

The Stick That Heals

MAHARAJJI OFTEN UTILIZED his awesome powers to spread an umbrella of protection over his devotees. Nowhere was this more apparent or breathtaking than when it involved the healing of a devotee's illness. For some devotees the healing took place with a touch or a glance or a word; for others he prescribed medicines. Some stories reflect just how unusual these medicines were. To other devotees who came to him with illnesses, he implied that he could do nothing and sent them to doctors or to special temples to be cured. But when the situation demanded it, and the devotee's faith was strong, Maharajji seemed to effect cures at great distances, via telephone or even in dreams. When confronted with his miraculous healing powers, Maharajji denied all. All he would say at these times was "Sub Ishwar hai. [It's all God]."

After one of Maharajji's long-time devotees had a serious operation, Maharajji remained in her house for nine days. Someone asked him why he was staying so long when usually he never stayed more than few days in any one place. Maharajji replied, "Why do you ask? You're not the one who has to feed me. Why are you worried?" On the seventh night the woman had a

relapse. The doctors treated her with sleeping pills, saying that she should rest, but all to no avail. She could not sleep. Her husband informed Maharajji, who said, "Don't worry, I'm coming." Finally, several hours later, he went to her room where he rebuked her soundly for not going to sleep as the doctors had ordered. Then, lifting his right leg, he touched his big toe to her forehead and within seconds she fell into a deep sleep. When she awoke she was well.

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A devotee was admitted to the hospital for an operation. The doctors said that he was dying of cancer and that an operation was his only chance of survival. His family went to get Maharajji's blessings. Maharajji said, "Go ahead with the operation. He can't have cancer. He'll be all right after the operation." For two or three days the man was near death. Maharajji sent some prasad to him with a Mother, who stayed at his bedside for two days. The operation was performed and no cancer was found. Cancer had shown up on the tests, but by the time of the operation it had disappeared.

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Once a Harvard professor and his wife came to visit Maharajji. The wife was an artist and she sketched a likeness of Maharajji as she sat before him. That night she became violently ill, shaking with fever and coughing blood. This was extremely unusual, as she was a very healthy woman. It was also unfortunate because they were on a tight schedule and had planned to leave that day for Delhi. When word of her illness was taken to Maharajji, he replied, "She will go to Delhi today." But the doctor came and said she would have to be transported to better lodgings and that it would be at least a week before she could travel. They bundled her up to take her to better lodgings and passed by the temple en route, so they stopped the car. Everyone went in to pay their respects to Maharajji, including the sick woman. The closer she got to him, the better she felt—and when she was directly in front of him, she felt completely well. He was beaming at her. She took out her sketch of him and he wrote ॥१॥, ॥१॥, ॥१॥ (Ram, Ram, Ram) all around the edge of the drawing.

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The daughter of the police inspector of Rampur was dying of typhoid, and the only treatment they had in those days was to take away all food. They hadn't fed her for about forty days, so she was on the very edge of death. A letter came from Rampur to Nainital asking Maharajji to come and give darshan to the girl. Actually, the day before the letter arrived, Maharajji had said, "Come, we have to go to Rampur." They went. In the bedroom he said, "They are starving my daughter. What's going on! I'm very hungry. Make me food." Then he ate and said to the girl, "They are starving you. Here, eat this chapatti. Get up and eat this." She managed to get up and eat a bit of it. Then he said, "I'm tired. I have to rest. You sit in the chair and I'll sleep on the bed," The girl did as he instructed. For about an hour he was completely silent, apparently asleep. Then he got up and left, and she recovered.

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One of the Ma's was having back trouble during a pilgrimage. She had a dream of Maharajji and vibhuti (ash from sacred fires, commonly used for healing), but she was rubbing it on his back, which was hurting him. The next day another Ma said, "We have some vibhuti from Maharajji. Let us rub it on your back." They did, and she improved and continued the pilgrimage.

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There was one woman who was pregnant, but all the doctors told her that it was an irregular pregnancy and that she would not be able to carry it to term. Then she had Maharajji's darshan. He just looked at her and said, "Thik ho jaega [It will be all right]." She carried the baby full term and gave a normal delivery to a perfectly normal child.

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When R's daughter was only one year old, she tumbled out the window of their home—a thirty-foot fall. She was unhurt, and the next day, having received word that Maharajji had come to Kainchi, they took her to him. Maharajji said she would be okay. When this same little girl was two, she again tumbled thirty feet—out of another window in their home. This time,

also, she was unhurt and again Maharajji had just come to Kainchi, so instead of taking her to a doctor they took her to Maharajji, who casually said that she'd be okay. This same incident was repeated a third time when she was three. This time the girl herself remembers. She said, "I remember the falling. I felt as if I were floating down." This time when they took her to Maharajji, he said to her parents, "I won't let her die."

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A devotee's son was very sick and he asked his mother to give him some vibhuti from Maharajji. Then he fell asleep and dreamed that he kept trying to dive into a lake and Maharajji kept pulling him out. When he awoke the illness had passed the point of crisis.

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My wife had paralysis of her eye and mouth, and it became so bad that she wanted to commit suicide, but she was very young.

We slept in two cots. One night we both saw Maharajji at the same time, 3:30 A.M. My wife asked me to get up and arrange tea for Maharajji. I got up but there was no one there. Neither of us could sleep, so we had tea ourselves. Suddenly I looked at my wife and saw that her face was again moving and her eye was blinking. The doctor later said, "This is impossible. God has done it."

Several days later Maharajji came at 6:00 A.M. and asked, "What happened to your wife?" All her luster had returned. We have seven children now.

