

DIARY LEAVES

Part II

SATSANG IN SOLAN

May-June 1955



During Mataji's sojourn in Solan in May and June 1955, a great variety of questions were discussed. The following are notes from Solan.

On the Importance of Right Education

Again and again one can hear Mataji point out that most of the difficulties people experience throughout their lives and much of the chaos in the world today are due to lack of right education. If the first of the four ashramas, namely the brahmacharya ashrama, is observed as it should be, man can face life without the fear of being crushed by adversity, for the sublime purpose of human existence will have been firmly fixed in his mind.

If the growing child, the adolescent thoroughly understands that man's true vocation is to find himself, if he realizes that all knowledge is only a preparation for *Brahmavidyā*, the Knowledge of Reality ; if at the same time he is taught how to control body and mind by living the simple, frugal and disciplined life of a brahmachari, so that all his energies may be available for the Quest that alone is worthy of man, he will have learnt the art of living. Whether he chooses the shortcut, and renouncing all worldly attachment straight away, takes *samnyasa* or whether he first passes through the stages of the householder (*grihasta*) and of the anchorite (*vānparastha*), – the path to Self-realization and Immortality is open to him.

Just as we are bound to inhale the air about us, we constantly absorb the subtle influences from our surroundings. No man can remain entirely unaffected by the contacts he makes. A child is far more sensitive than an adult. It is therefore important that the young should be in the company of men and women who have dedicated their lives to the Supreme Quest, that their pliable minds should be moulded by books of wisdom rather than by cinemas and light novels. A boy or a girl who has once deeply felt the necessity of aspiring after Truth and Enlightenment, who has been made to feel how treacherous and

comparatively unimportant are wealth, name, fame, brilliant career, etc. will come back to the ideals that in youth have been engrained in him or her even though he or she should deviate from them for a time.

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On Truthfulness

A young boy asked, "If one speaks the truth one cannot get on in the world ; if one tells lies one cannot find God. So what is one to do ?"

"Always try to speak the truth and see what happens," replied Mataji. "Will you listen to a story ?"

"A notorious thief sought the company of a *sādhu*. At first the holy man took no notice of him, but when the thief came day after day, begging to be given instruction the *sadhu* finally responded. 'First of all,' he said, 'you must give up stealing and telling lies. When you have succeeded in this for some days, you may come again.' The thief fell at his feet and went home. After several days he returned, looking thin and miserable. 'Well,' asked the *sādhu*, 'how have you been faring ?' 'Maharaj' said the thief, 'I have faithfully obeyed your orders, but I can't go on like this much longer. My whole family is starving. I am well-known as a thief and no one will give me work. If I don't steel, how are we to keep alive ?' 'Very well,' said the *sādhu*, 'you may steel again, but under no circumstances tell any lies, keep strictly to the truth!' The face of the thief lit up. He promised to abide by his Guru's instructions.

'After so much fasting,' he thought, 'we need to break into the treasury at the royal palace.'

"As fate would have it the King could not sleep that night. Hearing a strange noise, he put on the old clothes of a servant and went downstairs. When he found that a burglar was busy removing valuables, he pretended to be a thief himself and said, 'Look here, brother, I am of

your trade, only I am a beginner. Couldn't I help you and in return you might let me have a small share of the booty ? 'Not a bad idea,' agreed the old thief, 'breaking these heavy locks has been a tough job and it will soon be dawn. If you see whether the night-watch is coming this side, give me a sign in good time ; I will let you have one fourth of what I get.' 'That's settled,' assented the King, but let me have your name and address.' Mindful of his Guru's bidding, the thief gave the correct information. With the help of the disguised King he succeeded in safely removing his loot, leaving one fourth for his accomplice.

"In the morning there was great commotion in the palace. The theft was reported to the King. Investigations were carried on, but no trace could be found of the culprit. The King did not disclose his secret, but when the case was to be discussed in his darbar, he sent for the thief. 'Do you know anything about the theft ?' the King asked straight out. 'I do,' replied the thief. 'Let us have all the details,' commanded the Monarch. The thief related with great precision what had happened. The King could hardly believe his ears. 'How can one who is so completely truthful become guilty of stealing ?' he exclaimed. The thief explained that he was acting in obedience to his Guru's order and that it was only to save himself and his family from dire poverty that he was obliged to continue to steal. 'How much a month do you require for the upkeep of your family ?' asked the King. The man stated a modest sum. 'You won't have to steal any longer', said the King, 'I shall provide for all of you for the rest of your lives.'

"You see," commented Mataji, "by being strictly truthful the thief was enabled to lead an honest life. It is very important to speak the truth. God is Truth. By being truthful one draws nearer to Him. The other lesson this story illustrates is that carrying out the Guru's orders to the letter without using one's own judgement not only leads to the highest good, but also brings about the solution of one's daily problems."

On Purity

A lady from Australia, who was feeling rather bewildered at the very great difference between the Hindu conception of purity and that of the West, begged an explanation from Mataji.

