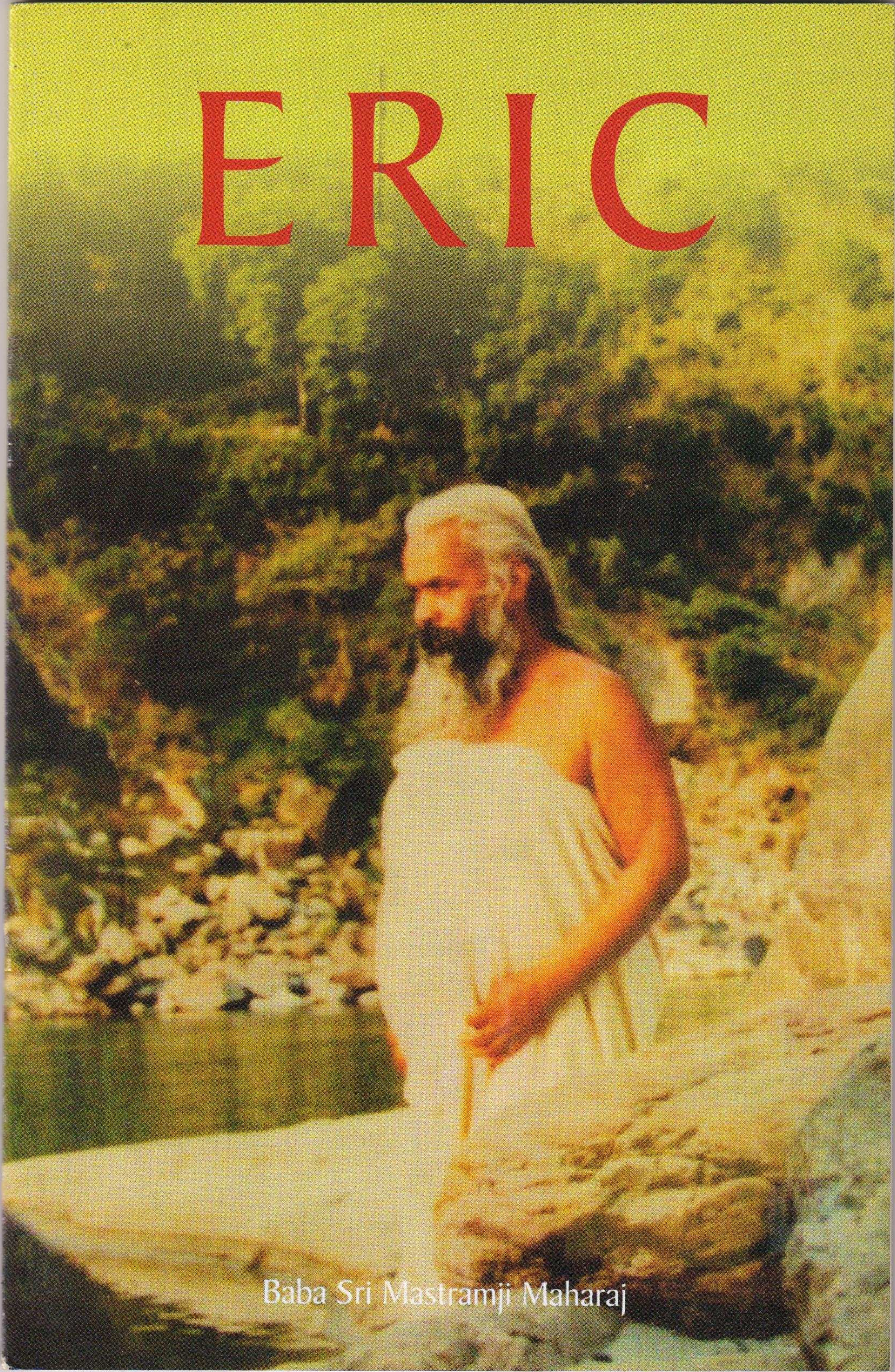


ERIC



Baba Sri Mastramji Maharaj

Eric

A True Story

by
Nani

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Sri Krishna tells us in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita that men approach God from all sides. Indeed we find that there are many paths to God in India. Among them, the four principal paths are the path of knowledge, the path of devotion, the path of meditation and the path of service. Most of us have to struggle for years along one or more of these paths before we catch any glimpse of the goal, but a few blessed people with tremendous tenacity and determination are able to follow their path to the ultimate goal even in this lifetime and, according to Hindu belief, attain God realization. Eric Cameron Smith was one such soul who within only eight years of devotion and service, was able to utter the name of God as he left his body.

I first saw Eric when I went to make my pranam (to bow) to my guru Babaji in the dharmsala one afternoon. A dharmsala is generally a room or building given in charity used to house religious pilgrims and sadhus, as the monks are called in India. In Babaji's ashram the dharmsala was a simple construction made from railway sleepers which were floated down the Ganga by the government. The sleepers were guided down the river by groups of workers swimming with the aid of blown-up pig skins. Made mostly from very strong pine, the sleepers had numbers written on them by the government contractors. Some of them however had no numbers on them, and those we would take as gifts from Ganga Mai (Mother Ganga) as no contractor claimed them. The sleepers making up the roof of the dharmsala rested on other sleepers embedded in the sand. On one and a half sides there were stone walls and the

other two and a half sides were open. The floor was a soft layer of clean white sand which Babaji's disciples brought from the Ganga banks. The dharmsala itself was just a hundred yards up from the water's edge. In the monsoon it often became filled with water and was even swept away occasionally.

It was in this dharmsala that Babaji sat during the summer months to receive visitors. His cave was very small and the hot Indian summer sun did not allow people to sit out on the sand as they would in winter. So Babaji would sit in the dharmsala, leaning his back against the rock wall facing the Ganga. His disciples and visitors sat on either side of him, men on his left and women on his right. Babaji would sit there at lunch time when the dharmsala also served as dining hall, and in the evenings when the sun's blaze became less glaring and allowed people to make the 1 kilometer journey from the nearest village. Sometimes stories would be read from the scriptures, sometimes there was spiritual singing, occasionally accompanied by musical instruments, but most often the Satsangas (spiritual meetings) were informal and consisted of people's questions and Babaji's answers. He sat until sunset when he would take his evening stroll along the beach that bordered the sacred Ganga.

As I bowed to Babaji that particular afternoon, I noticed three foreigners sitting on Babaji's right hand side: two rather anemic looking, shaven-headed foreign monks, and Eric, who at that time made no particular impression on me other than that he was the third in the group. Within an hour, however, he made a more individual impact when he had the audacity to go to sleep in the dharmsala.

An elderly lady disciple of Babaji's came rushing down to me where I was sitting on the clay platform outside Babaji's cave, and excitedly related how a "foreigner" had gone to

sleep in the dharmsala and would I immediately go and eject him. Babaji, who had followed the lady down to the cave, quietly told me to allow him to sleep. When I went later to accompany Babaji on his evening stroll, I saw Eric lying in the dharmsala, his arms and legs stretched out comfortably, and snoring loudly. On a later occasion when I asked Eric why he had gone to sleep, he told me that he had been overwhelmed by a feeling of comfort and happiness, and as if he were in his own home, he had allowed his two companions to leave and had fallen asleep.

