

THREE CHRISTMAS PUJAS

THE PATH OF CHRIST

from the pages of The Divine Cool Breeze

THE PATH OF CHRIST

Christmas Puja 2002 2004 and 1997

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photographs

2002 puja by Michael Markl

Ganapatipule beach by Toni Grabmeyer

2004 puja stage by Andrei Harabor

THE DIVINE COOL BREEZE



The Path of Christ

He governs
the hearts of
so many

*At six in the evening,
Sahaja Yogis gather in the
main pendal. The backdrop
looks beautiful with the
little child Jesus in the lap
of the Holy Mother Mary.
A manger is seen covered
with grass, with angels
looking over the child.
The altar of Shri Mataji
is beautifully decorated.
Flowers seem to be a special
treat to our meditative eyes.
The Sahaja Yogis go into
meditation. The time grows
and maybe the patience to
welcome Her holy arrival
heightens. The hearts of the
collective yearn as they
sing a number of bhajans
invoking Shri Adi Shakti
to accept the puja.
Shri Mataji graces us
with Her holy appearance.
All rise up and cheer and
then there is a stillness
and calm all around.
She wishes all Her children
Merry Christmas before the
talk starts. Rabi Ghosh*

“According to Sahaja Yoga, Christ is settled on your Agnya chakra.” His life depicts “the qualities of a person who is a realized soul and what He has suggested in His own life is that you should not have any greed or lust.”

Christianity and materialism

The greed of people today is shocking. Children learn to want things. “Only complete satisfaction in life can give you that equanimity, that balance by which you do not hanker after things.”

Even India has become very westernized with materialistic desires. But “now in America, suddenly with this happening, people are getting to spirituality. They come to spirituality because they think they have not found any satisfaction in anything.”

We should learn from the great life of Christ. He was born in a small hut, “very much satisfied and He was put in a cradle,” covered with very dry grass. “And then He sacrificed His life on the cross. The whole thing is a story of that sacrifice because He had a ... power of spirit that He could sacrifice anything. He even sacrificed His own life....

“The greatness of Christ was coming from His great personality of spirituality. But the same Christ is worshipped all over the world,” yet they are running after things.

They boast of their wealth and wear a cross on their necks to show that they are Christians. “One should never bear that cross on which Christ was crucified.” By this hypocrisy, “they are another extreme of Christ....

“India is very much in the same run.... They think, by getting all these things around them, they’ll be very comfortable. It’s not so. They’re all the time hankering and they cannot even enjoy whatever they have achieved....

“India was, once upon a time, a real saintly country where saints were respected, but nowadays India has fallen down to such a low level of greed that it’s impossible to understand these people.

There was not a great following of Christ in India, but the Christians in India. They are the ones who have taken to all kinds of western life or greed ... but Christ has shown that you don’t need anything in this world. He is such a great personality, such a great incarnation,” respected by everyone everywhere “because His power of sacrificing was the highest, not because He was owning a big car or any big house.... He was such a humble man. His life is remarkable.... He governs the hearts of so many, despite the fact He was born a very, very poor man and was crucified also as a very poor man.

“So those people who are running after money are no way Christians, are nowhere near Christ....

“So happy and joyous He was.” He could understand and feel the problems of the poor and needy. He tried to help the diseased and underprivileged “while today’s world has come to such a nonsense that they help countries to fight. They create Christianity to fight.”



One of the principles of Sahaj is that you have to help people.

Christianity and India

“Christ never converted even a single soul. He wanted to give transformation ... but not changing the religion or changing your birthmark.” The Christians today are “a useless third rate people who are running after lust and greed.

“I get worried sometimes about Myself, that I hope My disciples and My children won’t do things which are against ... the principle of Sahaj. And one of the principles of Sahaj is that you have to help people, those who are downtrodden, those who are not yet realized. You have to give them Realization.” You should not help people who are ruining this world. “If we have to save this country, if you have to save the whole world, then we have to become like Christ.

“Develop your sacrificing temperament.” It should be very powerful because you are realized. “Try to develop that temperament of helping others.”

Some people are always willing to give to others who are in need. They are of such a great temperament and are happy if they can help others.