The following is the gist of what Mataji said : Purity is an attitude of mind. Some people think if everything is spotlessly clean, looks clean, it is also pure. But take for instance germs. A place may look perfectly clean and yet be full of germs. Germs, although invisible to the naked eye, cause illness. Qualities cannot be seen, yet it is a man's qualities that make him pure or impure. I was told of a mother who had a violent quarrel with someone, which deeply upset her. The quarrel occurred just before her baby's feeding time. The child drank his mother's milk and died on the spot. The doctor who was consulted declared that by her excessive anger the woman's whole system had been affected, so that her milk became poisonous.

Whatever a man touches takes on some of his characteristics. The ancient Rishis devised the caste system, in order that each of the four castes might develop certain special qualities and capacities. The members of the different castes were therefore required to observe strict rules when mixing with anyone belonging to another caste. A thing is called pure when it is without mixture, without alloy, entirely true to itself; when mixed with another substance it is said to be impure. Suppose someone brings you water from the tap in a perfectly clean vessel. Although the water is itself clean, it carries something of the quality of the person who fetched it. Brahmanas were asked not to drink water touched by anyone belonging to another caste. A Brahmana's duty is to seek *Brahmavidyā*, the knowledge of the Absolute. For this reason he should not mix with those who are engaged in other pursuits. This is how the question of untouchability arose.

Now concerning service : If you serve human beings or animals as such, it is not pure service. But if you serve them with the thought that there is only the ONE, that by serving whomsoever, you are serving God in that particular guise, then and then only does it become real service. Since nothing exists really but the Supreme Being, one should serve THAT alone. Purity means Truth, that which IS. Essentially, whatever aids towards the realization of Truth may be called pure and whatever is apt to retard it, impure.

A very learned professor who had travelled widely in India and Europe, remarked : "The Ganges is said to be pure, but on visiting Varanasi I found the drains emptying themselves into the river, and a few yards away someone drinking the water ; I was disgusted. I can't bathe in the Ganges, it makes me feel sick."

Mataji : The very nature of the Ganges is to purify. Whatever is immersed in the Ganges becomes absorbed by its purity, just as fire purifies. No matter what you throw into it, it will be burnt to ashes. You think tap-water is cleaner than Gangeswater, but tap-water at Varanasi also comes from the Ganges. It is a matter of point of view. From your angle of vision you are right. Yet, fundamentally purity and impurity are of the mind. There is only one *Atma*. Filth and sandalpaste are both the ONE, there is neither purity nor impurity. The pure food you eat today will by tomorrow have turned into excrement, into filth. Nevertheless, some creatures feed on it. A dead body which is putrid floats on the Ganges. Vultures swoop down and eat of its flesh. It is the vulture's natural food, the bird thrives on it. Life is one. What is dirt to one creature, may be sustenance to another. We must reach the state where we know the ONE alone and everything as His forms. There is only One—Brahman—without—a—second.

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On Suffering

A lady from Australia came last summer to Almora to see Mataji. One of the questions she asked was, since illnesses are the results of our actions in this or in former lives, was it advisable to consult doctors and take medicines? Rather was it not more appropriate to bear whatever came to us without interfering with its natural course? Mataji replied that it was right to do everything in our power to keep our bodies fit and healthy, for an ailing person could hardly expect to engage in *sādhana*. All the same it was certainly necessary to learn how to endure pain, since suffering cannot always be avoided. In such cases, we should accept it as one of the ways in which He manifests.

Several months later, the same lady badly fractured her ankle. This happened in the mountains, miles away from a doctor. To make things worse, heavy rain set in and she had to wait for three days till she could be carried down in a dandy. The pain was acute. The lady kept awake all night, but remembering what Mataji had told her, she concentrated on Divine Love in the form of Christ and of Mataji. To her own amazement she forgot all about her pain and felt well and refreshed the next morning. She remained in a state of bliss throughout those three days. She later declared that she would not have missed this experience for anything in the world. Was this what Mataji meant, when She said we had to learn to endure suffering when it came?

Since then, whenever she felt any pain, the lady tried to concentrate in a similar manner, but she was never able to get again into that elevated state of mind. On meeting Mataji this year, she wanted the cause of her failure explained. "Your pain was not severe enough," said Mataji with a smile.

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On Prayer

Question : Can *prārabdha* be annulled by prayer ?

Mataji : No. To annul *prārabdha* is most difficult, some say impossible. According to one doctrine it cannot even be blotted out by liberation (*Jivanmukti*). But since where liberation is there can be no individual, where does *prārabdha* come in? This body says, if by the flame of liberation everything is consumed, why not *prārabdha* as well? It is like the revolutions of an electric fan after the switch has been turned off. When the connection is cut off the movement is bound to cease after a little while. But for one who is, liberated not even this kind of movement exists, for who is to experience the *prārabdha* ? For the liberated there is no body—although you may see a body.

Question : Is prayer effective ?

