I told them that I would come the following morning, and if Maharajji didn't come with me, I would take the oath that I would not even drink water until he came.

As I was saying this Maharajji immediately came from inside: "Wait, wait. I'll go with you just now."

We climbed into two cars and drove to my house, arriving at about eleven at night. No fresh food was available, but Maharajji ate of the leftovers from dinner, taking a little of whatever was offered. He said, "I've taken. Now you eat. Start eating grains and don't fast." Then he left. This is the story of Maharajji's blessing upon me. By and by it increased.

**O**FTEN THE quality of the play between Maharajji and devotees was truly childlike.

Maharajji would plead with me like a spoiled child. "Oh, Ma, please sing bhajan [devotional song]." He would quote the song, "A well without water, a cow without milk, a temple without a lamp, so is a man without bhajan."

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*It was the day of Rakshabandhan, the day of tying protection ribbons on the wrists of your brothers. Earlier, I had bought ribbons for my brothers and for Maharajji as well. I left the ones for my brothers at home but had Maharajji's in my purse. I'd never spent this day with Maharajji and I very much wanted to tie the ribbon around his wrist, but I felt shy doing it in front of so many people. When we were alone for a moment he let me tie it on his wrist. Just then someone came into the room and Maharajji said to him, very shyly, "Mother is tying the Rakshabandhan."*

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*Maharajji had been in his room all morning, giving darshan to many people. After many hours Dada whispered to Maharajji, as a father to a child, "Come, Maharajji, you have been in here all morning and have never once gone to urinate."*

*Maharajji put the blame squarely on Dada's shoulders: "It's all your fault. You didn't remind me!"*

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*Maharajji once seemed to make a great effort to pick up a dead fly on a piece of paper. Finally he held it out for Dada to take. As Dada reached for it the fly flew away, and Maharajji said angrily, "I went to all that trouble, and you let it go!"*

*"Baba," said Dada, "it was in your hand, not mine." Maharajji just laughed.*

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*In 1968, at Kainchi, Maharajji would spend most of the day sitting on Dada's bed. He would say, "Dada keeps awake, so I must stay up, too." At 3:00 A.M. he came to Dada's room, knocking. "You wake me, so today I wake you!"*



"But it's 3:00 A.M.," protested Dada, "and I wake you at 5:00." Maharajji just laughed and came in.

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Once the Ma's came to Maharajji, saying, "Maharajji, come take your bath."

"Go away," he replied. "I don't want to. Come, KK, we'll go to Vrindaban!"

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Maharajji was lying down, sick with a cold. Mrs. Soni, who had never seen him lying sick like that, rubbed his feet and said, "Oh, Maharajji, your feet are so cold."

"Are they, Ma?" He was like a little child.

It was a new moon, which is auspicious to see. So just as one would with a child, she said, "Maharajji, come to the door and look at the new moon and you'll be better."

"Will I, Ma?" She helped him to the door, coaxing him. "Ma, I don't see it."

"There it is."

"Where, Ma?" Finally: "Oh, I see it."

Then she said, "Now you'll be all better tomorrow." She helped him back to bed, and the next day he was better.

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One devotee said that although she had a camera she had never taken pictures of Maharajji. She would lend her camera to others. One day it was loaded and in her possession. She was alone with Maharajji and decided to try to take pictures.

"He tried to pull my leg. You know—posing this way and that, turning his head to the right, the left, pretending to meditate. It was such fun." She pointed out several photos of Maharajji, now on the ashram walls, which were taken at the time.

†††

*Only we were allowed to be with him at all times—while he was eating, bathing, or going to the latrine. He was so delightful! Sometimes he was like a small child—so playful and joyful. Sometimes he would seem so helpless.*

†††

*A man would come to Kainchi dressed in his camouflage jungle clothes and tell Maharajji stories of his hunting exploits. Maharajji called the man "hunter" in English. The man once skillfully described crawling stealthily through the grass in search of a tiger, slowly parting the grass ahead of him as he crawled. As he related the incident he acted out his part. All this time, Maharajji sat in seemingly rapt attention, with apprehension proper to the mood of the story. "Then suddenly," said the hunter, "there in front of me was a tiger!"*

*At this, Maharajji leaped backward on his tucket, just as a child would do. Maharajji was so gleeful at such a good story.*

†††

*Once when Westerners arrived Maharajji yelled with childlike delight, "Here they come! They've come to see me."*

WHERE DID YOU GET THAT?  
NOBODY HAS GIVEN ME ANY.