When Eric awoke, Babaji was still strolling on the sparkling white sandy beach in the warmth of the early evening. Eric came running over, and falling on his knees embraced Babaji's feet with such loving fervor that I remarked, "Babaji, he looks like an old devotee."

"Yes, perhaps he is," Babaji replied gently.

When Eric finished his pranam, he asked me to ask Babaji if he could come and live with him. I translated, and Babaji asked him where he was staying and for how long he had taken a room. Eric replied that he was staying at Sivananda Ashram and had the room for one week. Then Babaji told him to come during the day for that week, and if he still wanted to come, he could come after that. Eric came every day and all day, staying as close to Babaji as he could, drinking him in with his eyes and doing little helpful things that Babaji or anyone else indicated.

After one week, Eric moved into a little cave that Babaji gave him on the banks of the Ganga. Eric was tall and heavy boned. He didn't have any luggage, and wore a light blue faded smock with a brownish belt tied around the middle. He reminded me of a medieval Anglo-Saxon. Eric at once showed a deep love for Babaji and for Ganga Mai. I began to teach him Hindi which he learnt fairly quickly, and he spent his time helping the Babas (Babaji's male

sadhu disciples) feed the cows that came to the ashram to eat, doing his own prayers, and generally helping around.

Eric quickly began to show a number of remarkable qualities. One was his generosity. When he saw that there was generally no evening meal at the ashram, he brought rice and dal and cauliflower with which we made kichori (a mixture of the three). At that time Babaji's ashram was not so well equipped as later, so the kichori was made in a tin bath tub (usually used to feed the cows) and cooked over a wood fire by the edge of the Ganga. Eric brought the rice and dal every day until he confessed to me that he had no more money. He had only had 300 rupees and he had spent it down to the last paisa without any thought for himself or the future.

Another quality was his stoicism. He never complained or asked for anything. When the food was passed out he never asked for any unless it was willfully given, even if he had to go without. He always seemed quite happy and content with any situation, and took even the worst insults with a quite sense of humor. Sometimes there was an evening meal at one of the Baba's rooms and we would sit on that Baba's verandah to eat. Although I was also a foreigner, the Baba had become accustomed to me. But to Eric he objected. He refused to have "that foreigner" sitting on his verandah. I told Eric, who quietly took his food and sitting on the dusty path below the verandah, continued to eat as if nothing had happened. The next day Eric took his food on the path again. After a few days the Baba, charmed by Eric's tolerance, called him back onto the verandah. Eric happily joined us again.

After a while Eric's blue smock fell to pieces and Babaji replaced it with a white cloth like the other Babas wore. Eric was also given a huge brown quilt to wrap up in at night. He would come to the evening service wrapped in

this bulky quilt, and one day as he turned, looking for somewhere to sit down, his quilt banged into one of the Babas. "Mr. Elephant!" the Baba shouted, "Go and sit over there." Eric was made to sit far away but he accepted it in his usual good humour.

I don't know too much about what he did in his personal prayers except that he always did exactly what Babaji said. If Babaji said, "Go and sleep," he would go and sleep. If Babaji said, "Go and pray, he would go and pray. He asked Babaji what form of God he should worship and Babaji told him to pray to God to reveal to him in his heart the form to which he should pray. Although I acted as the translator between Babaji and Eric, I can no longer remember most of the early questions and answers. I only remember being impressed by Eric's simplicity and love. Eric had absolutely no falseness about him. He was what he was and he loved Babaji. We quickly became close friends.

Eric passed a few months happily in this way, serving Babaji and the cows, studying and praying. He learned to speak and write a little Hindi and also to sing the Tulsidas' Ramayana. He would sing the chapter entitled "Sundarakanda" every day. He gradually adopted the life style of Indian renunciates who sever ties with their families and keep only the bare minimum of possessions endeavoring to live a life of prayer and complete surrender to God. He developed a deeper and deeper love for Babaji and Ganga Mai and also a good relationship with everyone at the ashram, all of whom were quickly won over by his good humour and loving nature. He would roar with laughter at his own mistakes and was never interested in having his own way about anything.

The next big event in Eric's life was when he went to renew his visa. It was not granted. He was told he would have to have proof of people giving him financial support.

That was easy. He returned to the police with a letter from one of Babaji's rich industrialist disciples. But the visa was still not granted. At that time it was difficult for Americans to get visas.

Eric revealed to me his desolation. He said that he didn't want to leave Babaji. I suggested he talk to Babaji and ask him what to do. Eric had received a 15 day Quit India notice. The days passed by. Eric continued his daily practices but more quietly than usual. Then one day as I was sitting with Babaji near his cave over on the math, (an island near the bank of the Ganga), Eric came over to us slowly and said he wanted to talk to Babaji. He told Babaji that he couldn't bear to leave him and asked him what he should do about the notice. Babaji answered kindly by saying that there were many foreigners in Eric's position. Eric could come and go as they did. He could work and pray in America for six months and then come and be with Babaji for six months. Babaji said that this was the course to be taken by foreigners. Eric looked at Babaji pleadingly and asked if Babaji was telling him to take that course. Babaji answered yes, that it seemed to be right for him. Eric looked downwards and was silent for a while. The love was so strong between Eric and Babaji that tears rolled from my eyes. We all three sat in silence and in love.

After a while Eric asked Babaji, "Babaji, who was the better devotee, Lakshman or Bharat?" I was rather taken aback by this seemingly unrelated question, but Babaji smiled at Eric and looked at him lovingly.

Then Babaji also looked down and was silent for a while. "Both Lakshman and Bharat were supreme devotees and they were both deeply and equally loved by Ram."

Eric breathed an audible sigh of relief and said delightedly, "In that case Babaji, I will not obey you. I will

stay with you. I will not leave you." And he fell embracing Babaji's feet.

Babaji said quietly that if Eric were to take that course he might have to suffer greatly. It would be easier to take the course Babaji had suggested. Eric replied passionately that he didn't care what happened, he would never voluntarily leave Babaji's feet. Then Babaji lovingly gave him permission to stay.

I was still at a loss as to what Lakshman and Bharat had to do with all this when Babaji asked Eric what he had meant by his question. Eric smiled and replied that in the Ramayana when Ram is exiled to the woods by his father, King Dasaratha, Ram's younger brother Lakshman asks Ram if he may accompany him. Ram forbids him, replying that it is Lakshman's duty to stay at home and look after his elderly parents and the kingdom. Lakshman, in an agony of fear at the thought of separation from Ram, disobeys him and insists on accompanying him. Ram recognizes his love and allows Lakshman to go into exile with him. Later on in the Ramayana, Ram's brother Bharat also begs Ram to allow him to live with him in the forest. Ram tells Bharat also that it is his duty to look after his mother and the kingdom. Bharat, in an agony of love and awe for Ram, cannot disobey him and, taking Ram's wooden sandals with him as Ram's representative, passes the years of separation from Ram in austere penance and longing for him. When Babaji replied that Lakshman and Bharat were equally beloved by Ram, then Eric had decided, like Lakshman, to disobey Babaji on the strength of his love for him. The depth of love and understanding in Eric that drove him to ask that question was something beyond the ordinary level of devotion. The heart-rending decision to disobey Babaji, whom he had always obeyed strictly to the letter, was because his love was so great he felt he could

not live without Babaji. Babaji's answer had freed him from the dilemma of disobeying Babaji and staying, or of obeying Babaji and leaving him.