Mataji : Yes. Prayer invariably has a result, not necessarily the result you pray for, but since prayer connects you with God, it is always beneficial. Suppose you pray for the recovery of your sick child and the child dies. Your prayer has not been granted, yet it will help your child in some way. You do not know what is for your real good. Suppose you pray for employment and secure it, but get ill ; or for money, but a dacoit waylays and kills you for the sake of it. God alone knows your real need. At times, just as a child is given a biscuit to make it stop crying, you may not get what you desire, but something else.

Question : Why should one pray to God at all ? He in any case does all that is necessary.

Mataji : Yes, this also is true on one level. But prayer is good, for to pray means turning one's thoughts to God.

There are various kinds of prayer. At first, man prays for material things like wealth, health, family, position, etc. On that level, if he did not pray for these and similar boons, he would not remember God at all. To be reminded of Him, no matter from what motive, is beneficial.

Then there is a stage, especially in the line of *bhakti* when prayer spontaneously flows from one's heart. One yearns and pines for God and cannot help praying : "I cannot bear to be without Thee, reveal Thyself! When wilt Thou bless me with Thy vision ?" It is like a fever that cannot be allayed by anything but union with Him. The first type of prayer is of the ego; the second is still of the ego, but of an ego that is about to disintegrate ; when its prayer has been fulfilled, there will be no other prayer.

There is another state when one prays : "Do what Thou wilt with me. I am a tool in Thy hand, only vouchsafe me the strength to endure whatever Thou mayst require of me."

There is a further state when one does not pray at all. One feels : "God does all that is necessary, so, for what am I to pray ?" Then in the firm belief that He provides for all the needs of His creatures, one becomes free from worry and remains absorbed in deep meditation.

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On Clothing

A young university student asked : Why do sadhus wear a special dress, matted hair, long beards and so on ? What has all this to do with spirituality ?

Mataji : Why do you put oil on your hair and part it in front of a mirror ? Why do you wear fine trousers and well laundered shirts ? Whom do you wish to please ? Who is it that is your own and that you are trying to impress by your elegant appearance ? You think : "What will people say ?" You really are afraid of public opinion. You like to look like a gentleman. You admire well-dressed people and so you say to yourself : "I must also dress in the same fashion." What benefit do you expect to get out of it ?

The young student : It gives me satisfaction to look neat and nice.

Mataji : Exactly. It gives you pleasure. And what will this kind of satisfaction lead to ? Can you tell ?

The young student : It is difficult to tell.

Mataji : You do not find an answer. All this dressing up is done for the sake of self-satisfaction. A genuine *sādhaka* is too preoccupied with his search to bother about his appearance. He is impatient to attain to the vision of the Supreme. He has no time to look after his clothes, to cut his nails, trim his beard, etc.; all his time and energy are spent in *sādhana* and therefore he goes about looking anyhow. He feels : "Whom should I please by being well-dressed ?" A *sādhū* is out for Self-realization and hence cannot give thought or time to his appearance.

The Rishis of old used to have matted hair and long beards, in spite of this being very troublesome in the hot weather. They put up with the inconvenience because matted hair and long beards had become, as it were, the badge of a Rishi, it was known as the outer signs of a man intent on Self-realization.

Now have you still other doubts concerning this question ?

The young man : Does the special dress of a *saṁnyāsi* help him in his *sādhana* ?

Mataji : You dress well for your own pleasure, not because it brings you nearer to God. The real *sadhu* is eager for Supreme Bliss. Of course, not all *sadhū*s are genuine. There are also 'babu *sadhū*s.' Although they have taken the robe, they are still worldly-minded.

Once, coming down from Mussoorie in a bus, we were travelling with a *sadhu* whose face seemed to shine with inner radiance. People were greatly impressed by him, but later he was caught painting his cheeks.

I have heard of another *sādhū* with a large following, whose *charanamrita* was said to taste sweet. A doctor of medicine came to hear about this and said he also wanted to taste the sweet water. The *sadhu* always used to have a bath before people took his *charanamrita* ¹. But the physician insisted on washing and drying

1. It is a custom to ceremonially wash (or rather dip into water) the feet of saints. The water is then called *charanamrita* and is drunk by people in the belief that power and purity are transmitted to them by it.

the sādhu's feet with his own hands and on cutting his toe-nails before proceeding with the ceremony. As a result, the *charanamrita* did not taste sweet. The actual fact was, when the sādhu went for his bath he put sacharin under his toe-nails. Many people who have been disillusioned in similar ways have come to this body and related various stories of the same kind.

It is said that a *samnyāsi* wears the ochre robe as a symbol of the fire of renunciation and he shaves his head and face to indicate that this fire has burnt away everything, not leaving even a single hair on his head. These outer observances are meant to remind him constantly of this fact. You may say, "why should a man who has not attained to complete desirelessness take *samnyāsa* ?" "Taking" *samnyāsa* is one thing, but it is quite another when renunciation just happens effortlessly. Initiation into the order of *samnyāsa*, is an aid, so that real *samnyāsa* which is supreme renunciation, may come about.

