

"May God Live in You"

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I met Babuji Maharaj for the first time in Rome in June 1976, six months after I became an abhyasi. He came accompanied by Chariji, and I travelled from Napoli where I lived.

When I went into Master's room, I immediately felt a state of wonder and reverence and that I was meeting somebody I had known since all eternity.

After a while I started asking him a few questions. One was whether evil forces really existed or not. He said that there was no such a thing as evil, but the human beings coming down from their original condition had generated evil forces. The next day I was made a preceptor which was another unexpected and wonderful experience.

After three days with him I had to leave to rejoin military service. We were in Latina in the Rizzo's house. Just before leaving I was in such a state of sadness that I broke down in tears before him. He said, "Military service is good for the discipline," but it didn't help me to bear the pain of separation. Then he invited me to visit him in India the next year.

Chariji has written that he asked Babuji how he was able to create this condition in an abhyasi who had seen him for the first time only a few days back, "It is Lalaji's grace," he answered.

I visited Babuji in India with my wife Tiziana in November 77. The trip to Shajahanpur was quite difficult because in our eagerness to reach Babuji we had taken the first train from Delhi to Bareilly the same night of our arrival in India. We had hoped to catch a connection to Shajahanpur from there, but when we reached Bareilly the train had already left. We looked for a bus, but at that time there was a big language difficulty so we got into the wrong bus, then we had to

get out somewhere and take another bus that somebody had indicated, hoping it was the right one. It was becoming dark and we were very tired from the long trip and at one stage we did not know whether we were going the right way at all. Our confusion increased as the villagers on the bus continued to ask us whether we wanted to go to Shajahanpur or Saranpur. We were wondering where we were going to spend the night in this unknown country when suddenly the driver stopped and we were told that we had to get out. We were just in front of the ashram's gate in Shajahanpur and somebody came to welcome us!

We felt immediately at home and in that divine atmosphere all our tiredness and burdens dissolved at once. He had conducted us to His very door. We spent ten days with Babuji going every morning to have sittings in his room. Once He started the sitting and went out of the room. He came back after half an hour or so to say 'that's all'. Obviously He could work on us from wherever while He was attending to other things.

The days were filled with grace and deep inner transformation. The atmosphere was always divinely charged. We spoke very little, most of the time He was silent and totally absorbed in Himself with his hookah as his only companion. One day I put him quite a childish question, "What will happen after the *Mahapralaya*?" He looked at me innocently and said, "Nobody knows."

In those days we could hear many wonderful stories about Babuji from his assistant at that time, Gunde Rao. I did not hear these tales from Babuji but I believe that Rao must have heard some of them from him in the years spent in Shajahanpur. Here are a few:

Babuji was in Ceylon for some spiritual work. One day he visited another spiritual organisation, but the followers of this organisation were quite closed and unfriendly to him. Suddenly the founder of that Mission, at that time already departed, appeared to Master ashamed by the behaviour of his followers and asked Babuji to destroy what remained of the organisation. Immediately, Lalaji intercommuned saying, "Leave it, we are not here to destroy but to build." So Master left.

An abhyasi in France wanted to publish some book of Master's but the publisher refused. Then it seems that after some time the man called back the abhyasi saying that an old Indian man with a beard had visited him explaining the utility of the system and he was now convinced to publish the book. The abhyasi wrote this to Master and he replied that as he was sincere he had wanted to help him.

One day an abhyasi in south India was cooking something and he had an intense wish for Master to taste the food. Suddenly Babuji appeared saying, "This time I have come but please don't call me again."

A disciple of Lalaji's wrote asking whether on the way to Fatehgarh he could go to visit him with a friend. Lalaji replied that he could come, but alone, leaving the friend at the railway station. After a few months the disciple asked Lalaji the reason. Lalaji said that his friend was not genuine as he had tried to kill the abhyasi several times and Lalaji had protected him each time.

I saw Babuji again in Munich in 1980. What I remember most of that meeting was the moment I went to say good bye to Him. I went close to him with joined hands and told him that I was leaving. Then he looked at me and in a low voice He blessed me, "May God live in you." It was as if a river of grace had flooded my heart. I became unaware of the crowd of abhyasis around and was suddenly totally alone with Him, drowned in the divine gift of His words. I feel that at that moment something changed forever in me.

Those were the last words he spoke to me because when I met Him for the last time in Paris in 1982, I did not have the opportunity to be near him. When he left the campus, I wept bitterly, feeling that I would never meet him again in this physical existence.

I have wondered for many years how I could justify such a blessing as meeting such a divine Master. I felt totally undeserving. The mystery was solved one day by Chariji, "It is not a question of deserving, it is a question of belonging."