Eric's face was now filled with a loving glow and he enthusiastically continued his daily routine. When the fifteen days were finished, Eric began to have visits from the Foreign Registration authorities. He was then told that if he did not leave he would be arrested. Eric was firm and happy. They could do as they pleased. He said he could not leave Babaji of his own free will. A few days later the police came to arrest Eric. The first I knew of it was the sound of frantic blowing of whistles and the thudding of feet running past the cave on the math where I was sitting praying. Suddenly a policeman jumped into my cave, then seeing it empty except for me, he jumped out again with no explanation. Disturbed and intrigued, I also came out of my cave in time to see Eric emerging, dripping wet, from the other side of the Ganga. He was wearing only his kopeen (loin cloth) and began running and climbing up the sheer cliff on the other side of the Ganga. On this side the police whistles continued and the police ran back and forth shouting. I stood praying that Eric should not fall before he reached the top of the cliff and disappeared into the woods. Then I went over to the dharmshala to ask what was happening. Apparently, the police had come to arrest Eric just as Babaji's lunch had arrived. Babaji had given Eric prasad (a portion of the offering to him) to eat and the police had allowed Eric to sit by the Ganga to eat it. When he had finished eating and was washing his hands, he had suddenly jumped into the Ganga, swam across the narrow strait to the math and then ran out of sight down the beach, with the police after him. When Eric reached the other end of the math he had again jumped into the Ganga and swam to the far side. The Ganga at that point flows swift and rough, but Eric was a strong swimmer and

reached the other side. The police angrily took their leave and I went back to my prayers wondering what was happening to Eric.

At the evening prayer service Eric suddenly appeared, dripping wet, and began waving the arti lights in front of Babaji. I was relieved, but after arti Babaji was grave. He asked Eric why he had run away. He said that Eric should have had the strength to stay by his decision and to face whatever consequences might arise. Eric was also grave and begged Babaji's forgiveness. He said that he had just panicked and jumped into the Ganga. Later Eric told me that when he had entered the woods he began to walk towards the Himalayas, thinking that if he could not be with Babaji, he would wander as a sadhu worshipping his Lord Krishna. After he had been walking a while, he met a man and began talking with him. When Eric told the man of his intention, the man informed Eric that the forest was full of tigers and that Eric would be eaten by them on his first night. He had better return. Eric, feeling that he wasn't yet up to facing tigers, decided to accept his advice. Returning to the cliff on the other side of the Ganga, Eric had entered the temple that was opposite Babaji's ashram. He said there was a feast going on and he had been well fed. As darkness began to fall, he slipped back into the Ganga and swimming across, had reached the ashram in time for arti, the evening service. He was a little downcast at his failure to face the police, and also amused about the whole affair.

The next day, when I went to my prayers Eric was sitting praying on the math in a place sacred to Hanuman. The police, who had heard of his return, apparently arrived in force, and swarming up on Hanuman's rock, pounced on Eric, who this time did not move an inch. He was taken away. When I returned from my prayers in the evening,

the ashram was rather dejected although Babaji as usual showed no signs of anything but serenity and love. We heard in a round about way that Eric had been sentenced to six months in jail. As he told me later, three months for overstaying the Quit India notice and three months for resisting arrest.

In many people's eyes, Eric's behavior was incorrect. People felt that he should have left India and acted in a normal way. Those who were closer to him, however, knew that he had forsaken normality in the strange madness of divine love. When divine love is genuine, the devotee cannot always be tried by the rules and regulations by which an ordinary person is bound to abide. Eric had made his decision that the Lord was his refuge and he took the consequences, however, difficult they were for him.

After a couple of months I met a foreigner who was going to the town where Eric was in jail. I begged him to visit Eric and give him our love. On his return the foreigner said that he had visited Eric and had given him thirty rupees for anything he might need. He said that Eric had asked him to bring thirty rupees of raw sugar as the tea in jail was served without sugar and he wanted to treat the inmates. It was typical of Eric not to think of himself, although he had absolutely no possessions or even clothes other than the cloth in which he was arrested.

One afternoon six months after his arrest, Eric came flying down the steps to the Dharmasala as we were sitting listening to one of the Babas read from the scriptures. He was wearing only a small ragged piece of cloth around his waist which barely covered his loin cloth and he was emaciated. He fell like a stick on the ground at Babaji's feet. Claspng Babaji's feet with his hands and also placing his head on Babaji's feet he cried, "Babaji!" and began to sob loudly.

Babaji leaned forward and patted Eric's head and shoulders lovingly. We all sat silently, tears rolling down our faces. The air was full of love and compassion. After a while Eric's sobs subsided and he got up and sat quietly on the men's side while the story continued. After a few minutes a disciple came bringing a new cloth and gave it to Eric to wear. Babaji had sent for the cloth even before the story had finished and little while later a lady disciple brought him a warm sweater. (The sweater however only stayed with him a few days as he gave it to a beggar who had asked him for it.)

During the next few days Eric, in reply to my eager questioning, gradually unfolded the horrific story of his six months in jail. I myself was outside of the jail when I visited the town some years later. It was a small mountain town prison, three walls built up against the mountain side, tiny and with no windows. Eric said that inside there were small cells and wooden planks as beds. The prisoners including Eric sewed mailbags during the day. The food was watery dal and dry roti (flat bread) every day with tea twice a day. The tea had no sugar or milk. The jail was filthy and the men rough. The only way in which Eric was able to chant his prayers was during the recreation hour when a radio was turned on. He told me he stood under the loudspeaker and sang the Hanuman Chalisa, which he knew by heart. As no one could hear him over the voice of the loud speaker, no one objected. Eric neither exaggerated nor complained about the conditions in the jail. He answered all the questions as I asked him.

Had Eric been healthy the conditions would have been difficult, as the jail was bitterly cold, but Eric also suffered from chronic asthma. When he was having attacks and was unable to breathe, he would crouch on all fours on the floor of his cell to enable himself to get some air into his

lungs. Then the jailers would kick him, telling him to get up and stop acting. They said he was just trying to get out of sewing the mailbags. On one occasion when he was being ill-treated during an attack, Eric made a fuss and insisted on being taken to the jail superintendent's office. There, as he was trying to explain his difficulty, he collapsed. He was taken to the town hospital where he was chained to his bed in the public ward. An electric light bulb burned over the bed day and night. Eric was expected to answer even the calls of nature in that situation. He laughed as he told me, "Well, Nani, I can't be embarrassed by anything now. It was like performing on the stage."

Eric said that the filth and conditions in the hospital were terrible. A young boy in the bed next to him died for want of attention, while Eric could only look on, chained to the bed as he was. The misery of his plight was added to by the prison officers who visited and accused him of acting up his illness to get out of jail. Eric laughed at the irony of their comments and asked them to take him back to jail. Through all of this Eric's faith in Babaji and God did not lessen but grew day by day. He said that Babaji showed him infinite grace in jail.