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On Food

Question : It is said that what one eats affects the mind. Is this true? What is the connection between the mind and food ?

Mataji : There is indeed a close interrelationship between the mind and food. Sri Krishnananda Avadhutaji explained this in detail to you only the other day, and your *Śāstras* also give elaborate instructions on this theme. *Sattwic* food will produce *sattwic* qualities, *rajasic* food *rajasic* qualities, and so on. Therefore, people observe special rules concerning their diet. But, if someone engages in *sādhana* he will automatically feel the necessity of giving up certain types of food and of introducing others. He will come to experience an aversion for the eatables that hinder his *sādhana*. Just as a fever patient craves for water, so will the *sādhaka* instinctively conceive a desire for particular articles of diet and a distaste for others. But, also by reasoning, one may adopt a *sattwic* diet and later gradually develop a taste for it.

Question : We see that people cannot live without food. Yet, we are told that during your life there were times when you ate infinitesimal quantities, as for instance, three grains of rice twice daily or as much as can be given in one breath, etc.

Mataji : Once I had to travel by carriage, it was overcrowded, so I sat on a woman's lap. The *kheyala* came to this body that it would be too heavy for her, so this body became lighter than a leaf. When afterwards it got out of the carriage this body sat down on the ground,, again assuming its normal weight. That was *yoga kriya* (a yogic process). This is one thing.

Another is as follows : When a kite flies in the air it gets into a state of poise so that the wooden frame to which it is attached is also held in the air in balance, although at other times it would fall down. Similarly there is a state of poise in which the rhythm of the breath is such that six months may become equal to six hours. At the time when this body lived on such a scanty diet its health was excellent. It could walk for hours and climb without getting breathless. When walking up a steep hill people usually pant, but at that time this body did not feel any fatigue or exertion. If there had been the *kheyāla*, it could have remained in that condition for years or for a whole age. But this also is only a state, namely the state of a yogi. Since this body does nothing by personal will, but everything happens spontaneously, it now behaves like other human beings; it gets a stomach-ache, a pain in the foot and so on – it is all the same.

Another point is this : The energy of the grain or fruit is absorbed into oneself by eating them. But if this energy is within one's reach in a more direct way, no food is required. Where the power to create, preserve and destroy is present – what is it, not to eat ? Nothing at all.

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On the Use and Misuse of Psychic Powers

Question : Is it legitimate to use psychic powers in order to obtain results in the material world, as for example, in business or in one's relationship with people ?

Mataji : If divine energy (*Bhagavat Śakti*) is used for anything save for divine purposes (*Bhagavat-kārya*), it is wasted. A man who studies medicine employs his knowledge to cure patients, the one who learns engineering has to do an engineer's work. If the power acquired in the course of one's search after Truth is directed towards material ends, the current of the Supreme Spiritual Energy (*Maha Śakti*) is thereby inhibited. The power that accumulates within as a result of spiritual exercises must not be frittered away in worldly pursuits. Certain supernormal powers (*vibhūtis*) may be developed. Yet is not everything God's *Vibhuti*, *His Lila*, *His Maya* ? If in the midst of this play you do not seek the Reality behind it, and if instead of using for this purpose the powers and capacities you have been blessed with, you get side-tracked into the ways of the world, this will have undesirable consequences. Having once become a pilgrim on the road to Immortality and been endowed with powers, to neglect this path and linger in bypaths hinders spiritual progress. It means to revert to worldly interests.

One must not allow oneself to be caught by the lure of supernormal faculties. Suppose one has acquired the power that whatever one utters becomes true or whatever one desires fulfilled. What of it ? This is only a stage. By using such powers to destroy or improve people one may become arrested on that level instead of progressing towards the Ultimate. To get entangled on the level of these powers is a waste of energy. Having acquired them one must not lose sight of the Supreme Goal of human existence, but strive unceasingly after Selfrealization. Failing to do so will create obstacles and may result in a fall.

Here someone else asked : Having acquired supernormal powers does not the desire to use them for lower purposes vanish ?

Mataji : Having developed a little power, one may feel tempted to use it for worldly ends. But where the Supreme Power of the Self functions, it is quite a different matter. The world is no longer perceived as separate and it may well happen that the Power will effect certain material changes. In this there is no personal will and moreover there appear unmistakable signs : A person through whom this Supreme Power expresses itself is full of humility, compassion, forgiveness and mercy. He cannot possibly feel hostile towards anyone. In this case, the Power manifests spontaneously, whereas in the other case it is being 'used.' Where it is used it implies that there is 'doing' and a 'doer' and therefore one has not risen beyond praise and prestige. This is why there is the danger of sustaining a fall.