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My mother had a dream in which a sadhu was wounded in the head and she put something in his mouth that Maharajji had given her. She awoke upset at such a strange dream. Hari Dass came to our house the next day to get food for people at the temple. The food was not ready, so Hari Dass was told to wait. He went down to the bathroom and then passed out on the stairs coming up, hitting his head which bled badly. My father arrived and, finding Hari Dass on the stairs, called my mother and together they brought him up to a bed. He

was unconscious and there seemed little hope, but my mother remembered her dream and got some vibhuti that she had obtained from Maharajji. She placed it in Hari Dass's mouth and he got up within half an hour.

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R's wife was dying and she needed surgery. None of her special blood type was available, even in Bombay. She went into surgery saying Maharajji's name, and to the surgeon's surprise it was almost a totally bloodless operation. She later said that she had experienced going to a plane of consciousness where Maharajji had said, "Take her away. She'll stay there."

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Dada's nephew was dying of smallpox and apparently the last moment had come, for the body had been moved from the bed to the floor. It was suggested that a drop of water from the Ganga, with which Maharajji's feet had been washed, be placed in the boy's throat. When this was done the boy sat up, and by the next day the smallpox was gone.

At that same time, many miles away in the hills where Siddhi Ma was with Maharajji, suddenly Maharajji developed these spots all over his body. Since smallpox was not frequently seen in the hills, the hill people were not familiar with what it looked like. They got lotion and treated it as an allergy. By the next day the spots were gone and Maharajji said, "That was wonderful lotion. What could those spots have been? I must have been allergic to something." Only much later was it ascertained that the boy's cure and Maharajji's "allergy" coincided.

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Maharajji was giving darshan in a small room of the ashram, when a disturbed-looking man came in. Maharajji at once started screaming at him and held out his hand toward him. The fellow mumbled and shook his head, but Maharajji kept demanding something from him. Finally the man reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a tiny bird with a stick through its chest. It looked quite dead. Maharajji took the bird, still yelling at the crazy man, and

pulled the stick out of the bird's body. He then gave the bird to the pujari, saying, "Take it out and give it water." As the pujari took it and headed out the door, the bird flew out of his hand and away.

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One evening in Agra Maharajji came to our house. He began to walk up and down the verandah, this way and that, again and again. It appeared to us that he was taking on someone's pain. After a few hours he sat in a chair and asked for some hot tea. The phone rang. Devotees from Lucknow were trying to locate Maharajji. They said to tell Maharajji that there had been a two-and-a-half-hour operation on one of his devotees, a poor seventy-six-year-old woman from the hills, and that it had been successful. In his way Maharajji had been with her throughout the operation. He appeared upset all during this time. When the call came he expressed great relief.

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My wife had known Maharajji since her childhood and her whole family had been devotees for a long time. I did not meet him, however, until 1962, when I had an operation on my lungs. I was in critical condition. My wife spoke to me then about Maharajji and I was remembering all that I'd previously heard about him and was praying to meet him before my death. On that same day Maharajji came to our home, approached my bed, and blessed me. From that day my health began to improve, and the illness has never returned. During every visit thereafter Maharajji told me that my health would be fine.

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Yudisthra had brought Maharajji to Bhumiadhar in a car. Yudisthra went to take a bath in the waterfall. He came running back and told Maharajji that he had been bitten by a snake, then he fell down unconscious. His hand had become blue black. Maharajji told Brahmachari Baba to spread a blanket and put Yudisthra on it. Then Maharajji told him to get a glass of water, which Maharajji then held in his hand under his blanket. Maharajji was shouting, "He has been bitten! What will happen?" The man remained unconscious.

After a few minutes Maharajji gave Brahmachari Baba the water and told him to rub it over the place where the snake had bitten the man. As soon as he started to apply the water, Yudisthra regained consciousness. In another hour, he was well again.

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Once when I was a child I was very, very sick with a high fever. My mother telephoned Maharajji and he came right away. He just laid his hand on my head and the fever left me.

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In 1964 I suffered a heart attack. My wife was very worried, but I felt a calm assurance in my soul from Maharajji that I would not die.

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Early one morning, five young men came to Kainchi. They waited nervously for Maharajji to make his appearance. As soon as he emerged from his room he questioned them. They answered that they were Moslems from a nearby city. Their close relative was dying and had asked them to go and request Maharajji's blessing. Maharajji asked his attendants for some water, which was handed to him in a plastic cup. He raised it to his lips, whispering something, then he blew into the water and gave it to the boys. He told them to return at once to the sick man and to make him drink it. "Thik ho jaega [He'll be all right]."

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At the home of some devotees in Lucknow Maharajji was giving darshan to a large crowd. Outside Maharajji's room a sadhu recited the Gita in a loud, punditlike voice while the man of the house cared for his sick cat nearby. Maharajji shouted to his devotee, "What are you doing with that cat?" The devotee explained that since the cat was extremely ill he was warming it in the sun, and, further, he thought of taking it to the vet. "It's a fact of nature,"

Maharajji said, "that cats don't usually need doctors. She's the property of Mother Nature; she'll be all right." He took a small sweet, saying, "Give her this." Although the cat was so ill that it wouldn't even drink milk, it ate the sweet without hesitation. A minute later it leaped up and jumped on the sadhu, interrupting his recital. Then it bounded away. When the devotee came back into the room, Maharajji said, "Your cat is all right now? Animals cure themselves. When they're sick, they won't eat food. They'll find herbs and eat them."