At last Eric's six months were over and he was escorted to Delhi and handed over to the American Embassy to be flown back home to America. When the police officials had left the Embassy, Eric asked his government if they had any right to hold him. They admitted that as he had committed no offense against the U.S. government, they could not hold him against his will. Hearing this, Eric happily left the Embassy and set off towards the railway station. He had no money and was hungry. He was bare-footed and wore only a small dirty rag which was what remained of the cloth in which he was arrested. He saw an onion lying in the street; he picked it up and ate it raw.

Feeling better, he found his way to the railway station and praying hard, managed to enter without a ticket and board the Haridwar train. Through God's grace he was not questioned and reached the ashram safely.

Eric continued to live with Babaji for a number of months without further trouble. Although the police must have known of his return, no one came to query his stay. So he continued his devotional life, learning more Hindi and remaining in the ashram. He was loving and compassionate to everyone and everyone loved him. Once he sat up all night singing "Ram Ram" into the ear of a dying calf. When the spirit of the calf left the body, Eric saw it in the form of a bright light hanging in the air over the dead calf.

Eric asked Babaji how he could achieve God. He said his mind did not become steady in meditation; nor could he spend long hours in prayers. Yet he longed to meet with his deity, Lord Krishna. Babaji said that if Eric were to adhere to the truth and never lie, no matter what, he would become one with that Supreme Truth. From that time on, Eric's life vow was truthfulness.

After some months, the local Foreign Registration authority was obliged to take action. I say "obliged", because like everyone else, they were also won over by Eric's loving nature and devotional sincerity. When they acted with authority it was with profuse apologies and expressions of goodwill.

At last the day came again for Eric's arrest. We were all sitting on the clay platform outside Babaji's cave, listening to a story from the scriptures, when the police arrived. They, too, sat and listened to the story. We all knew why they had come and tears of love and sympathy began to roll down the cheeks of Babaji's disciples and devotees. Eric sat quietly. At the end of the story, Eric bowed to Babaji and, taking a little prasada in his hand, he went away

with the police. A few months later I heard from a foreigner that Eric had stayed one month in Delhi International Airport before he was forcibly deported.

On his next visit, Eric told me the whole story. He had been taken to Delhi Airport where he was told his mother had paid for a ticket for him to be deported. Desperate, he tore up his ticket as he reached the entry door to board the plane. Without a ticket, he was unable to board the plane and was taken back into the main airport. The officials were in a quandary. Eric refused to go and he was not allowed back into India either. His case was reported in the world press and even went as far as the United Nations, but the Secretary of the Indian Home Office was adamant: Eric had to be deported.

During the time he stayed at the airport, Eric spent many days hungry. From the day he found a chicken bone in his vegetarian meal, he refused to eat. At last arrangements were made for him to cook his own kichori in a little kitchenette. After one month of prayer and hope, Eric was tricked into signing a paper agreeing to his deportation. He was also injected with tranquilizers and put on the plane for New York. When he reached New York, he refused the ticket sent by his mother to continue to Los Angeles, deciding to go into New York penniless and without clothes as he was. He said he realized from the kindly behavior of the American officials that everyone thought he was crazy. As he stepped through the sliding doors leading out of the airport he was met by a barrage of flashing lights and microphones. "Mr. Smith, who is your guru? What made you want to stay in India?"

Eric was shocked and exhausted. He had not realized he had become internationally known. He laughed as he told me later, "Well, I made the 10 o'clock New York news bulletin."

Replying that his guru was God and little else, Eric pushed his way through the reporters and out of the airport. He started on foot for New York City. After he had walked a little way, a taxi pulled up. Eric told the driver he had no money but the driver said never mind and insisted that Eric get in. Eric said that the driver was half drunk but very sympathetic and Eric found himself telling the driver the whole story. Finally the taxi driver persuaded Eric to return to the airport and accept his mother's ticket to Los Angeles. Eric felt a great debt of gratitude to that taxi driver and it was that incident that made him decide to be a taxi driver when he returned to New York the following year. So Eric went back to the airport where he was received by somewhat relieved officials and put on a plane to L.A. His mother welcomed him at the airport and he was treated at home with the love and sympathy that people accord those suffering from some mental disturbance.

Eric's mental condition was, however, far from what most people may have imagined. Longing desperately to be back with Babaji and praying continually for divine help, he began what was to be his life-long struggle to return to Babaji. He sold the little piece of land he had bought in the American Rockies and tied up all his loose ends. Officially, he made repeated applications to the Indian government for admission into India. He flew to Bombay, but was not granted entry; he was refused admission when he tried to enter India through Nepal.

Finally, driving a car across Europe and Asia from Germany to Lahore, he paid a large amount of money to be smuggled over the Pakistan border and into India. He made a bee-line for Babaji and was received with an enthusiastic and loving welcome from us all. He told me of the numerous difficulties that had befallen him on his way across Europe and Asia, including being hospitalized in

Istanbul during an asthma attack. There he had almost died when he refused to take medicine on Ekadashi, his twice monthly fast day. He described with amusement how he had done his daily spiritual reading with the help of the ignition light in the middle of the Iranian desert.

On this visit, for the first time, Eric had some money in his pocket so he was able to express his generosity. He brought all sorts of good food, cloth and anything he could think of that might be useful to the ashram. He saw to it that each individual had anything he might need as well as to the general needs of the ashram.

But of course Eric's troubles were not at an end. The local authorities pleaded with Eric to leave or they would have to report him. Talking things over with Babaji, Eric decided to return to America and try again for legal entry into India. Eric asked Babaji how he could best employ his time in America as he said he was unable to pray constantly. Babaji said that he could take a job for the time that he could not spend in prayer and he could offer his earnings to God. This, Babaji said, would be equal to being a full-time sadhu. So Eric left again for America.

This time on his return to the U.S. Eric did not go to Los Angeles. He severed all ties with his home, relatives and friends; in fact, we received a telegram from his family that his mother was ill and another that she had died, as his family was not aware that he was in America.

Eric rented a little room in New York and took a job as a taxi driver. On one of his visits to the ashram he described to me how he spent his time and earnings. Since he now considered he was working for God, he spent as much time as he could working overtime, as well as normal hours. On his first year back in America, he did not take off a single day of work for the whole year as he had forgotten to ask Babaji if he could take time off. He said he even

followed the snow plow around during a heavy winter snowfall. After that year, he asked Babaji if he could take a day off sometimes when he felt ill. Babaji immediately replied that he was to take off as much time as he needed. To save money, Eric bought his clothes from the army and navy surplus stores. He cooked a frugal meal of rice and vegetables once a day in the evening. For his lunch he would buy some milk and fruit and eat while he queued up in his taxi outside some big hotel. He spent his spare time studying Hindi and reading the scriptures. On one of his visits to the ashram, he taped arti (the morning and evening service) so he could take part in his room in New York. He also taped Babaji chanting the scriptures, and he said by listening to that he gained the strength to carry on. He said Babaji's grace was also with him in New York, and he felt continual spiritual help and growth.