THERE IS A LONG history of Maharajji's association with dacoits, or robbers. To the extent that a person had a pure or spiritual spark, Maharajji would point to it and fan it—regardless of the person's social status. At the same time, he did not condone thievery, and he dealt harshly with it when it came to his attention. Besides meeting the lawless element of society in jails, which he often visited, he met them on the road in culverts. In his earlier days when he wandered the jungle, the huge ditches under the roads that were designed to hold the monsoon rains served well as shelter in the night. And here he found individuals who became, in one way or another, his devotees.

Maharajji slept in many culverts. So did dacoits. They would go in and push aside the cobwebs and all. There is one huge culvert near Mathura under a bridge where robbers go and await their prey. Maharajji would stay there and the dacoits would say, "Baba, are we going to get any money tonight? You'd better say yes or we'll kill you."

Maharajji says that's why he knows all the bad guys.

॥१॥

Dacoits would get free education in Nainital. The children would come to see Maharajji, and Maharajji would say of their fathers, "Their hearts are pure sometimes." Someone showed Maharajji a picture of a dacoit with rudraksham beads (sacred beads of Shiva). "How sincere," Maharajji commented. "He did bad things but he was pure in his duty."

॥१॥

A policeman lead a captive through town and was being very cruel to him. Maharajji said, "Don't do that."

The policeman was very abusive to Maharajji, but Maharajji replied, "You should be more kind. You never know when you will be in the same position."

The next day the policeman was arrested for bribery and taken in chains through the town.

॥१॥

Maharajji was visiting a jail during Ram Lila (a festival during which the Ramayana is enacted daily), and the inmates were acting out the Ramayana, dressed in appropriate costumes. The jail superintendent was arrogantly telling Maharajji who was in prison for what and for how long—even while the inmates were enacting characters from the Ramayana. The superintendent's old father came, and Maharajji had him do arti to the fellow who was playing Ram and also touch his feet. This humbled the superintendent.

॥१॥

A woman and her sister were taken by Maharajji to visit a juvenile jail in Bareilly. The convicts had constructed a dais for Maharajji to sit on, but they were required to remain some distance from him. They sang kirtan, with folded hands. Maharajji gave some money to the superintendent for sweets for everyone but told him not to tell where the money had come from. As they were leaving they saw some young boys, sitting in their cells.

One of the women with Maharajji asked, "Maharajji, can't you do something for them?"

Maharajji was in tears. "Do you want to take that responsibility?"

॥११

Once Maharajji was arrested as a loiterer and put in jail. Three or four times during the night he unlocked the cell to go out and urinate, much to the perturbation of the jailer. In the morning, the jailer told his superior of the trouble Maharajji had caused him. The superior realized who Maharajji was and apologized, brought him food, and let him go. He became a great devotee of Maharajji.

॥११

Maharajji frequently used the expression "Central Jail" in reference to his body and to the ashrams. Maharajji used this expression even before J became superintendent of police of the Central Jail. Maharajji used to visit an Anglo-Indian devotee who was in the Fategarh Central Jail. While visiting J's home, Maharajji would ask for prison food and they would serve him the prisoners' fare. He would eat it, then visit the prisoners. A few of these people, who were from all walks of life, even considered themselves devotees.

॥११

Dada and Gurudatt Sharma were with Maharajji in a jeep on their way to the temple at Bhumiadhar. As they drove up to the temple they saw some men who were apparently trying to break in. Maharajji grew very excited and said, "They're after Hanumanji! Let's go! Let's go!"