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On Alms and Hospitality

Question : It is written in the *Śāstras* that it is the duty of a householder to give when appealed to and to entertain any guest that may come to his home. Yet he is warned not to give money to those who may use it for unworthy purposes, for he will reap part of the fruit of their evil deeds. What then are we to do ? If we refuse to give we sin and if we give to the evil-minded we also sin. It is impossible to make sure of the character of everyone who begs for alms. We householders are really unfortunate : whether we act in this way or in that way we have to bear the brunt of our conduct.

Mataji : (Laughing) Yes, you are quite right. If you give money to someone who uses it well you get part of the merit, but suppose it is spent on drink, part of the responsibility for the evil consequences falls to you. It is really very difficult. The only way out is to regard everyone as the Supreme Being. If you give only to the ONE, neither good nor evil consequences will be attached to your deed. With the conviction that it is God you may worship a dog or a cat or a tree, it makes no

difference. It is said that every guest is *Nārāyaṇa*, (the Lord of men). If you serve a guest with the firm faith that *Nārāyaṇa*, has come to your house in this guise, it does not matter who the guest be.

There is a story of a Brahmana who chose *Nārāyaṇa pūjā* for his main *sādhana*. He and his wife never ate before a guest had come to their house and been entertained by them with the honours due to *Nārāyaṇa*. Before they died they requested their son to continue this practice faithfully. He obeyed. After finishing his morning ablutions and prayers, he would cook food, arrange the guest's seat and wait till a guest turned up, even though it might not be till evening. He decided to remain a bachelor all this life, but friends tried to persuade him to get married. At first he refused, but when they continued to press him, he finally said, "very well, I agree on condition that should my wife disobey me I shall cut off her head." His friends did not take this threat seriously and arranged for the wedding.

He directed his wife to cook food and serve *Nārāyaṇa* whenever He should appear in the form of a guest, and after she had done this to call her husband for food. He himself would spend his days practising *japa* and studying the Scriptures. All went well for some time until one day no guest came. Evening was approaching and the young housewife was getting very hungry and thirsty. She began to wonder whether it would be possible to deceive her husband by telling him the guest had left the house after taking his meal. But for fear of losing her life if found out, she refrained : Just then a man, carrying a cow's head dangling on a stick, entered the house. He asked her to cut up the head and prepare it for his meal. She had never before done such a thing and did not know how to set about it. However, the guest showed her how to proceed and in spite of the disgust she felt, she submitted for fear of displeasing her husband. When the meat was placed before the strange guest, he bade her taste it first. Being a Brahmana's daughter she became

nauseated at the thought of eating cow's flesh, but again out of fear was ready to obey. Just as she was raising her hand to put the first morsel into her mouth, the guest said, "First call your husband !" She dropped the meat, washed her hands and entered her husband's room. "It" is almost night," he said, "has the guest been fed and left the house satisfied?" "No," was the reply, "he has not yet eaten, but asked me to call you first." "What wrong have you done ?" Thundered the husband, "now I shall have to cut off your head." However, they went to see what the guest wanted. Lo and behold, the man with the cow's head had disappeared, instead both husband and wife had a clear vision of Radha and Krishna occupying the guest's seat.

Intense faith is a path to the vision of God : This story brings it home in a drastic manner. The man who was obviously an outcaste violating the rules of his Brahmana host revealed himself as God. If you treat every guest as *Nārāyaṇa*, no matter what be his behaviour, you yourself and he will be benefited.

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On Sleep

Question : How can one conquer sleep ?

Mataji : Sleep cannot be conquered, yet under certain conditions the need of sleep vanishes of itself. When you are keenly interested in something you do not feel sleepy, on the contrary, you remain wide awake without any effort; but afterwards you get a reaction and have to make up for your loss of sleep. When you have not slept enough you cannot do good work. On the other hand sound sleep refreshes you. At least a few out of the twenty-four hours of each day have to be spent in sleep, otherwise you feel tired and wretched. Why ? During deep sleep the activities of the senses are at rest and moreover, although still covered with the veil of ignorance, you touch your Self. Unless this happens at least once a day, you cannot endure life; it becomes an ordeal. This is so for the average person.

However, as one progresses in *sadhana*, the senses get more and more rest and one draws nearer to one's Self. In proportion to the discovery of one's Self, the necessity for sleep decreases. When the Self has been realized, when one has become absorbed in the Bliss of the Self, then there is no more question of work, of experience, or of sleep, because there is only the ONE ! Then sleep will not exist for you anymore, you will have gone beyond it. This is why I began by saying, sleep is not conquered, it ceases of itself. Nevertheless, it is also true that a yogi may conquer sleep by the Divine Energy that awakens in him through his yoga. But, for the one who has become *āt māstha*, established in the Self, the question of sleep can no longer arise.

The amount of sleep a person requires depends on various factors. When *tamas* predominates one needs more sleep, and also when the body is weak or unhealthy. The kind of food one eats also has a bearing on the amount of sleep that is required.

Question : How is one to know whether one sleeps too much out of laziness or because the body needs it due to weakness ?

Mataji : If you watch yourself carefully you will soon find out.