Not only did Eric consider that he was working for God, but he tried to use his time for helping people spiritually. Whenever he got the chance, he would try to talk to his customers about God and India. He said people like to talk to taxi drivers and it was amazing how many people were really deeply interested in what he said and even wanted to make further contacts. But on the whole, Eric did not make any friends, not wanting to waste a moment of his precious time, every second of which he had offered to God.

Soon he began to pine for Babaji and the sight of Ganga Mai, the Himalayas and his sadhu friends. He repeatedly requested the government of India to reconsider their decision but met with no success. Then he decided to change his name and try to return. So he changed his name to Jay Harrison. Babaji was in the habit of saying "Jay Hari" meaning "Victory to Hari" (Lord Vishnu) as a form of blessing, so in fun Eric made his new name have this spiritual meaning. From that time on Babaji called him "Hari Sunu", meaning the Son of Hari in Sanskrit.

With his new name Eric obtained a transitory visa of one month for India. For a longer visa he would have had to write down any alias, which of course he could not do, as he was bound by his vow of truth. Had he written his former name, he would not have gained entry.

I was walking with Babaji on the math beach during the evening time when Babaji said laughingly: Look. I looked in the direction he indicated and saw Eric running along the path from Laksman Jhoola, towards the ashram. He was carrying two huge bags which were banging into his legs as he lumbered along—sometimes trying to lift them, sometimes tripping over them, but unwilling to stop his mad run towards his beloved Babaji. Babaji smiled and said: "This is love". Babaji and I made our way back to the main ashram. As usual, tears wet my face as I saw Eric's supernatural devotion. He, Eric, stumbled down the steps to the ashram, dropped the bags by the dharmasala, and raced to Babaji's feet, sobbing and laughing at the same time. The ecstasy with which he clasped Babaji's feet cannot be described, but can be understood perhaps by those who have been lucky enough to have received the love and grace of a realized saint.

When he rose, we exchanged looks of love and joy. According to the Indian custom, Eric and I never embraced in meeting as Western friends would, but the exchange of love between two people who love the same Divinity does not need a physical expression to reach its fullest. Eric soon unpacked his bag full to the brim with presents for everyone he knew. This time the local authority was pleased with Eric's new name and having made him promise to leave when the month was up, he went away and didn't bother Eric again.

Eric had always been shy with Babaji because of his great awe for him. This time, when Babaji lay down to rest,

Eric took Babaji's feet into his lap and caressed them with a familiar ease that made a deep impression on me. Eric seemed taller, full of light, and with a new confidence. He told me only, "Babaji is always with me in New York. He has shown me so much grace." Eric spent his month to the fullest: sitting, walking and talking with his beloved Babaji and bathing in the waters of his divine Mother Ganga. He would dip in again and again, laughing uproariously and saying, "Oh, Nani, if you knew what this bath means to me!"

He served the cows and all the members of the ashram with great exuberance. Generous as always, he would take the ashram members on visits to the local holy places. Crowding into taxis and eating sweets along the way, all the ashramites, especially the children and the older folks, would be chattering excitedly. We would go on shopping sprees on which Eric would buy anything he thought would make life in the ashram easier. As he had lived there under the most difficult conditions, he knew exactly what was needed and what was wanted by whom. He was always over-generous in paying for the goods. He gave whatever he was asked for. When I would start to bargain, he would say, "Look, Nani, I haven't spent hours driving a taxi around New York so that you have to break your head bargaining for something that costs me a few minutes to earn. Just give them whatever they ask and take whatever you want. Please never bargain with the money I give you!"

At other times when I remonstrated with him for over-paying, he would say, "Look, Nani, he's a poor man and I can afford it. Let me give what I want."

As a result, he was loved by all the shopkeepers and fruit sellers from the ashram to the nearest town. When he came from America he would buy fruit, flowers and gifts on

his way to the ashram and we often heard he was coming before he reached us. On one occasion he vastly over tipped a taxi driver who was quite overwhelmed. When I interfered he replied with feeling, "Nani, I'm a taxi driver and I know what it means to get a big tip."

Eric had gained the quality of love for his fellow beings which is found in all great saints; he seemed to love every being with a deep sincerity, understanding that the joy and sorrow of every being is the same as one's own. He treated everyone with a generous equality and love that I have not seen in anyone except Babaji. Eric made everyone he met feel as if he was his special friend.

At the end of the month Eric left. He distributed the few possessions and money he had left among the ashram inhabitants and workers. He left wearing only the clothes on his back and exactly the amount of money he needed to get to the airport. If anyone said that he should keep something, he just answered simply, "It's not mine, it's Babaji's."

After he had bowed to Babaji and left the ashram, we went up to the house nearby which was rented by Babaji's devotees. Eric changed into a European shirt and trousers and, putting his money, passport, etc., into a little hand purse, he gave his dhoti and kurta (Indian sarong and shirt) to the boy who washed the cooking pots and set off for Delhi. As we left the house, we saw Babaji standing at the top of the ashram steps with some children. I said, "Eric, Babaji has come. Go and bow to him."

Eric laughed sheepishly and said, "Oh, I can't in these clothes," and falling on his knees where he was, he placed his head on the ground in Babaji's direction; then jumping up and smiling at me he ran off around the corner.

In this way Eric visited the ashram for one month at six month intervals for a number of years. I cannot remember

the exact number of times he came but each time his spiritual growth and his love for Babaji and Gangaji grew enormously. At the same time his agony caused by the continual separation increased steadily. He suffered more and more from the asthma, which was aggravated by driving a taxi and living in New York. Although he never complained, his life of separation from his beloved was becoming more and more agonizing to him.

I asked Babaji why God did not let Eric stay near the Ganga and near Babaji. I felt sympathetic anguish every time I witnessed Eric's love and read his letters which were full of the pangs of separation that he was scarcely able to bear. He was being worn down by the weight of his love, which he could not express without the proximity of his divine lover. I prayed to Babaji to find some way to let him stay. Babaji explained to me gently that God's grace was so wonderful, that it was difficult for a human being to understand. For some, he said, proximity was grace; for others, ultimate grace was separation. Separation, Babaji said, increases the fervor and intensity of the devotee's love. Lord Krishna, although he loved the Gopis deeply, made them suffer years of separation from him. That separation, he said, increased the intensity of their love so much that they saw Krishna everywhere and thought only of him in a way which may not have been possible in his presence. Although it seems that Sri Krishna was heartless and unfeeling towards them as they suffered the most incredible and indescribable desolation, actually, Babaji said, it was Sri Krishna's supreme compassion towards them. Thinking of him every second, the Gopis became one with him. So Babaji said, don't think God doesn't know what Eric is suffering, but God always does the best for His devotees. I was immediately gripped by the fear that God might also separate me from Babaji and I clasped

Babaji's feet entreating him to let me stay with him. He laughed and said God's grace is different to each one, according to their nature and need.