In India it is very sad. “So many people have sacrificed their lives to achieve independence and freedom,” but today those who are governing or are in charge are making money.

In India “we had many people who were extremely sacrificing. They were the leaders. But how many of you are like that? How many of you would like to give away something of yours to others? What would you do to help others?

“It’s very sad that the Christian nations have never followed Christ and we also are becoming the same. I don’t say we should not do business or we should not make money. You can, but with all that, you must remember for whom you are doing it.... With this money, what are you going to do?... At least sacrifice a little bit of your comfort for the people.”

The path of Christ

“Sahaja Yogis have to be extremely kind, extremely kind and loving people. If you are not that, you are not Sahaja Yogis. First thing, you should be kind and loving and understanding the problems around and try to help as many people as you can. But that is not so.

“Even Sahaja Yogis do not understand what is the value of their life. They’re on the same path as Christ was. They’re realized souls. They must have that feeling. They must have that oneness with the rest of the people and they should feel the sacrifice of Christ within themselves.”

He sacrificed His life “to improve our Agnya, to remove our ego, to fight our ego. But we are so egoistical. Whatever He has done is a waste, is something people don’t understand and they do not imbibe His character and His life.... He is a very great message for all the people who are realized souls. He’s a very great example.

“There are so many things to be done.... My mind is always with the needy and I’ve started many such organizations,” such as those for destitute women and orphans. We never see how destitute women suffer in India. “I felt very much that I should try to do something, at least bring the attention of the people to their lot and to their problem so that they come up into life and earn their living. It’s a duty of all the Sahaja Yogis to go and see around who needs your help. Just don’t live for yourself, earning for yourself, making money for yourself, but try to help. Help those people who can really be helped....

“So many ideas I have of helping people and I’m going to try them with whatever money I have, but I wish you could decide to do something for them.”

India is divided into rich and poor. “These very poor people just make My heart wrench, wrench with pain.... You can go around and you can find out ways and method

*When the chorus
sings “Silent Night” at
Ganapatipule it especially
makes me feel like a
drop in the ocean of love.
I see myself as a speck with a
great many yogis surrounding
me for Christmas night.
The song brings shivers
down my spine. It’s as if
the whole universe stops
for the duration of that
song and then resumes.
You can actually feel
the silence of the night, the
silence within your heart and
the hearts of your brothers
and sisters around you.
Louisa Apadhya*



Let Me hear the stories of Sahaja Yogis who are giving love and compassion

*Ganapatipule is a place
of liberty and beauty,
of magnificent sea and
streams, and of golden
sands, of spiritual joy,
the excitement of those
here for the first time, and
the sense of celebration
for those returning.
It brings to mind sacred
memories, vibrations from
the land and all that
our Sahaj culture evokes.
Chris Kyriacou*

of helping the people who are extremely poor. They need your help by all means and you are capable. With the Mahalakshmi's blessings, you are well equipped.... Try to help the people who are in great trouble. I know they are not Sahaja Yogis. Don't expect them to be Sahaja Yogis. They cannot be.

"At the time of Christ, how many there were who were Sahaja Yogis? How many people were there who could understand the depth of human problems, but Christ did and He sacrificed His life for the sins of the people."

The life of Christ

"It's a day to celebrate His birthday with very great joy, by what a birth, what a life that He had to go through. Nobody would like to have that kind of a life. But the essence of it we must understand. Running after greed is madness. There's no end to greed. Those who are greedy are greedy all the time.... Why not see to others, what do they want? Because we are in collective consciousness, we should understand....

"I know it's very difficult in those modern times with all the advertisements going on, but we are Sahaja Yogis. We have to be normal people.... Face it in a way that a saint has to face it and try to eradicate all these ills by your special powers.