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In Lucknow a woman suffering from high blood pressure called her husband at the office and said she was feeling giddy and asked him to come home, as she couldn't reach a doctor. When he got there, she was still unable to reach a doctor. They were wondering what to do when the telephone rang and it was Maharajji calling from Agra. He said, "You are worried about your wife's high blood pressure? Don't worry. Nothing is wrong with her. Give her a glass of water."

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One morning at 4:00 A.M. when Maharajji was staying at my house, he said, "Come on, let's go."

I said, "Maharajji, I'll get my car and take you."

But he said, "No, I will walk."

So I got my sandals. Maharajji went barefoot. I didn't know where we were going, but I always entrusted myself to Maharajji because, even if he said he didn't know where a place was, he knew. Often Maharajji would ask, "Do you know where such-and-such is?" I'd say no and then he'd take us there. So I surrendered myself to him.

We went into a slum. Maharajji came to a shack with only a windowlike door, which he pushed open and looked inside. There, a young boy of about twelve was lying on a cot, very sick. Maharajji said to the boy, "Get up, you aren't sick." As soon as the boy was able to get up and lean against the wall, Maharajji lay down on the bed. At this point, the old, blind grandmother who was taking care of the boy awakened and asked, "Who is there?"

I answered, "A mahatma [great soul] has come."

Maharajji asked her, "Has he been feverish with chills for two weeks?"
She said yes.

The boy probably had typhoid fever. Then the Ma was uncomfortable because she had nothing to offer Maharajji. Maharajji saw this and spied an old can with water in it.

"Ma, have you got some pani (water)? I'm very thirsty."

She was happy to have the opportunity at least to give water. He drank deeply and then offered the container to me, but he knew I would never drink from it, and I said no. We left then, and the boy recovered.

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Ram Dass gave a talk in Ohio in 1972 or 1973. A boy who attended the lecture that night got on the first plane the next morning, flew from Cleveland, Ohio, to New York, to London, to New Delhi, where he got in a taxi and rode up to Kainchi. Less than thirty-six hours earlier he had heard Ram Dass talking about Maharajji. He walked into the ashram. He had taken off his shirt, since it was so hot, and I could see that on his chest he had a bad rash. I welcomed him and asked him where he had come from, and he told me his story. Then I asked him why he hadn't treated his rash. He explained that all the medical authorities had told him it was incurable; he'd tried injections and salves, and nothing had worked.

I said that that was silly—it was just *tinia corpus*, which is really very easy to cure. I said that, in fact, Dwarka was going to Nainital and he could get the sulphur tar to cure it and could bring it back that night. Then in a few days the rash would be gone. And he said to me, "I heard Ram Dass just two days ago. And now I've met Doctor America (Maharajji's nickname for me) and I'm here in Maharajji's ashram. Anything you say!" His eyes were as big as saucers.

Dwarka brought back the sulphur tar. I showed the boy how to use it and told him the rash would be cured in just a few days. He agreed to use it and said he was on his way to Badrinath that day for a week. And he went off to the chai stall.

I got to thinking that it had been a long time since I'd practiced medicine and I was a bit rusty. I went to where I was staying and checked my medical books about this disease that I had just diagnosed. I realized that I had diagnosed the wrong disease. The treatment I had given him was absolutely useless, so I raced down to the chai stall, just in time to see him get on the bus and be gone.

I felt very bad. By misdiagnosing his disease, not only had I failed as Maharajji's representative, but I'd sent the boy off with a useless medicine—and when he came back, he was going to think that all the people around Maharajji were fools and incompetents. The week that he was gone was just awful for me. I had done something terrible.

After a week passed he came back. I saw him from across the ashram and ran out to him and said, "I'm sorry!"

He said, "Sorry? Look!" He opened his shirt and his chest was completely healed. Not even a scar. It was all gone. I didn't understand, but I knew it wasn't the medicine that I had given him.

I went to the window of Maharajji's room we called the "office," and I said, "Maharajji, thank you. You cured him."

He said, "Sub Ishwar hai [It's all God]."

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A woman devotee was sick from eating too many pickles. She loved them but had a bad stomach and couldn't digest them, so when she'd eaten mango chutney, the next morning her stomach was bad. Her husband told Maharajji that his wife was sick, so Maharajji came running with something wrapped in a piece of paper. We all thought that he had brought some secret herb or ancient remedy. Maharajji opened up the packet and handed the contents to her husband: a cellophane-wrapped tablet of Gelusil!

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I had discovered that I had diabetes and wasn't supposed to eat anything spicy, starchy, greasy, or sweet. Right after that, I went to Kainchi for the first time and was served a big plate of puris cooked in grease, some halva, and some spicy potatoes—all precisely the things I shouldn't eat. The doctor had told me that if I ate such things I could get very very ill. I thought about what the doctor said and looked over at Maharajji, who was twinkling. I was trying to decide whether to have faith in the doctor or faith in Maharajji. (At that time I didn't even know if he was my guru.) It was my first day "on the job" as Maharajji's devotee.

I finally decided to eat the food. In fact, I was so hungry I ate two big plates of it. Every day thereafter, I would come and stuff myself. After a few weeks, I went to Nainital and had my blood-sugar level tested. It was down to

borderline low. The doctor said, "I don't understand how this could have gotten so low so quickly. This doesn't make sense."

I said, "Well, I think I know what happened."

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My mother was ill. Many doctors had seen her and had said she was septic and must go to the hospital. My mother, who is very orthodox, did not want to go. I wrote to Maharajji and he asked me to take her to a homeopath whose name he gave me. My mother was cured. However, the old homeopath, who had never met Maharajji, said, "So many are sent to me by this Maharajji and no matter what medicine I give them, they are cured, even when the disease is chronic. I don't know how it is done!"