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On Prema and Moha (Real Love and Attraction)

Question : Is it possible to attain to Self-realization by an intensification of emotion, such as love ?

Mataji : Yes. Prema, the love of God is certainly a way. But what is ordinarily called 'love' is not *prema*, true love, but *moha*, attraction through delusion. *Prema*, real love, cannot exist between individuals. How can one get pure love from that, which by its very nature is impure, namely the individual ? Again and again it happens that people come to this body saying, "My love for such and such a person is true love, not worldly love." They are deceiving themselves. Love for that which is

mortal is invariably *moha*, attraction through delusion, and leads to death. Quite obviously so. Have you not noticed how, when you find it impossible to get the object of your love you either wish to kill it or to die yourself? Whereas *prema*, the love of God, takes you to the death of death, to Immortality.

Therefore, it is said, to regard the Guru as an individual is a sin. The Guru has to be loved and revered as God. Some time ago a woman came to this body, who wanted to commit suicide because her Guru had passed away. I said to her : "Does a Guru die"? Because he has left his body it does not mean that he is no more. The Guru is everywhere and never leaves his disciple. The fact that you want to take your life out of grief over your Guru's passing into *Mahāsamādhi* shows that you love him as a person and not as a Guru." It was not at all easy to convince the woman of this, and she had to pass through much heart-ache and trouble until at last she got over her attachment.

It happens that people fall in love with their Guru. If he has attained to the state that a Guru should have reached, he will be able to canalize the disciple's love, turning it towards the Divine. But, if he himself has not transcended personality, difficulties will naturally arise. This body has come across a number of cases where inexperienced girls, child widows, or even married women have been led into a wrong path by false Gurus.

The injunction of the *Śāstras* is that one has to surrender one's whole being – body, mind and heart to the Guru. To surrender one's body means to surrender one's desires so that they may be obliterated, but not to surrender one's body in the material sense. If it is misunderstood in this way, as occurs sometimes, then this body says, although you may have received *dikṣā* from him, that person is not your Guru. You should then bathe in the Ganges and purify yourself and make a fresh start. Although the mantra cannot be defiled, there are

instances when it becomes imperative to relinquish even that, namely, if it is inextricably associated with the memory of the false guru. In such cases it is advisable to change the mantra to another.

People contract so-called love marriages, but in some cases both parties are disillusioned and after a time each separately come to this body lamenting and repenting.

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On The Right Attitude Toward Our Deceased

Question : Is it good to repeatedly call a dead person by his name, to keep his picture and remember him ?

Mataji : If one mourns for the person, regretting the loss of the worldly enjoyment one has had together, it is bad both for the departed and for oneself. On the other hand, if the remembrance be an act of worship, as for example, since it is a wife's duty to regard her husband as God, she thinks of the deceased and keeps his picture with this attitude of mind, it may well be beneficial both for her deceased husband and herself.

I knew a couple who had lost their only daughter just a few days before she was to be married. They were broken-hearted. The girl's mother started wearing widow's dress and her husband also deeply grieved after his child and gave up many things he had been accustomed to enjoy. They had a life-size picture of their daughter made and lived only in their memory of her. Before eating they would place the food before the picture and so forth. This body told them, "Just as some flowers bloom and fall off without bearing fruit, so your child passed away young and pure, without having formed any attachments. Look upon her as the servant of the Lord, keep a picture of Him near hers; burn incense in the room and set it apart for worship and meditation." Neither the husband nor the wife were religiously inclined, but by taking their loss in this manner they gradually developed in that direction.

This body then said to them : "Your daughter has become your Guru, it is she who has made you turn towards God." This is a case where a whole family benefited.

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On Renunciation

Someone wanted to know how detachment (*vairagya*) could be brought about. "If it comes naturally," he asked, "there is no problem. But how can those who feel pulled in two directions, who are half hearted, be helped to give up?"

Mataji : If you like eating sweets and you find it interferes with your *sadhana*, give it up for a day or two and say to yourself : "I can get those sweets again later, but for these two days, I shall do without them." This will break the habit.

When a boy is intelligent and keen on his studies there is no difficulty. But even a student who is dull and lazy can be made to pass his examinations by the aid of an efficient teacher. All the same, so far as worldly knowledge is concerned, there are people who are quite incapable of learning anything. But in the spiritual field this cannot be so, for everyone without exception has in the end to reach the goal of human existence. Therefore, if he finds the right teacher, he can be pushed up by some means or other.

There are cases when through a combination of factors operating together people are led to drop bad habits or vices. The following is a striking instance of this.

In the Ashram grounds smoking is forbidden. Once when this body was staying in the Kishenpur Ashram a *bhakta* from Delhi, who had come for a short visit, went out on the road to smoke a cigarette. As soon as he had lit it, this body had to tell him something and he was called. He put out his cigarette and came inside. When our talk was over he went back and relit his cigarette. But at that very moment someone shouted that Mataji wanted him at the Ashram. By some

co-incidence, or whatever it may have been, exactly the same situation repeated itself several times over, until he felt thoroughly disgusted and instead of lighting his cigarette, flung the whole packet away and never smoked again. He had a close friend with whom he used to spend much time. On hearing the story, his experience was communicated to the friend who also left off smoking.