On the last but one of Eric's visits to Babaji, he made a strange request. Describing his pain at his separation from Babaji he said that he was no longer able to bear the coming and going. He said he could not leave Babaji again. He said that this must be the last time he left. He asked Babaji not to allow him to come again until he could come to stay with Babaji forever. I translated word-for-word what Eric said to Babaji, for although Eric now spoke to Babaji himself about general matters, he still liked me to be present on any more important issues, so that there would not be any language misunderstanding. I did not interfere in the conversation, although it hurt me deeply to make such a request. Eric and Babaji alone can understand the depth of the agony which drove Eric to make that request. Babaji slowly replied in the affirmative that Eric would not come again until he would not have to go back. Eric did not return for two and a half years.

He wrote regularly during his absence from the ashram, sometimes performing services like sending copies of photos of the ashram and sometimes printing some of Babaji's poems and songs. With Babaji's permission, he sometimes sent sums of money for particular festivals, or just as a general service. Although Babaji did not usually allow any of us to accept money, (he himself of course never did) he allowed me to manage this money from Eric because it was a way in which Eric could feel a part of the ashram and lessen the pain of his separation.

After about two years had passed I received a strange letter from Eric. He said that he no longer knew if he would be able to return to the ashram or not. He gave no reason for the statement, but asked me to obtain permission from

Babaji to open a bank account as he wanted to send me a large amount of money. He said that he had saved the money to come to India but as there was now some doubt as to whether he would ever come, he wanted to make sure the money came to the ashram. His letter was strangely stilted but I could in no way guess what he was implying. I read the letter to Babaji and replied to Eric in the affirmative. Eric straight away sent two large sums of money: one which he asked me to spend on the ashram in which ever way I felt might be needed, and one to put in a deposit account. Should he ever come, he said, he would be able to live off the interest. I did as he requested.

Some months passed. Eric continued to write and occasionally sent some money. Then one day as I was walking with Babaji on the beach of the math, Babaji suddenly said, "Oh, my devotee has come!"

"Eric!" I replied eagerly.

Babaji looked at me and laughed. "Is Eric my only devotee?"

But Eric did not come, nor did any other of Babaji's hundreds of householder devotees show up during the next few days. Then ten days later during the evening arti, Eric quietly entered the dharmshala and bowed at Babaji's feet. I did not recognize him in the dark, but I heard a whisper among the devotees, "Eric has come." After arti the children and others gathered around Eric and began to chatter eagerly. Eric answered slowly and absentmindedly.

Babaji called me and said Eric was tired, to take him up to the house, give him food and a room and let him rest. Babaji repeated to the other disciples to let Eric rest and then he retired to his cave.

We went up to the house. Eric looked emaciated and exhausted but I thought he was just tired from the journey. There were two huge trunks on the veranda of the house.

Eric immediately said, "Nani, please have the trunks taken up to your room."

"Tomorrow," I replied jovially. "Now you must rest."

"Please, Nani," he repeated earnestly. "It must be done today."

At his insistence I got some of the Babas to carry the trunks up to my room which was on the roof. Eric asked me to send everyone away, which I did, telling them Eric was tired and wanted to sleep. Tomorrow he would talk to everyone. I made arrangements for Eric to sleep in a big empty hall downstairs, but he wanted to come up and show me the contents of the trunks.

"Eric, there's no hurry," I said, "Let's do it tomorrow!" He smiled wanly and replied that it had to be done today.

We went up to my room. One of the trunks contained a huge old tiger skin. It was in fairly good condition. Eric had always wanted to bring a tiger skin for Babaji. It was a huge Bengali tiger skin, but Eric was disappointed, as it was old. He had paid a vast amount of money for it in Bombay, almost four times the price of a new one, and the sellers had not allowed him to see it before he paid.

"There was nothing I could do," he confided. "I wanted a tiger skin so much and I was too sick to hunt for one myself. I had to rely on someone else and this is what I got." I assured him it was beautiful and he cheered up. Actually it was, although he had wanted it to be perfect for Babaji.

Then Eric told me that he had been in Bombay for the last ten days, but that he had been too ill to make the journey on. He would have flown from Bombay to Delhi, but he knew that he could no longer physically handle the air trip. He said only Babaji's grace had kept him alive on the trip from America. I was startled but still did not realize

the seriousness of what he was saying. He spoke slowly, breathing noisily as he sometimes did when the asthma was bad.

"Nani, I'm sick," he said. He told me he had come from Bombay by train. He had collapsed on the way across Rajasthan and the railway officials had wanted him to leave the train and go to the hospital. He had told them he had to reach Haridwar so the doctor had given him some injections and medicine and he had been transferred to the first class compartment.

Slightly alarmed, I repeated that he had better rest. We would look at the other trunk tomorrow. Again he repeated that it must be looked at tonight, so I spread some blankets for him to sit on and opened the huge trunk. Truly it was a treasure chest. Eric laughed with delight to see my face as I pulled out one thing after another: Books, paints and crayons for the children, warm underwear for the elderly members of the ashram, beautiful silk and velvet clothes for Babaji and for decorating the temples, watches, tape recorders, sunglasses, folding umbrellas, kitchen tools, numerous gadgets, little silk purses, pens, pencils, note pads, seeds for the garden, a wonderful variety of exotic dried fruits and nuts sealed in useful airtight plastic containers, as well as many presents for numerous individuals. As I pulled each article out of the box, Eric would explain to me who it was for and how it worked. There were so many things I cannot remember now as many years have passed since that day. Each item was filled with so much love and thoughtfulness, and there were so many things that going over everything took a long time. Many of the things were for no one in particular. Eric said Babaji could give them to whomever he wanted. Eric told me he had collected the presents together over the last two and a half years.

As I took out each article, Eric became weaker and weaker. He gradually sank down to a lying position. Again and again I begged him to stop; we would continue tomorrow. But he replied, "Who knows what will happen tomorrow. We must finish tonight."

As we worked, his breathing became more and more difficult until he collapsed into semi-consciousness. When I could not rouse him I rushed down to Babaji's cave and told him everything. Babaji told me to bring some water from the Ganga. I did so. Babaji sipped it and told me to take it and give it to Eric to drink. I ran up to the house and gave the water to Eric. As he drank it, he revived considerably and at his insistence we continued our work. Now I stopped marveling at each new article and worked hurriedly. When we had finished, I locked up the trunk. Eric was relieved and happy although in a state of semi-collapse. He made an effort to get up but could not. I begged him to sleep in my room. I would sleep downstairs I said, but he refused. He said he hadn't come to cause trouble. I helped him to his feet. It was after midnight. He wouldn't let me wake anyone up, so I helped him downstairs. He rested at every step, leaning his head on the wall. "Eric, you are really sick," I said, astonished.

He laughed. "Nani, I'm dying," he said. "It has been worse than this. I have been so many times under the lung machine in New York." He said he had prayed to Ganga Mai that he could die by her side and that his body should lie on her bed, washed by her water. Stunned, I helped him inch his way downstairs and into the hall. He sat down on the wooden bed and then lay down to sleep. I returned to my room and fell asleep.

The next day Eric seemed much better. He sat quietly near Babaji. He accepted the eager love and queries of all his friends. When Babaji's lunch came, Babaji gave him a

generous portion of his prasad. When Eric looked at the food he had been given, including a sweet dish, he laughed and said, "I haven't eaten food like this for so long. I can scarcely eat anything!"

"It's Babaji's prasad," I replied.