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One time while I was staying at Kainchi, my wife came for Maharajji's darshan, though I didn't know she had come. In those days she was feeling great pain in her heart. Whenever she would go up or down the stairs, her heart would start palpitating. She would come to me, weeping, thinking she was about to die. But, putting my faith in Maharajji's power, I had no worries about her and never spoke of this to Maharajji.

This day, she came to Maharajji herself and told him. Immediately Maharajji called out, "Where is he? Call him!" I came, and he said, "What? She is ill and you don't care?" He went on talking like this. I didn't reply because I knew that whatever you are thinking, he knows and he replies to your thoughts as if you had spoken them. You think and he talks.

I was thinking, "Why should I do anything—it is all in his hands."

He replied out loud, "No! There is a doctor—go to Agra. He is a heart specialist. He is a great disciple." Then Maharajji turned to one of the Ma's standing by and said, "Tell him how I sent your relative to him. This doctor is a great saint."

She said, "When I showed the doctor the letter that Maharajji had sent us, he came running to treat my relative at the house."

Maharajji said, "And what happened?"

"Well, in only two or three days she was all right."

"Just see! Just see!" Maharajji exclaimed to me. "He is my great disciple. You go! Tomorrow, you leave this place. Jao! Go! If you need money, I will give it to you. You must go!"

I didn't say anything. I just thought in my heart, "Well, Maharajji, you are so great. I have no need of going there. You are God. You can cure her."

He immediately replied to my thoughts, "No, no, you must go! Badmash! This is my order!" I kept mum. He said, "Don't you know? The doctor is a great saint. The moment she has his darshan she will be all right. You see his grace, you go to him, there will be no need of medicine. You see him. She will be all right. You go! Tomorrow you will have to go! Don't deny it!" I had been thinking that I would not go. "What? You don't obey my orders? Obey my orders! You are very wicked. You have to go."

Well, I was thinking, it is a great trouble to me—but he says I have to go, and so I must go. The next day, I thought he would direct me to go, but he didn't say anything about it. He said, "Well, come here, sit beside me. How many people are coming to the temple? Give them prasad, give them whatever they need." But he didn't say anything about going to Agra. From that day, even till now—eight years—my wife has had no pain.

IN HIS EARLIER years, in some of the villages on the plains of India, Maharajji became well-known for his curing of insane people. In those days many such people would be brought in chains to Maharajji to be helped. In the later years he would do much less of this and often had such people taken to a temple known as Bala Ji Hanuman—yet still, with a word or a glance or a pointing of the finger, he could straighten that which in the mind was crooked.

An Indian man had brought his widowed mother who had been emotionally and physically destitute since her husband's death. She had been a devotee of Maharajji for many years but it seemed she saw him only rarely, so her son brought her to Maharajji hoping that this would help her. When Maharajji came out, I was troubled to see that the man and his mother were standing way in the back and that all the area near Maharajji was taken up by the young Westerners.

I got up the nerve to be a busybody and ask people to move aside so that these people could come forward. People did move, instantly. Then Maharajji took the widow into the small room, where she stayed with him for some time. She came out a different person, really radiant. I was impressed by that, and her son and granddaughter were very moved, too.

One of the Westerners became quite manic. He stopped sleeping and began walking through the town naked, stealing things, and acting irrational in many ways. Finally he took off in a taxi, with only a shawl wrapped around himself, to go see Maharajji at a temple some two hundred miles distant. When he arrived he entered the temple and walked toward Maharajji. As he approached, Maharajji held up his index finger, and the man later reported that immediately it felt as if all the incredible high energy with which his body had been charged for days, giving him the feeling that he had supernatural powers, was drained out of him instantaneously. He recalls being angry with Maharajji for taking this energy from him.

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Many years ago in Neeb Karori village, crazy men were sometimes brought to Maharajji, bound in chains. Maharajji used to say, "Free them and keep them near Hanumanji." He would take a small bamboo stick and proceed to hit them on their heads. Then he would ask, "Are you all right?" They would say, "Yes." Then Maharajji would ask them to do some work, saying something like, "Bring a stick of rambans [cactus plant]." When they would bring it, he'd say, "Now it's all right." They were allowed to stay for a day or two and then he would ask the people who brought them to take them back home.

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Many years ago, a Mohammedan lived behind the place where Maharajji was staying. They loved each other very much. One day, two crazy men were brought there and Maharajji said to the Mohammedan, "You make one of them all right and I will make the other one all right." The one who was with Maharajji became all right within a short time, but the Moslem took some time and his man was still not all right. The devotees were sitting there watching. Maharajji called the other crazy man over to him and hit him gently on his head, and then he too was perfectly all right. But Maharajji said, "Oh, the Mohammedan did it first."

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I was with Maharajji when he went to the sanitarium to visit the principal's younger brother, who had gone insane. He was brought into the room in chains and his unfocused eyes were rolling around in his head. Maharajji stood in front of him talking to him. Suddenly the man fell to the ground at Maharajji's feet and was perfectly sane. The man was able to answer all questions. Later he was released, although it wasn't to be his last bout with mental illness.