The dacoits ran off down the road. Maharajji jumped out of the jeep, dropped his blanket, and took off down the road after them, running full speed.

Dada and Gurudatt Sharma tried to keep up but kept getting in each other's way, and by the time they caught up with Maharajji he was already returning. He was laughing and happy. "I chased them, Dada. I scared them! I yelled so loud that they peed in their pants. I did good, Dada. Didn't I do good?"

॥१॥

Once an inspector who had been accused of taking a bribe, the Central Excise Commissioner, and Maharajji were sitting together. Maharajji asked the inspector, "You take bribes, don't you?"

The man trembled and wept. Maharajji asked the Commissioner, "He will be thrown out and go to jail?"

The boss replied, "I don't know."

Maharajji then said, "If he's thrown out, his children and wife will die."

The man was acquitted. Maharajji would get people to make confessions publicly, and thereby clear their conscience, and then he would seek compassion for them.

॥१॥

It was a hot summer night and Maharajji and some devotees were sitting outside on the lawn at D's house. Maharajji was sitting in the only chair. All the members of the top-class gentry encircled him. I sat at a distance, watching. Then two people came, one dressed in the traditional formal attire of an advocate and one in a dhoti. Both pranammed and took a seat beside me, but Maharajji ignored them and talked to those in the circle. The two newcomers were very impatient and the advocate wanted to leave. I felt much trouble in them, for if you are before a saint, why run? The advocate pressed the man in white, who stood up and got Maharajji's attention. He said he had a request.

Maharajji said, "Go on."

He continued, "My friend [advocate] is in great trouble."

So Maharajji said to the advocate, "You are not an advocate, are you?"

He replied, "True, I am not."

Maharajji asked, "What is your trouble?"

The man couldn't answer but his friend in white said, "He was involved in murder."

"Did you not commit murder?" asked Maharajji.

"No."

"Was not the murder arranged by you?"

"Yes."

Maharajji looked as if he were viewing a slide before his eyes. Maharajji said, "What harm did he do you? Was he not a simple and honest man?"

"Yes, but he was a hurdle in my way."

Maharajji said, "He had three or four children. It is a heinous crime. Are you not sorry?"

"Yes."

"You will not do it again in your life?"

"No."

"Now you can go," Maharajji said.

The man in the dhoti asked, "Will he be acquitted?"

Maharajji said, "Yes, he will be pardoned."

Maharajji said to the murderer, "Think of the man's wife and helpless children. Who will look after them?" The man was trembling.

"Look after the children," Maharajji continued, "and help them, and you will realize later what you have done." The judge for the case had already written a decision, but late at night he got up and changed the judgment to acquittal.

†††

During Maharajji's absence a number of bags of cement were stolen from the Vrindaban ashram. As soon as he returned he called for the gardener.

"How many bags of cement did you steal?"

"No, Maharajji, I didn't take them."

"Tell me," Maharajji continued, "how much money did you get for them?"

"Nothing."

Maharajji stood up and slapped the gardener on the face so hard that he fell to the ground. Then Maharajji walked away, leaving him there. Five minutes later, Maharajji inquired of others, "How is he now? Call him."

The gardener again came before Maharajji.

"Did you steal them? How many rupees?"

The gardener confessed and said that he received 250 rupees for the cement.

Maharajji turned to the man in charge of the ashram accounts and said to him, "Give him another 250 rupees," and to the gardener, "Now, go!"

The gardener was fired and sent away. Some time later he returned and touched Maharajji's feet and begged to have his old job back again.

Maharajji said, "You've come back! This time I'll put you in Central Jail."

The gardener was sent to the Lucknow temple, where Mahotra, a retired prison official, was the manager.

॥१॥

A policeman and a dacoit were both visiting Maharajji. Each was massaging a leg. Maharajji said to the dacoit, "There is a bounty out for you and anyone who brings you in gets a reward, isn't that true?"

"I don't know, Maharajji," the dacoit replied.

Then Maharajji turned to the policeman, "Do you recognize him?"

"No, Maharajji."

Such was his play.