"I will eat it by Ganga Mai." He walked with his plate slowly down to the river.

Some time passed. I was sitting by Babaji when he said to me, "Go quickly and see what Eric is doing."

I ran to the edge of the Ganga. Eric was sitting on a rock quietly. I went up to him and said, "Come on, Eric. Babaji is calling you."

He looked up at me. "I can't get up, Nani."

"Try."

"I have, I can't" he said.

I returned to Babaji and told him what Eric had said. Babaji silently got up from his seat and went to Eric by the edge of the Ganga. He stood looking at Eric compassionately. Eric gazed at Babaji. Then Babaji said, "Come," and turning away, walked slowly back to the dharmshala. Eric got up from the rock and followed Babaji back. The day passed slowly and peacefully and Eric went to bed early.

The next morning after arti, Babaji asked me where Eric was. I went up to the house. Eric was lying in his bed. "I'm sorry I can't get up," he said, "I prayed that Ganga Mai would take me in the night but another day has come. I don't know why this body wants to go on living."

"Eric, no one wants to die. Why do you talk like this so happily?"

"Nani, I have no use for this body any more. I don't want it. It cannot live by Babaji and now it is too sick to serve him, so what is its use?"

Eric looked sick, although cheerful. I told him to rest and went to see Babaji. Babaji was busy so I did my morning prayers. When I returned to see Eric, he was being fed on watery dal. He seemed happy so I returned to the ashram. After a while, I felt urgently that he was calling me and I ran up to the house. I found him some 100 yards behind the house, exhausted and leaning against a gatepost. We did not have toilets in the house and used the forest behind for this purpose. Eric had been there and collapsed. He had mentally called for me. I helped him slowly back to the house. He was laughing. "Nani," he said, "I wish one didn't have to go to Dehradun to go to the toilet!" (Dehradun is a town some thirty miles away) I washed his hands and helped him back to his bed.

Eric rested a few minutes and then asked me to hand him a shoulder bag on the end of his bed. He opened it and began going through his papers. He handed me his original and his new passport. "Lock these up in your room," he said, "You'll need them."

"Nani," he said smiling, "I am leaving my body today. Now please take these papers and do as I say."

"Eric," I replied, "Everyone is afraid of death. You couldn't be so unconcerned if you were really dying."

"Why? Do you think Babaji would send me anywhere bad?" He laughed uproariously, then told me not to worry and began going through his papers. He had tied up everything in America. He gave me lots of doctor and hospital reports. These he said I should give to the police to show the cause of death. He told me to give the new passport to the police and keep the old one, unless anyone asked for it. He opened his purse; there was not much money left.

"It has all gone to buy the tiger skin." He gave the purse to me saying, "All the money I had I have already sent you;

it is in your name; use it as you feel right for the ashram or as Babaji says." He kept a few clothes in the shoulder bag.

"These are my possessions," he said. "The trunks and their contents I have already given you. They are no longer mine so you have no need to report them."

When I had taken the papers and the money up to my room and locked them up, Eric relaxed and we began talking about Babaji's grace. With tears in his eyes he told me how Babaji had looked after him in New York. Among other things, saving him from a serious back injury. He began to describe Babaji's grace and the fact that Babaji had given him Sri Krishna's darshan (the sight of Sri Krishna).

"It was on the day that I received the Quit India notice. I had not known which form of God to worship and Babaji had told me to pray to God to reveal Himself to me. I had done so but had had no revelation. When the Foreign Registration Officer handed me the notice, in the garden of the house, I took it in my hand and read it. I was so full of despair that I said nothing to the officer, but ran down to Babaji, tears blinding my eyes." Eric said he sat down behind Babaji, who was listening to the evening story. Eric closed his eyes and, screaming inwardly for help, he struggled to control himself. Suddenly, he saw a huge red heart which slowly opened, revealing Lord Krishna inside. Eric said Lord Krishna was wearing a simple yellow cloth.

"Oh, Nani, the colours! You know what divine colours are like! It was so beautiful. Krishna was playing his flute and looking at me with Babaji's eyes." As Eric said this his throat choked with emotion and tears flowed down his cheeks. "Oh, Nani, Babaji has given me so much," he cried.

For a time he was overcome with emotion, then we began to exchange experiences and feelings about our divine Guru. Full of love and cheerfulness, Eric still insisted

that he was leaving his body that day. "You can ask Babaji, if you don't believe me," he laughed.

After a while Eric had a breathing attack. It was the worst I had ever seen. He reared up and, clutching the top of the door, stretched his body, fighting for breath. I asked if there was anything I could do. He indicated behind him and I found a small medicinal spray which I handed to him. He squirted it into his mouth and found a little relief. Seeing this, I ran down to Babaji, and fetching water from the Ganga, washed Babaji's feet, telling Babaji Eric's condition. I ran with the water up to the house and washed Eric's face and head with the water. Slightly relieved, he drank the rest of the water. Now he was able to relax and lie down on the bed. He immediately began to groan saying, "Oh, why didn't I leave my body when I had Babaji's charan amrit (the nectar of the feet) on my head and in my mouth!"

I consoled him by saying, "Perhaps there will be a better opportunity."

After this he quickly fell asleep, but his breathing was laboured, his colour grey, and his eyes sunken. There was a strange look about him which I had not seen before. I went down to Babaji. Babaji was surrounded by visitors and I was unable to speak to him. I wandered about restlessly until Babaji began his evening stroll. Seeing Babaji alone by the edge of the Ganga I ran to him and blurted out, "Babaji, Eric says he is going to die. Is he?"

Babaji continued to rinse his mouth and then drinking some water and wiping his hands on his cloth, he said slowly, "Life and death are not important. It is devotion that matters."

I was not quite sure what this meant as far as my question was concerned, but Babaji did not elucidate and as more people joined us, I could not ask further. I went up

to the house. Eric was still asleep and I took my evening meal on the veranda, wanting to tell him what Babaji had said, but he didn't wake up and I heard the arti bell ringing in the ashram. Half way through arti, I was strongly aware of Eric calling me. I jumped up and bowed to Babaji, "Eric is calling me," I said and started to leave.

Babaji waved me back to my seat with his hand, saying, "Sit down."

At that time I experienced almost physical agony. I felt Eric calling me so desperately, but Babaji forbade me to go. I sat torn in two, longing for the end of arti. Suddenly with one song left before the end of arti, Babaji stood up—something that had never happened before. The singing faltered, but Babaji said, "Sing. Finish arti," and beckoning to me, left the dharmasala.

I followed him down to his cave, where he stood silently on the platform for a moment. Then he said to me, "Go and tell Eric to concentrate on God. And tell him he doesn't have to go back to America."

"Babaji, he will think he's going to die!"

But Babaji said that he wouldn't worry, just to tell him to think only of God. Then Babaji told me to find some Tulsi (holy basil plant) and give it to Eric to smell and to eat. I replied that no one would allow me to pick the Tulsi at night (in India we do not disturb the plants at night) so Babaji came back to the dharmasala with me and told one of the Babas who had Tulsi in his garden to pluck it and give it to me. Babaji sat down in the dharmasala and I went with the Baba to fetch the Tulsi. We then hurried together towards the house. As we approached the house, sounds of laughter reached us, the loudest of which was Eric's mirthful bray. Astonished, I entered the hall to find Eric surrounded by a number of male and female sadhus who were changing his clothes.