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Once a Western devotee stood before Maharajji in a rage of defiance. He was drug-intoxicated and came to believe that he himself was Jesus Christ and that Maharajji needed to repent. Before many other devotees there, this fellow shouted his defiance. Maharajji silently engaged the fellow's gaze for a few moments, with a look of openness and compassion. The man still continued his tirade, so Maharajji nodded his head and then told some devotees to throw him out. Even after he was outside, Maharajji sent more devotees out to be sure that he had gotten on the bus and left town. (Later, when asked how he had felt during this time, the man said he felt engulfed with Maharajji's love and was especially touched that he would send people out to help him board the bus.)

MAHARAJJI DID NOT heal all who came to him with illness or who prayed to be healed. Why some were healed and others were not was known only to him. Sometimes he would apparently lessen the illness but leave the individual with some of the suffering. His comments at these times suggest that Maharajji's healing acts were intimately related to the karma of the individual—that often it was necessary for the person to suffer part or perhaps all of the pain of the illness. While most people do not want to suffer, Maharajji now and then reminded his devotees that suffering brings us closer to God.

When my daughter was born she was very sickly. I took her to an allopath and to an ayurved (doctor of herbal medicine), but no one could help. I took her to an astrologer, who said, "She has three planets indicating death. If she lives past two-and-a-half, then bring her to me for her chart. Now it is useless." Then I brought her to Maharajji and asked his help. Maharajji just bent his head down on his arm and hid his face for some time. For about five minutes he concentrated. Then he picked up his head and said, "Don't worry, he'll be all right." After that darshan, my daughter caught pneumonia—again

and again—but she lived. She is now six years old. I don't worry about her. What comes now is karma and we must deal with it.

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One of Maharajji's devotees was seriously poisoned. He was suffering gravely and no one expected him to survive. Maharajji said, "You have to be satisfied with that little bit of suffering. You have to take on some of it." In other words, his suffering would have been worse but for Maharajji's grace. But indeed he survived.

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My elder sister has always been very sickly, with various maladies. Maharajji told her that it couldn't be helped—that she must somehow work off past samskaras (karma). He told her to keep her mind always in devotional thoughts or she would lose everything.

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Maharajji asked an Indian girl four times, "Do you like sorrow or joy?" Each time the girl answered, "I've never known joy, Maharajji, only sorrow." Finally, Maharajji said, "I love sorrow. It brings me closer to God."

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I got a very bad arthritic pain for the first time on a Saturday. By Sunday, after Maharajji had departed for Agra, the pain had stopped. In the winter it came back again very intensely, but I didn't do anything for it. I want to keep the pain to remind me of that day. It was the last darshan I had of Maharajji.

YOU GET WISDOM FROM SUFFERING. YOU ARE ALONE WITH GOD WHEN YOU ARE SICK, IN THE CREMATION GROUND OR HOSPITAL. YOU CALL ON GOD WHEN YOU SUFFER.

AGAIN, FOR REASONS known only to Maharajji, sometimes he would seem to bargain with death and push it away from one of his devotees, while at other times he would not intercede and the devotee would die. Because Maharajji knew the time of each person's death, but hated to be the bearer of bad news, he would often be absent at the time when one of his devotees must die. In some cases, when pressed, he gave a subtle clue, but often it was merely his absence that was the clue for the devotees who had come to know his ways.

Once a neighbor lady came to my wife and said she was going for the darshan of another local baba. She asked my wife to accompany her, so my wife went along. The neighbor showed her hand to the baba, as he was considered an expert in palmistry, astrology, and such things. But the baba said, "I don't want to see your hand; I want to see her [my wife's] hand." She didn't want to show it, but he insisted and he told her that she would die in six months. My wife told this to Maharajji, who immediately exclaimed, "Sub gulat [It's all wrong]! Why did that baba say that? Will you not die? A time will not come when you will die? Everybody will die! Why didn't you say to him, 'What—will you not die? Are you immortal?' He will also die. Everybody will die. Why does he say such things? It's very bad that he says such things. Wicked!" Then Maharajji narrated another story about a saint. I was there to hear it.

"Well, there was a saint. A woman came to see him. Her husband had just died. She bowed to his lotus feet, and he gave her his blessing and told her that she would have five sons. She said, 'But Maharaj, I have come to you because my husband has just died. How will I have five sons?' The saint replied, 'I have told you that you will have five sons and I will keep my word.' And her husband came back to life." Then Maharajji said, "And I will do the same thing. Since I have given my word, I will complete it. You will not die. You will live for seventy-five years. Don't be worried." That was eight years ago. She is still alive.

॥५

Maharajji was walking by a place where a palm reader was working. And the palm reader, in reading the palm of one of Maharajji's devotees, said that he would die in three days. The devotee was of course very upset. But Maharajji said, "He's so smart. But what that fool doesn't realize is that it is he who is going to die in three days." And he did.

॥१॥

I was in a boat with Maharajji and he told me to jump in the water. I was afraid and said, "Maharajji, I can't swim. I'll drown."

Maharajji pointed to a high bridge and said, "If the right time has not come, you could jump from that bridge and not die." As he said that I felt great faith and jumped in, and it was only up to my waist.

॥१॥

There was a peddler who lived in Ram Ghar. He became very ill and the worried family took him to a local baba for help. This baba said the man would die very soon but that he did have some medicine that might save him. The family then also consulted Maharajji, telling him of the first baba's verdict. Maharajji responded quickly, "Nonsense! He will live to be in his eighties. That wicked baba just wants to scare you so he can sell you his medicine."