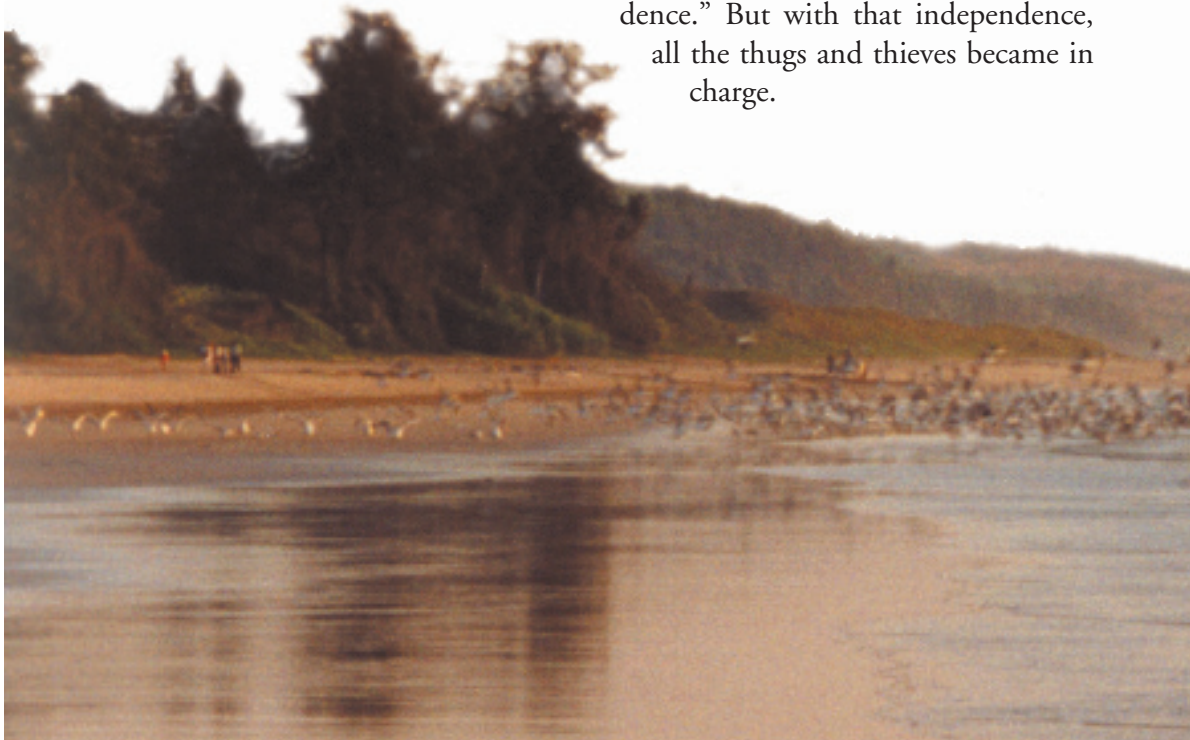
"Today is a day of great joy to Me and to all of you." Christ's life was short and miserable, not because of poverty, but because of hatred and tortures. He felt bad about the wrongs and the oppression. "He took up all that happening onto Himself to solve the problem. He created the Christians and what they are doing is nonsense, just a nonsense.... It has no meaning to Christ's life. And it has no meaning to the richness of His great work.

"So when we are celebrating His birthday, we should also celebrate His sacrificing capacity, His power of loving. Now Sahaja Yogis have become very good people, very loving people ... but still I think the greed lingers on. There's no end to greed.

"It's a shameless thing, the way people are and they're not ashamed that they're asking for money, money, money for comfort, comfort, comfort. It's very, very difficult to understand human beings. Once they have gone in a strange way, they can go to any extent. They don't know how to sacrifice....

"When Gandhiji asked people to sacrifice, all the women gave away their ornaments. They gave away their lives. They went to jail, did all kinds of things to achieve independence."

But with that independence,
all the thugs and thieves became in
charge.



“What do you say to such a country where everything that is great and noble goes into waste? Have you been a noble person?... Have you tried to help others?”

Christ was the “king of kings, but He lived in poverty with grace and He did everything for people who were sinful, who were in trouble – such a lot, one person.

“Now you are so many, so many of you. You all have to do something.... Try to know that you have to sacrifice something of your earnings, something of your luxuries for the sake of your country because you are Sahaja Yogis. We are not ordinary people. You have got your Realization, so what are you doing? Are you demanding money from everyone or ... you are giving love to everyone? Let Me hear the stories of Sahaja Yogis who are giving love and compassion.