Another incident of a somewhat similar nature occurred several years ago when this body was living in a house-boat on the Ganges at Varanasi. This body then used to get a pain in the arm. One of the people who were staying with me then, said he personally knew an excellent physician and begged to be allowed to call him. The doctor came. When he examined the arm, this body observed that he was enveloped in a strong aroma of cigarettes. He was evidently a heavy smoker. However, I neither remarked on it nor showed by any gesture what I had observed. The doctor offered to prescribe some medicine, but since this body does not take any medicine, nothing could be done and he left after a short while.

On his way home he lit a cigarette. To his surprise he found that he felt an aversion for it ; he did not want to smoke. The same dislike arose again in him when he lit another cigarette after returning home. He never smoked again. The craving had simply left him.

When things come about in such a manner, by Grace as it were, nothing need or can be done. But it is possible to accomplish a great deal by determination and sustained effort as well.

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Question : Is it right for a man to leave his family and go forth in search of Truth ?

Mutaji : At the state in which a man's actions are prompted by his sense of duty, he cannot and will not leave his family. He should remain a householder and fulfil the duties incumbent on him, as prescribed in the *Śāstras*. But just as nobody can remain in a burning house, so there is a state in which one feels as if one's house were on fire and one

cannot possibly remain at home. The Lord Buddha's life is an example of this irresistible inner call and there are many other less famous cases. Can you say that the Lord Buddha did wrong ?

Question : There are many instances of people who felt that they must leave their families in order to take *sannyāsa*, only to realize after a time that they had been mistaken. Unable to bear the hardships of such a life, their spiritual progress comes to a standstill. Would it not be better for such men to return home and resume their professions ?

Mataji : Once a man has renounced the world and become a *sannyāsi*, even though he may not be able to advance in his *sadhana*, still he has taken to this life in search of the Ultimate. At least, at the time of leaving his home he felt the urge to dedicate his life to the Supreme Quest. If he cannot proceed he will have to undergo a great deal of suffering. He may starve, be without shelter and perhaps die somewhere under a tree without anyone to wait on him. But having suffered and died in order to find God, he will continue in another birth where he left off in this one and there is hope that then he may succeed. Are not people who live the ordinary worldly life also subjected to hardships, poverty and illness ? Yet, unless they be intent on discovering their Self these trials are of no special benefit to them. However, one cannot make a hard and fast rule concerning these matters. The same thing is not right for everyone. There are cases where people who left their families had to return to them.

Many years ago, for example, a *sādhu* came to this body. He was still young, not much over thirty. He looked worried and ill. He said, "I find myself on the horns of a dilemma. For a whole month I have had neither sleep nor been able to give my mind to any *sadhana*. I just wander about on the banks of the Ganges, brooding over my problem; sometimes I eat, at other times I forget to do even that." Then he related his story. When almost a child of fifteen or sixteen he had left his parents and lived as a *sādhu* without however formally taking *sannyāsa*; he just adopted the ochre robe on his own responsibility. After some time he got tired of begging for his food. He had learnt tailoring and decided

to do a little work in his profession, just enough to earn his bare upkeep and for the rest to continue with his *sādhana*. He did this for a while. Mind you, he intended merely to provide for himself and not to have anything to do with the world. But man cannot escape the influences of his surroundings. One day, he met an elderly man who could read hands. "There is marriage in your fate," he predicted, "you won't be able to continue this kind of life much longer."

On hearing this the young *sādhū* thought that if it was his destiny he would not be able to avoid it. The old man described the type of bride that would be suitable for him and eventually suggested giving him his own daughter. The marriage took place, but the girl, a mere child of 12 or 13, motherless and deeply attached to her father, neither cared for her husband nor looked after him. This went on for about a year and a half. At last the young man grew weary of this state of affairs and regretted what he had let himself in for. So he left his home for the second time and resumed his life as a *sādhū*. This had occurred five or six years before he met this body. "All went well at first," he said, "but for quite a time I have been haunted by the thought that if my wife, who is a grown-up woman now, gets into the ways of sin, it will be my fault. This worries me so much that I am wondering whether I should remain a *sādhū* or go back to her." Seeing the condition of the young man, this body felt, if he got ill and died, his last thought would not be of God, but of the worry over his wife, and this was certainly most undesirable. Moreover the man had not taken formal *sannyāsa*. So I advised him to put on ordinary clothes and return to his wife. He was a clever tailor. He went to Calcutta and took up work in his profession. "My son shall be made into a *dandi*¹ *swami* !" He exclaimed. But whether he ever had a son we have not heard.

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1. A *dandi swami* is a *sannyāsi* belonging to an order with particularly austere and difficult rules.