॥१॥

The husband of a sick woman went to Maharajji, and Maharajji made a stick in a certain way and gave it to the man with instructions to put it under his wife's pillow. He did this and soon she got better, but when they looked for the stick it was missing. The husband, who was now greedy to have the stick, went to Maharajji and told him the stick was missing. Maharajji said, "You have your wife. What do you want with a stick?" Later the mother of another man became ill, so the man went to Maharajji and said, "You gave so-and-so a stick to heal his wife. Will you give me a stick to heal my mother?" Maharajji said, "She was a young girl and I saved her. Your mother is an old woman and she'll die." And she did.

॥१॥

My father had a series of operations, and before and after each one Maharajji visited him. The last time he became ill, however, Maharajji didn't come. We knew that his life would soon be over. Maharajji came after his death.

The same thing happened to my mother. When my mother became ill, Maharajji came to Kanpur but didn't visit our house, though he would always visit us when he was in town. She died. Two days later, Maharajji came to the house and went to the prayer room where a photo of my mother was kept. Maharajji started weeping like a five-year-old child. Weeping, weeping, weeping.

॥५

After Maharajji's death something happened that brought me to him. My young brother-in-law, dying of cancer, was down at the cancer research institute in Bombay, away from us all. The doctors wired us that he would die that very day, that he was in the absolute, final stage of cancer. We were all very sad. I went to Jaunapur (Maharajji's new temple in New Delhi), thinking that if Maharajji is really as great a saint as they say, he could help us. Out of the merit of his own tapasya (austerities) he could help us. So I went and prayed for three things: First, I prayed that my brother-in-law's life be extended for two more months. I wouldn't ask for a cure (what is ordained must be; a ravaged body must die), but an extension could be granted. Second, I asked that he die here, surrounded by his family. Third, I asked that he have a peaceful death.

Next we heard from Bombay, and they said he'd had a remission and was released from their care. He flew immediately to Delhi to join us. Here, the doctors examined him and declared him fit enough to return to work! Well, this remission lasted for two months and one day, until he got sick again and died peacefully, surrounded by all of us. Why did he get that one more day? He went to Maharajji's temple on the last day of the two months and received prasad. That prasad saved him. He couldn't die on the same day as receiving prasad.

॥५

When it came time for my father to die, Maharajji said to him, "Ask me for anything."

Father said, "I want nothing. I've lived my life. Now I want to die by the Ganges at Kashi [Benares]."

Maharajji said to him privately, "You must live one more year. You will die by the Ganges but not at Kashi."

One year later, at Dharagan on the Ganges where I had a new house, my father said, "You have a house in Dharagan, but you don't know how unfortunate it is for you." That was when he visited in July. He died there in November.

॥॥

In 1951 my father, the district magistrate, was ill and in great pain. He'd had a ninety-nine-degree temperature for thirty days. Four days before he died, Maharajji came and brought him four roses. To my father he said, "You'll be okay." To me he said, "The body has to finish."

ALTHOUGH ALL these incidents concern Maharajji's devotees, his healing energies extended far beyond them. In the following story about Subrahmanyum—Dr. Larry Brilliant, a Western physician who was brought to Maharajji by his wife, Girija—we catch a glimpse of how Maharajji worked indirectly. In this case he worked through Subrahmanyum and the World Health Organization of the United Nations to speed the eradication of smallpox.

The first thing he said to us as we walked in and sat down was, "Doctor—Doctor America! How much money do you have?"

I said, "Oh, Maharajji, I have five hundred dollars."

"No, no, no, really—how much money do you have?" I insisted that this was all I had. He said, "Yes, yes, yes, that's in India. But how much money do you have in America?"

I thought about it, and I confess to being a bit concerned that this was an appeal from him for money for some temple, and I said, "I have only five hundred dollars back in America," which was true. Then I hastened to add, "But I also have a very big debt from medical school. I had to borrow a lot of money to go through medical school, and even though I have a thousand dollars, I owe a lot more than that."

He said, "What? You have no money? You are no doctor!" It sounded exactly like something my mother would say. He looked at me and laughed and laughed: "You are no doctor. You are no doctor, you are no doctor, U N O doctor, U N O doctor . . ." I didn't understand what he was saying. Then he said, "You are going to give vaccinations; you will go to the villages and give vaccinations."

"You want me to give a shot to someone here?" I asked. I didn't understand

what he was instructing me to do. Everybody else understood except me. Finally he looked at me and said, "Doctor America—UNO doctor. United Nations Organization doctor. You will work for the United Nations. You are going to go to villages and give vaccinations."

In fact, I had made a very casual inquiry of some acquaintances who worked for WHO, the World Health Organization, but they replied that WHO was not hiring anyone at all. Meanwhile, over the next few weeks Maharajji was always asking me, "Did you get your job?"

I'd always say, "No, Maharajji," and quickly drop the subject.

One day Maharajji said to me, "Go to WHO. You'll get your job." So I went to the WHO offices in New Delhi and saw the man to whom I had originally spoken. He was very friendly but pointed out that WHO had no openings, and, in any case, they only hired expert consultants from medical schools and institutions outside India. Then he said, "But there is one program. If they could ever do anything, it would be really nice, but it's doubtful they will be able to achieve their goal, because it's so difficult. It's the smallpox program. The Indian government right now is adamantly against expanding the WHO program to fight smallpox. They have other problems, such as malaria and family planning. Smallpox is not their highest priority. But I'll take you to see the French doctor, Nicole Grasset, who directs that program."

We made an appointment to see her and then I returned to the home of two of Maharajji's devotees, the Barmans, and borrowed Barman's suit and bought a terrible tie. I tied my hair into a pony tail and hid it under a white shirt. My costume was bizarre and ill-fitting and Nicole realized at once that I was just another hippie. She said, "I'm sorry. We really don't have a job. But it's awfully nice to meet you."