The character of Christ

“I’m sorry today, on the day of His birthday, I have to tell about His life, which was very, very painful.” He was “such a glorious personality, such a great Sahaja Yogi. He had to go through so many problems in His life and His own people troubled Him. His own people tried to take advantage.

“So we have to think where we can help others, what we can do for others. This is one of the things one has to learn from life of Christ....

“Even among Sahaja Yogis I have found people who are very money-oriented, when they have made money out of Sahaja Yoga.... If you are not careful, if you are not very money-oriented, others can rob you. I say let them rob. Let them do what they like, but I cannot develop a temperament by which I can get after people for money.... They all will be ruined, all such people.” It is very common and very bad.

“I want you all to be above money to be above all these worldly things and you will never starve. You will never have problems. But do not get mixed up with these kind of nonsensical things. This is God’s work and you shouldn’t make money out of it, in no way.

“So we have to learn a lot from the great life of Christ, who was born as very humble man and He did such great things. He tried to improve our Agnyas and, even now, if you think of Him, your Agnya will be all right. It will be finished.

“I know among Sahaja Yogis also there are people who are very pushing, who are all the time pushing themselves ... just like all other stupid people.

“So to feel the satisfaction within yourself, just like Christ, you have to meditate and introspect and find out are you satisfied people. You have to be very much satisfied in life, otherwise no use having Sahaja Yoga, no use getting your Self Realization.

“I bless you from My heart that you take the character of Christ as a model for you and to understand the problems of the world, from the whole world, as your own problems.

“May God bless you.”

*Ganapatipule is a place
we come to where
Shri Mataji fills us with
Her unending grace and love.
At this place, we know who
we are and where we are from.
Regardless of where we live in
this world, we are reminded
of our motherland, which
makes it all the more fulfilling
when we return home.
The vibrations and sanctity
of this place never cease to
inspire. Ganapatipule is an
opportunity of unlimited
potential, the prospect for
growth, the gift of vibrations
and spiritual experience.
When we leave this place,
we carry with us Shri Mataji’s
love and Her vibrations and
visions and memories of time
spent in the company of the
Divine that makes it all the
more fulfilling when fate
next allows us to return
to Ganapatipule.
Chris Kyriacou*





accept our

Just imagine yourself brushing past a collective of twenty thousand and being greeted with broad smiles and the magical words of “Jai Shri Mataji,” the passwords of long known brother and sisterhood, our acquaintances of past and present lives. Yes, I am trying to portray exactly the feelings of the 24th of December in the Pune Chartarpati Shivaji Stadium, where the great event is happening – the Christmas Puja of 2004.

The greatest number in the Sahaj world have gathered in this great place to offer their prayers at Her Holy Lotus Feet and to worship Shri Jesus Mary Mata.

There were announcements and Mr. VJ Nalgirkar, Indian and international leader, announced the opening of the day's program. He requested that we make every moment of this spiritual quest fruitful. “Let us try to be in meditation,” he said, “and try to make the best use of this time.”

We all pray in our heart, “May Shri Jesus and Mary Mata accept our collective prayer and help us ascend in our spiritual quest and spread Sahaja Yoga.

“Let us be thankful to Shri Jesus in Shri Mataji, who was kind enough to accept our heartfelt offerings of puja at Her Holy Lotus Feet on His birthday.... We thank Thee again and again for this day..... May the entire universe be counselled, comforted and redeemed by Your grace, as we, Your instruments, become more effective in carrying Self Realization forward to illumine all the nooks and corners of the world that need Your compassion. Mother, with our heartfelt sincere prayer, we, the world collective across the globe, tender apologies to have compelled You to come down for us and accept the Christmas Puja 2004 in Your Sakar Form in Pune on the 25th of December, amidst a collective of thirty thousand. Kindly accept our silent prayer. We are grateful to You for ‘the silent night, the holy night.’ Bless us with all that is desired in our hearts and all You have so compassionately bestowed upon us, Your powers to be in this state of Realization as Sahaja Yogis. Aum Twameva Sakshat Shri Jesus Mary Mata Sakshat Shri Adi Shakti Mataji Shri Nirmala Devi Namoh Namaha.”