“Bring me my kursi,” he said, then roared with laughter as he was told he meant kurta, “shirt”, not kursi, “chair”. I asked what was happening and was told that one of the young Brahmacharinis had asked Babaji if they might bring Eric down to see him. Some years before, I had been very ill and bedridden, and as I could not bear to be separated from Babaji the devotees used to carry me down to see him. Remembering this, the Brahmacharini asked if they might carry Eric down to see Babaji and Babaji had agreed. Eric had said he had not bathed and did not feel fit to go into Babaji’s presence, so they had decided to change his clothes at least. I pushed forward and gave Eric the Tulsi as well as Babaji’s message. When I told him Babaji had said he didn’t have to go back to America, he giggled and said gleefully, “I know.”

At this point, Eric was given some of Devi’s sacred water to drink. He kept smelling the Tulsi and also kept some in his mouth as Babaji instructed. Although Eric was joking with everyone, his weakness was such that he was unable to stand up and so the tallest and strongest of the Babas took him down to Babaji on his back. The Baba took Eric into the dharmasala which Babaji entered a few minutes later, having returned from his cave. Eric fell on Babaji’s feet and sobbed emotionally. Babaji went and sat on his seat and Eric crawled over to his side. I sat in front of Babaji and about twenty devotees and disciples sat on all sides. Eric stopped crying and knelt silently. He was breathing with difficulty. Babaji gently stroked his head and shoulders. Soon, in the grip of another attack, Eric reared up on his knees, fighting for air. Babaji asked, “Is there nothing that can be done?”

I told Babaji that Eric had a little machine. It was in his pocket. I pulled it out, but he wouldn’t take it. Babaji made a sign for him to take it and Eric squirted some of the spray

into his mouth. Slightly relieved, he sank down on all fours. Eric had told me during the afternoon that the spray was no longer of any real use to him. It was actually meant to aid people with less chronic conditions, but it did give him momentary relief. Babaji continued to stroke Eric. After a few minutes, Eric was seized by his last attack. He reared up again. Babaji told us to sing Hanuman Chalisa. We all began to sing as Eric fought for his final breaths. I stretched my hands towards him, holding out the little spray, but with a firm gesture, he brushed my arm away and, rearing up for the final time, he cried loudly, "Bhagavan! Bhagavan!" and fell prone with his head on Babaji's feet.

I leaned forward and wiped the mucus from his nostrils. I fancied I felt a slight movement of air, perhaps his last breath. In the dim lamp light I saw that Eric's eyes were fixed on Babaji. Babaji was looking back at Eric, and with one hand raised to his own nose, was gently doing pranayam (a breathing exercise). I was filled with the conviction that Babaji was drawing Eric into himself, along with his breath. I still feel this, but Babaji made no comment when I asked him later. As Hanuman Chalisa drew to an end, Babaji said quietly, "Sing again." We sang again. I put my hands by Eric's nostrils, but I could no longer feel any movement of breath. I was overwhelmed by a feeling of peace and spiritual elation. The second Hunaman Chalisa came to an end. Everyone sat for some time in silence. Not a sound was heard except the gentle breeze and the distant lapping of the waves of Ganga Mai. I don't know how long we sat. The air was pervaded by a gentle peace mixed with strange feelings of bliss and exaltation. At last someone rose breaking the silence and coming forward, took Eric's pulse and put into words the fact that he had left his body. Someone lit some lamps and we all gathered closer to Babaji and Eric. I saw that everyone was sharing my feelings of peace and

happiness. There were no tears, although everyone was deeply fond of Eric.

We began marveling at the wonderful circumstances of his death. In the Hindu scriptures, it is believed that if one pronounces the name of God at the time of death, one attains to God, that is, one is liberated forever. Eric had cried, "Bhagavan, Bhagavan," as he left his body; he had died with his head on the feet of his beloved Guru, on the banks of the Ganga, with Tulsi and divine Devi water in his mouth. The day was Mesh Sankranti, one of the most auspicious days of the year. There is a popular song in Hindi which says: "When the life-breath leaves the body, let it be on the banks of the Ganga. When the life-breath leaves the body, let the name of God be on my lips, let Tulsi be in my mouth." To a Hindu, Eric died in a very special way and to us there is no doubt about his liberation.

After a while of talking together, it was decided that the police would have to be notified. There are strict official rules governing the postmortem procedures for foreigners in India which prevent bodies from being simply cremated or laid to rest in the Ganga according to custom. So I set off with one of the Babas to find the Foreign Registration Officer. We couldn't find him, however, and when we returned an hour later, Babaji was still sitting in the same position with Eric's head on his feet. Now Babaji retired to his cave, and the Babas began an all-night vigil, sitting with Eric, singing hymns and kirtan (melodious repetition of the Lord's name). We female sadhus and devotees went up to the house where I spent the night reading through Eric's papers and shedding tears over some of his letters and writings expressing his love for the Lord, for Babaji, and for Ganga Mai.

In the morning after arti, the police were informed and they came to make a report. I handed over Eric's bag, a

couple of hundred rupees in his purse and his new passport along with his medical reports and papers. I wanted the devotional papers back, but was rather intimidated by the officious sergeant in charge.

Suddenly Babaji sent for me. Two visitors were sitting with him. One just happened to be a high official of the Delhi police who was a great devotee of God. He had turned up quite unexpectedly with an old devotee of Babaji's. He had asked Babaji if he could be of any service.

"Well, actually yes," Babaji had replied. "We have a dead American in the dharmasala. If you can help in any way, you may." Slightly taken aback by the somewhat unusual request, the official took the report out of the hands of the local sergeant. With his help, the official side of things was quickly and efficiently brought to a close. He handed back the devotional papers to me and arranged that Eric's body be returned to the ashram after the postmortem which took place in a local town thus fulfilling Eric's wish that his body should lie on the bed of Ganga Mai with her waters washing over him.

Within a few hours, Eric's body was returned to the ashram, where according to the rites of a Hindu sadhu, his body was washed and dressed in flowers and yellow cloths with Hari Krishna Hari Ram written on them. It was Babaji who said that Eric was a sadhu and should be given Hindu sadhu rites, rather than householder rites or rites of any other religion. Eric's body was taken by boat to the middle of the Ganga and there he was given Jal Samadhi (water burial).

After Eric's funeral, everybody in the ashram followed Babaji into the Ganga to take our purification bath. Babaji himself offered water libations for Eric and we did the same. Babaji then said that the water libation, which is offered for the peace of the soul, when offered to someone

who has become liberated, acts as his puja, that is, as his worship.

Eric's embassy (The American Embassy) was informed and officials of both countries realized that Jay Harrison was Eric Cameron Smith. Further inquiries were made. Babaji said that yes, indeed an American had died in his ashram. "Here," he said, pointing to his feet. There were no more questions.

Jai Babaji

Jai Bhagavan

Jai Bhagavan Ke
Bhakta

Victory to Babaji

Victory to God

Victory to
God's devotees