So I went back to Maharajji and he again asked, "Did you get your job?" I said, "No, Maharajji. Let's just cut this out."

Two more weeks passed, and Maharajji looked at me and said, "Go back to WHO."

I took the bus-train-bus-rickshaw trip back to WHO. Once more I talked to my acquaintance, Ned, and this time I filled out a different type of form, typed it a bit more properly, and sent it in and spoke with Nicole on the phone. Of course there was no job there.

The next week Maharajji asked if I got my job and then asked me to call Nicole. It was getting embarrassing. This time I called her from Vrindaban. Again she told me there was no expansion of the smallpox program, no possibility of hiring American doctors—but she thanked me for continued interest in the work.

Sometime later Maharajji suddenly called me and said, "Immediately! Go to WHO."

I took a train and went immediately to WHO. When I walked in the door there was another man there. He said to me, "What are you doing here?"

I gave my usual line, "I've come to WHO to work for the smallpox program. My guru told me I would work for WHO."

I went up to Ned's office again and telephoned Nicole. She said there was still no expansion of the smallpox program, but that something had happened that day: the chief of the global smallpox program had come from Geneva. She suggested I come to meet him. I went to meet him and of course he was that man in the doorway whom I had just told I would be working for WHO—and it was his program I was going to work for. He interviewed me and wrote a "note for the record": "This young man seems to like foreign cultures and will probably do very good international work someday. However, he has no experience in public health, no training past internship, and I wish him good luck in the future. We have no job for him." What he said to me was that WHO could not hire me for several reasons: First, I had no public health training. I had never even seen a case of smallpox. Second, because of political tensions, the Indian government preferred at that time not to have Americans working in India. Third, they had not yet really geared up the program for smallpox eradication in India. Smallpox had been eradicated in all but four countries, but the strategy was to work on the other three first and then come to India.

That was it. He added that there was a smallpox program in Pakistan, and if that interested me, I had best give it some more thought.

I paused and sheepishly said, "I'm going to have to ask my guru."

I went back to Maharajji. When he asked if I got the job, I said, "No, but there's a possibility of a job in Pakistan."

He yelled back, "No! I said India!" So I telephoned back to WHO and told Nicole my guru insisted I work for WHO in India.

That must have amused her, but she was polite as usual and thanked me for calling.

After two months of this, Girija and I were exhausted and frustrated. We decided to take a vacation from it all in Kashmir. As we were leaving the ashram, I called Nicole at WHO and told her our plans. "If by any chance a job comes through," I said, "please call me in Srinagar."

"You know," she said, "a very strange thing just happened. I suddenly had this inspiration. I don't know—maybe it's your guru or something like that, but can you write?"

"Yes," I said. I'd edited some medical journals.

"Well, you know we can't really hire you as a smallpox doctor, but if you're really that determined to work for WHO, maybe I could hire you as an administrative assistant."

"Look, anything. Maharajji said I'm going to work for you and I'm going to go to villages and give injections. He's never been wrong."

She changed my application from that of a doctor to that of an administrative assistant and sent a telegram to D. A. Henderson, the program chief in Geneva, Switzerland: "I'm going to hire Brilliant." She suddenly really wanted to hire me and put the application through. Still WHO had not created a post in her unit.

After our vacation in Kashmir we returned to Kainchi and Maharajji's first smiling question: "Did you get your job yet?"

"No, Maharajji. It's really very complicated." Again he had me go back to Delhi. It was ten times now that I'd gone back and forth, like a yo-yo, each time putting on Barman's suit and that awful tie.

When I got to WHO I found that my application as an administrative assistant had been approved, but that I would still have to pass a security clearance. Every American working for WHO must have one. When I got that piece of paper for a security clearance I knew this was the end of the game. There seemed no chance in the world that I could get a security clearance. We had been part of the left-wing antiwar movement in the States; I'd been a leader of a radical organization, the Medical Committee for Human Rights. There was absolutely no chance for a security clearance.

I came back to Kainchi feeling terrible. I explained all this to Maharajji and said that there may have been a lot of stumbling blocks up till now, but this was the last straw.

Maharajji said, "Oh. Who is the person who is supposed to give you this job?" I couldn't remember precisely who, but I mentioned that Henderson was the boss. Maharajji pretended to be a real fakir (sadhu). He sat up straight and put his blanketed arm up before his face and asked, "How do you spell his name?" I started spelling it. "Wait," he said. And then he began repeating the letters slowly in a deep voice. He peeked out at me through his fingers, which were covering his face, laughing all the time. He continued spelling the name and he pretended to go into a trance, always peeking at me to be sure I was watching and properly impressed, but giggling as he did so.

At the same time, in Geneva, Dr. Henderson was attending a cocktail party at the American Embassy. The American ambassador and the surgeon general were there. The surgeon general asked Henderson how the smallpox eradication program was going. "Great," said Henderson. "We have thirty-four countries cleared and only four are left."

"Are all the countries helping you?" asked the surgeon general.

"Yes. Russia's given us vaccine. Sweden's given us a lot of money. All the countries are helping."

The surgeon general asked, "What about America? What are we giving you?"

"Well," said Henderson, an expert in getting support for his program, "not so much."

"What do you need?"

Henderson replied, "I don't know how I got into this, and I don't know why we're doing it, but we want to hire this young American doctor who has been living in an ashram in India. We've never done anything like that before. And the kid can't get a security clearance."

The surgeon general of the United States said, "Security clearance? What does he need that for?"