Jai Shri Mataji –
the passwords
of long known
brother and
sisterhood.

offering

Christmas Puja • 25 December 2004 • Pune

There was silence – real silence in the heart – as the choir sang Silent Night to mark the birth of little Jesus.



The backdrop of the stage was aptly decorated with a photo of Shri Mataji.

*He is the one who is responsible for
our resurrection because He is the gate.
He's the path because He's Shri Ganesh.
Omkara is the path and He's the path.
And He's the gate, but He is not the destination.
His mother is the destination.
Even Mahalakshmi is not the destination
– even Mahakali, Mahasaraswati.
The Adi Shakti is the destination
where you have to reach.
Christmas Puja 1990*

It can only be possible by Mother's grace. And one can imagine how great it was that the entire collective of such a gathering moved as if an unseen management was all the time binding the entire collective and steering the movement of the saints.

In the evening, the stadium seemed to be full of little stars with outstretched arms, each waiting for the greatest moment on Earth. It was at seven in the evening when the collective meditation started with the audio-visual display of a past Christmas Puja talk.

At eight we were blessed with Shri Mataji's holy arrival in the pendal. Mother was pleased and blessed the collective with Her holy darshan, as the collective joined the choir in singing *Swagata Agata Swagatam*. The puja started directly, with a few children offering puja at Her Holy Lotus Feet and then seven married ladies did the shringar for the Deity, while all were immersed in singing the puja bhajans.

The international and country leaders, while they did the aarti, were joined by the voices of the choir. It was as if all was happening spontaneously. The aarti and the three mahamantras were showering the cool breeze all around.

The collective then witnessed another celestial phenomenon of a very bright shooting star which came from nowhere in the starless, yet full moon sky. It was as if the Gods were showing their presence. The shooting star was bright, perhaps like the one Shri Mataji once pointed to some years ago, the one that marked the future venue for the international seminars. Or maybe it was like the star of Bethlehem.

"We bow to Thee, Mother, again and again and thank Thee for this day to accept the puja on behalf of the entire collective of the world."

At 11 pm Shri Mataji cut the Christmas cake, assisted by Sir CP. There was silence – real silence in the heart – as the choir sang *Silent Night* to mark the birth of little Jesus in the arms of Mother Mary. The backdrop of the stage was aptly decorated with a rare photograph of Shri Mataji holding an innocent child. It was a photo and not a painting. A beautiful, yet simply decorated stage was blessed by Shri Mataji on this day.

It was a very strong puja. We did not have a talk, yet the message was so powerful in the silence. The silent night bears witness to the message. We must introspect more and reduce our inner urge and desire to expect materialistic gains. We must grow inward, seek Mother in the heart and enjoy Her bliss. We must now focus inward to absorb the talks of earlier years, which speak of this day and of our future. The talks – the *amrut vaani*, the divine messages – are abundant in our Sahaj world.

Aum Twameva Sakshat Shri Jesus Mary Mata Sakshat Shri Adi Shakti Mataji Shri Nirmala Devi Namoh Namaha.

The greatest gift God has bestowed upon humanity is Sahaja Yoga.

Thank You, Shri Mataji.

Rabi Ghosh



The seminar was historic in all senses.

- Day one, December 24th, opened with a havan on the 108 names of Shri Mataji, with an attendance of more than twenty thousand yogis.
- The evening musical program was hosted inside the main stadium, witnessed by more than twenty-three thousand. A welcoming address came from Mr. VJ Nalgirkar. He emphasized the need for all of us to go into meditation and best utilize this opportunity, as we did at last year's Ganapatipule seminar. There was much unique music that added grace to the occasion.
- Approximately 105 couples were matched and blessed by Shri Mataji for their marriages on December 26th.
- The Christmas Puja had the highest ever collective attendance, with approximately thirty-five thousands yogis from across the globe. It was a historical record in Sahaja Yoga pujas.
- The third day was also an eventful day with the marriages of sixty couples amidst a collective of approximately fifteen thousand. Bhajans and qawwalis from the Pune choir added grace to the event. The couples were escorted to Pratishthan, the divine abode of Shri Mataji. The vibrations in the stadium were as if escalating from Her Nirakar form. We bathed in those vibrations.
- Aum Twameva Sakshat Shri Jesus Mary Mata Sakshat
Shri Adi Shakti Mataji Shri Nirmala Devi Namoh Namaha.