Question : Suppose a full-fledged *sannyāsi* repents of having forsaken his home, what should he do ?

Mataji : This body has so far never advised a *sannyāsi* to return to the grihastha ashrama. For a *sannyāsi* who has been initiated into a *sannyāsa* mantra and has a Guru there is a path. Even if he has not got the capacity to advance very far, he should never relax his efforts although he die in the attempt.

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The following are three parables which we have heard Mataji relate at different times.

An Earthen Jar Tells Its Story

(Sometimes, instead of an image representing a deity, an earthen jar filled with Ganges water is used as a substitute when doing *pūjā* . Before the actual *pūjā* starts the jar has, through the appropriate rite and through mantras, to be brought into living relation with the particular aspect of Divine Power, so as to become a living focus for it. This rite of vivification is called "*Praṇa Pratīṣṭha* ").

Mataji said : An earthen jar that had been given *Praṇa Pratīṣṭha* by a *Mahatma*, related the story of its life. "At first", it said, "I was part of the earth. I was happy and at perfect peace. But one day a man came with a spade and dug me out. Oh dear, it hurt terribly ! Then he carried me away and left me in a heap in a corner." "Now," I thought, "I shall have peace again. But how badly mistaken I was ! Early next morning I found that he had brought a hammer to crush me into fine powder. What dreadful suffering I underwent ! However, having become powder, my hopes rose high. Now, I shall surely be left in peace ! But no, more pain was in store for me. The next day, I was mixed with water and stamped on. When this ordeal was over I expected to have found lasting peace. In vain — is there no end to misery ? I was put on

a potter's wheel and turned round and round at a maddening speed till I was formed into a jar. Now I felt quite certain that thereafter I should be left alone. But again I was wrong, for a new kind of torture was to be my lot. Every day I was exposed to the scorching rays of the sun and every night stored away in the house. This went on for some time, only to end in worse luck. Oh Hari, one fine morning I was put into fire and baked. Feeling sore all over, I comforted myself : What more can they do to me ? This no doubt marks the end of my tribulations and henceforth I shall enjoy undisturbed peace. Far from it ! Lo and behold, I was subjected to a new kind of trial. I was taken to the market and many people came and banged on me to see whether I was without a hole. Finally, someone bought me and took me home. He filled me with Ganges water, placed me on a pedestal and performed *Prāṇa Pratīṣṭha* and this is how I am able to speak now.'

Mataji added : "When in this manner one has matured and been made perfect, one will be filled with the Ganges (of wisdom) and awakened to Divine Life. Then one will be able to speak."

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The Clever Merchant

A rich merchant was preparing to go on a business tour. A thief, eager to rob the rich man, came to him. Dressed in fine clothes and pretending to be a merchant himself, he said : "I also have to travel the same route. It is not safe to venture forth alone when one is carrying money. Let us make the journey together !" It was agreed.

In the morning before starting from the inn, the merchant would take out all his money, count it carefully and put it back into his pocket. He did this quite openly while the thief was watching him and planning to steal the money that very night. After a tiring day, they settled down to rest till sunrise and soon the merchant was fast asleep. The thief had kept awake. He got up from bed and searched his companion's luggage,

his bedding and his person. The merchant never as much as opened his eyes, but went on snoring peacefully. Try as he might, the thief failed to discover a single farthing. This went on day after day. Every morning the merchant counted his money, making the thief's mouth water, but at night no money was to be found. Finally, in his despair the thief decided to question the merchant. "Friend," he said, "I must make a confession. I was deceiving you. I really sought your company to get hold of your money. Every night I tried my hardest, but all my efforts to lay my hands on your treasure proved futile, although I searched very thoroughly. Do please tell me, by what magic you kept your money hidden from me !" "It is quite simple," replied the merchant, laughing heartily. "From the beginning I suspected your evil intentions, yet I was quite free from anxiety, because I knew that you could never guess my hiding-place. Every night the money was lying safely under your own pillow. I was sure that this was the one place you would never search and so I was able to sleep most peacefully."

"God is within everyone," commented Mataji, "but man goes out in search of Him. This is what constitutes God's Play and God's Creation."

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The Precious Necklace

A precious necklace could be seen flashing from the bottom of a lake. Many dived, greedy for the beautiful ornament, but the strange thing was that when they reached the bottom, no necklace was to be found. Yet it was clearly visible for everyone from the edge of the lake, there was no mistaking. Finally, a Mahātmā passed by. He was consulted in the matter. "The necklace cannot be at the bottom of the lake, it must be somewhere else," he said. "What you see is its reflection in the water." He looked up and soon discovered the precious ornament hanging from a tree : A bird had picked it up from somewhere and deposited it there.

"The Eternal," concluded Mataji, "is the treasure-house of real happiness. In the objects of the senses, this happiness is merely reflected. The individual, misled birth after birth by experiencing glimpses of this reflection, thinks that the real thing is to be found in the objects of the senses. So long as one believes that true happiness can be had in this world without searching within, one will remain in bondage."