Henderson replied, "Every American, in order to work for the United Nations, has to have a security clearance."

The surgeon general said, "I didn't know that. Who gives him the clearance?"

Henderson said, "You do."

"I do? Give me a napkin and tell me what the kid's name is." He took a cocktail napkin and wrote, "Brilliant—okay to start work." He gave the napkin to Henderson, who telegraphed WHO in New Delhi that I'd been cleared to work.

The next morning Maharajji called us into his "office." He was being too nice. Laughing and smiling, he had tea and jelebees brought in, and he hugged us. We were rubbing his feet. It was so blissful. Then suddenly Maharajji said, "Okay. Time for you to go."

We thought he meant to leave the ashram.

We stood up and pranammed and then walked out and around the corner, and just as we approached the gate to the ashram the postman came with a telegram from New Delhi: "We have been notified today that you have received a US security clearance. Come immediately to WHO—New Delhi to begin work."

So I went to WHO and began work as an administrative assistant. During the week I worked in Delhi, and on the weekends we came to the ashram to be with Maharajji. I remember one darshan in the back at Kainchi, where we talked for three hours about smallpox. It was the most horrid disease I had ever seen. He told me everything about it: where it was located in India, where the bad epidemics were, what the seasons were, what the transmission cycle was, what places we would have trouble with—everything about the epidemiology.

He knew much more than I knew, even after I'd worked with WHO for about three months. I asked him, "Will smallpox be eradicated?" I remember his answer because I wrote it down: "Smallpox will be eradicated. This is God's gift to mankind because of the hard work of dedicated medical scientists."

At the WHO office I was occasionally assigned to write up the operational plans, since my native language was English. Maharajji would help to organize the whole plan. Because my source of information about conditions in India was, well, so direct, shall we say—and because Maharajji's advice was so good—I began to get more and more responsibility. Still, after about a month of this I was not feeling that Maharajji's prediction had come true, because I still wasn't going to the villages to give vaccinations. There was as yet no such program.

The project slowly moved to the point where we were about to go into the field. September was to be the first month. Some of the staff would go into the field, but not me, of course, since I was just an administrative assistant. I was to stay in New Delhi and mind the shop. However, it so happened that two of the Russian doctors who were to be assigned to an area where Maharajji had lived for a long period were held up by Soviet government formalities. There was this blank spot on the map—and there was just nobody except me who could be sent there.

I was sent out of the office and into the villages. The jeep that Girija and I drove had a big picture of Maharajji on the dashboard. Often when we went into a civil surgeon's office and told him about the importance of a serious smallpox program, he would say, "Yes, yes, thank you for coming. Now please leave. I've got so many other problems." Then, because of Indian courtesy, he might walk us out to our jeep—and he'd see Maharajji's picture on the dashboard and ask us why we had it there. "Oh," I'd say, "he's my guru. He told me to go work for the United Nations. He told me smallpox would be eradicated. He told me this is God's gift to mankind through the hard work of dedicated medical scientists." And then the civil surgeon might say, "Oh, please come back into my office. Take tea! Since smallpox is going to be eradicated, how shall we get organized?" It kept happening like that.

Every time—simply because Maharajji had said smallpox would be eradicated, and because all the Indian officials had heard that anything he said came true—they took our work seriously and put other things aside to help us.

Often, skeptical WHO or Indian officials said to me, "Look, you understand India. You may eradicate smallpox everywhere else, but you know India will never eradicate smallpox. It's just not possible." But when they heard what Maharajji had said, the Indian officials would often completely change their opinions.

Soon we were assigned to areas that were selected because of the negative attitudes of the local doctors. We talked about Maharajji's prediction. Some of the officials remembered when the Chinese invaded India in 1962 and Maharajji had said the Chinese troops would go back to China by themselves. And so these doctors would change their attitudes and motivate their people to do tremendous work, and soon smallpox would be beaten in their area. The effect of this was that, although I knew very little about smallpox or the UN system, every time I was sent to a difficult area, through Maharajji's grace smallpox would disappear.

WHO kept sending me to strange and remote places. I thought perhaps it was just in Uttar Pradesh that I had such luck, but in January 1974 they sent me to a remote part of Madhya Pradesh, to a place that just happened to be part of the Shahdol District—Amarkantak!—Maharajji's old sadhu stomping grounds, which at that time was experiencing the worst epidemic in India. Nearly everyone in the district had known Maharajji, and when they learned that he had said smallpox would be eradicated, they cooperated and, despite their earlier skepticism, mounted a tremendous campaign in the remote hills. The epidemic was over!

People within WHO began to ask me about Maharajji. Nicole, my boss, really opened up to Maharajji in a beautiful way. First of all, she did think Maharajji had somehow influenced her to hire me. Second, since she always asked everyone's advice before making difficult decisions, she got in the habit of asking us, when we'd go to see Maharajji over the weekends, what he would advise about specific problems in the eradication program. He would send his advice back through us. His answers were full of wisdom on every level, practical as well as spiritual. Many smallpox workers began to respect him. Members of the smallpox staff had a quality about them that was different from any other group I met in the UN program: they were very inspired. We talked freely about Maharajji, as they were all devout individuals.

It took only two years of intense effort to conquer smallpox in all of India. When we started in 1974 there were 180,000 cases with 30,000 deaths in only one year. A total of 400 epidemiologists from 30 different countries and 100,000 Indian workers worked in a frenzy of compassion and commitment. Everyone in India had said it could never be done—even many WHO officials—but Maharajji said it could be done. He said it was God's gift to mankind, and it was.