We must absorb the
talks of earlier years,
which speak of this day
and of our future.

As the conch announced Shri Mataji's arrival at the Christmas Puja, quite a few of us were struggling for a few seconds to hold back tears: tears of emotion, of being overwhelmed. But some deeper strength came up very quickly from within, pushing those tears away. We were asked to go on stage.

With a gentle and silent namaskar, we greeted Shri Mataji. Sadhana Didi, with an expression of sweetness and great dignity, unfolded a beautiful sari and gave it to all of us to hold in a half circle around Mother. Shri Mataji was sitting on Her beautifully decorated chair, absolutely silent, still without any movement, Her skin glowing soft as silk and almost transparent. Her eyes were for a long time looking at each of us, a look of the strongest kind I have ever felt or experienced. She was penetrating completely, penetrating into our beings, touching the deepest centre point within.

Mother's strong, almost laser-sharp look did not move. Looking up to Her, I felt the strongest plea in Her eyes and the whole expression of Her face, that felt like She was saying She needs us. She needs us to be there in the centre. It was such a plea of overwhelming strength, accompanied by a feeling of urgency, as if saying She does need us, She needs us to be at this centre point, without any compromise or failure.



to be at the

Her penetrating look did not stop, but my eyes had to bow down to Her Holy Lotus Feet, where the swastika was painted at that moment. With all my desire from that centre point, I joined into the song *Mahishasura Mardini*. In that way, I humbly joined the collective request to the Goddess to destroy the negativity which endlessly disturbs and troubles the purity, balance and harmony.

Although I have been part of and witnessed many celebrations of pujas over the years, I could not recount to you at all any detail of the procedure of this puja. All I remember in my most inner core of being and heart is Mother's overwhelming plea: "I need you. I need you all. I need you to be at this centre point."

This impression is strong enough to stay with me for the rest of my life.

But also it seemed imperative to share this experience with all children and devotees of Shri Mataji, as I was just only one drop out of the whole, out of all of us, being asked to be on the stage. *Brigitte Shehovych*

On Friday, January 14th, the Makar Sankranti Puja, also called the Shri Shakambari Puja was celebrated at Pratishthan, Shri Mataji's home near Pune. In attendance were some yogis from Mumbai, professionals in flower and vegetable arrangement and decoration, most appropriate for this puja. There were also beautiful ornaments made of sugar, nicely decorated bangles and necklaces. At about 9 pm we were called inside the house. We meditated sitting in a hall and the trustees and the cameramen went inside for the puja. They offered everything to Shri Mataji and She was very happy to see everyone.

centre point



Balance and Love

Christ's power "was of love and not of anger because He is the one who has crossed the most difficult centre of Agnya....

"You have to develop your balance and your love. That is only through this Paramchaitanya. With this all-pervading power of divine love, you can develop that discretion. You can develop those special powers.... I don't say that you can become like Me, but at least, you have vibrations to see."

Christmas Puja

Ganapatipule

25 December 1997

The modern ego

"With this ego, you cannot go further. Why did you come to Sahaja Yoga? You came here not to become some sort of a leader or some sort of a king, but you came here to become a great guru.... For that, you have to have, in Sahaja Yoga, a complete humility, natural humility, natural balance. This is what Christ has taught us.

"At that time, I don't think people had that much ego. Ego is a modern present to you. People get ego out of anything....

"What is so great than to be a good Sahaja Yogi?" Compared to kings and prime ministers, you have one advantage – no ego.

"Now people try to remove their ego." There are two types – ritualistic and ascetic. "They will go on beating themselves with shoes. All kinds of ritualistic things they do to remove their ego, but all this you do with your mind. Whatever you do with your mind will give you ego only. They become ascetic. They're the greatest egoist.... In Sahaja Yoga, you are not allowed at all, all this asceticism."

I would love
all My
children to
be extremely
loving and
collective.

Loving the wrong thing

“You have to be loving, affectionate, kind and disciplined.... You must have your balance through your discipline. If you have no discipline, you can never be a good Sahaja Yogi.

“From the life of Christ we have to learn these things, that unless and until we have these things we cannot become good Sahaja Yogis.” Ritualism, anger and miserliness are not necessary. Miserly people can never love. They love money.

“Egoistical people can never love because they love power to control others. They think they’re doing it for Sahaja Yoga, but are not.” While you are working for yourself and your ego, there is no use working for Sahaja Yoga.

“Look at the Christ. He took birth in a very humble abode, but He was the king and He lived with the poor and tried to save them. He saved the lepers. He saved so many people.” There were twenty-one people cured by Him.

If you are curing, it is important that you do not believe that it is you who is curing. “It is the divine power that is curing. You are not doing anything.... I feel the same way. I am doing nothing and I’m Nishkrya, not doing anything. But I’m not lazy. You should be active, but all your activity should come from the divine power of love.

“First of all, you should extend your hands for love. You extend your heart. Extend your money, house, everything for love....

“It’s very important. You have to be generous. You have to be kind. You have to be loving and sweet to others.”

The transformation

“The people who got Realization are suddenly changed. They don’t want to drink. They have stopped drinking. Their attention has become nice. The whole thing is changed.” Both Christ and Muhammed spoke of this time of transformation. But if you do not become, “you’ll be left behind.

“There’s a big transformation taking place. In that transformation also, your rising is taking place. There’s a big evolution going on.... This is the last judgement and you’ll be judged. You’ll be left behind. You cannot adhere to people who are rising higher. With your weight, you’ll fall down.”

To understand Christ, you must have all these qualities. “You must know what you are. First of all, introspect. Accordingly, you should work it out, but this ritualism is not allowed in Sahaja Yoga....

“I would love all My children to be extremely loving and collective, not to denounce anybody for any rhyme or reason.”

Promise and surrender

“So many miracles have taken place. So many people have been cured, no doubt, but that doesn’t mean you have done it. Don’t get into the trap of ego. That’s most dangerous. If you destroy Sahaja Yoga, you are destroying yourself....

“You all have to promise in your heart. Put your hands to your heart and say, ‘Mother, we’ll love, we’ll spread your divine love and encompass the whole world, give Realization to all the people. We’ll not shout. We’ll not be angry. We’ll not do all kinds of rituals, but just surrender – surrender our ego to You.’... ”

“All your problems can be solved because as long as there is ego, this divine power doesn’t take over. You may do anything. You are not connected. The connection is missing. Christ is missing. He is no more there. To establish Him, first of all, you must show how you love. That doesn’t mean that you love your wife, love your children and love your house. You have to love everyone. Try to make everyone happy.

*All this will work very well
if you understand that this divine power is so powerful.*



“That’s why I like music because through music you can spread vibrations.” Music is a very good medium for spreading loving vibrations, “but those who are musicians have to be loving people, not hot-tempered, not showing off, not thinking too much of themselves.”

The divine power

“All this will work very well if you understand that this divine power is so powerful. No doubt it is love. No doubt it is truth. And no doubt, if you get out of it, you’ll be caught up by anything and you could be finished. It is a very, very powerful, effective and absolutely conclusive power you have within yourself and, thanks to Christ, who crucified Himself, sacrificed His body for our sake, that our Agnya is opened, otherwise I could not have done this Sahaja Yoga....

“This divine power can transform you completely to such an extent that anything you want to do you can do in two, three months....

“There are so many things I would like you to know about Christ.... He had His own priorities.” The Bible does not describe Christ fully. “They have reduced it....

“One has to learn Christianity through the heart. There is no other way out. They should learn through the heart – heart of your Mother.

“May God bless you all.”

Forgiveness is the greatest weapon

FORGIVE

If the power of forgiveness
is not established within us,
we will destroy our own people.

9 June 1988 and 16 March 2003