

**Mukti De Coux: Foreward to the german edition of
David Godman: Nothing Ever Happened, Volume III.**

'Nothing Ever Happened' is an extraordinary title for a book that tells a thousand and one stories! Thanks to his great talent as a journalist and writer, David Godman has kept this paradox very much alive.

In February 1999, Ganga Mira was invited to give *satsang*¹ in Tiruvannamalai² on the rooftop of a guesthouse located near to the *ashram*³ of Ramana Maharishi⁴, H.W.L. Poonja's⁵ Master. There was a beautiful view of Arunachala⁶. I had accompanied her and as I started to go down the stairs a tall man came up to me and said:

-I wanted to see if you had escaped the 'Poonja' nose! I can see that fortunately you have your mother's!

My first meeting with David Godman was filled with humour which I enjoyed very much. He asked me if I would be happy to talk about the years I'd spent with Papaji, my father. He invited me to his house; we sat on the terrace and I answered his questions.

Poonjaji had an extremely charismatic and powerful presence. His personality was paradoxical, exuberant and sober. This was making his life and his lightning responses in *satsang* unpredictable. By his actions and words, he would pull the carpet out from under our feet, leaving us without any reference to hold on to.

We could never rest. Nothing was guaranteed! His unexplainable behavior defied all images and judgments. Spiritual and moralistic concepts were swept away. Was he not always saying: "Don't land anywhere!"? His life was a real teaching.

I have often been asked one question:

Was Papaji your father or your Master?

1 Meetings in Truth.

2 Town in the state of Tamil Nadu, South India.

3 Monastery.

4 Ramana Maharishi (1879-1950) was a Master of Advaita from Tamil Nadu, South India.

5 H.W.L. Poonja is also called Poonjaji, Master, Papaji.

6 A sacred mountain that Ramana Maharishi considered has his Master.

The real question is: Did you also inherit the desire to free yourself? Have you been able to look beyond the simple father-daughter relationship to see the incontestable greatness of the Master?

The search can never be imposed on anyone. There is no ground for fanaticism or conversion. Unlike religion, this indication leaves one naked from any belief. In my case though, for as long as I can remember, and for better or worse, I had been searching for something other than what this phenomenal world could offer. So, to this question, I reply:

Yes! He was my father! I was his little princess. He was so loving and tender. He nearly never got angry with me and he enjoyed my mischievousness. We laughed a lot together. We were so close, so intimate, especially the first ten years of my life. I adored and admired him.

Yes! He was my Master. For me, *satsang* came out of all his pores and was present in each moment of our daily life and around every conversation, observation and anecdote. He incited me to meditate and to report on what I was experiencing. I sat on his lap while he was giving *satsang*. And often in the evening, he would tell me passionate stories about the Indian Gods and interpret their symbolic meaning. When I reached adolescence, the Master often replaced the father with one who uncompromisingly broke my concepts and ideals while destroying even the foundations of my identity, this “I”, this unquestioned body-mind entity which we identify with. I admit that it wasn’t always easy, but today I give thanks for each ordeal and my gratitude towards this man, this undisputed Master, is complete.

So, he has been both, my father and my Master. As he was unpredictable, when I was looking for the father, the Master would appear in front of me, and when I was expecting the guidance of the Master, it was the father who was answering my question. These two aspects of him were so entangled that it was impossible to dissociate them.

He often said that he had had a worldly family while marrying young and fathering two children, but with Ganga Mira he had accomplished his desire to form a spiritual family where each member would dedicate his life to the search of the Self.

On the 5th May 1993, he wrote to me, “You are different. Who is your father, who is your mother? Can every child be that lucky to have this Grace? What a unique family: Mukti, Meera⁷, Papa and Mimi⁸”.

This is thus the story of the family that he wanted to create. It is the very human story of H.W.L. Poonja, a man liberated from history, free of all notions.

7 Ganga Mira’s name at that time.

8 Ganga Mira’s mother, Cornelia du Marais, Durga

As David described so well in 'Nothing Ever Happened', H.W.L. Poonja and Ganga Mira met in 1968 in Rishikesh at the bank of the Ganga, in circumstances well worthy of Indian mythology. I won't elaborate on this, but I'll mention certain episodes.

Geneviève De Coux⁹ was born in 1947, in Namur, Belgium. She spent an idyllic childhood in the Belgian Congo where her grand-parents owned a coffee plantation. Her father, Antoine De Coux, was a magistrate and her mother, Cornélia du Marais, was a painter, writer and poet. In 1960, the year of the Congo's independence, the family had to forgo everything and exile to Belgium. The lost paradise.

Geneviève found herself in Brussels. This radical change of scenery stoked the fire of her ontological search. Holidays were often spent at her mother's windmill in Sintra, Portugal.

On the Eve of her third year exams at the U.L.B. Brussels University, while studying her philosophy paper, she stumbled upon a saying of Socrates which hit her straight in the heart: "Know thyself". Realizing that this was precisely what she had always been looking for, she instantly dropped her studies and set out for India by road in search of a living Buddha.

On reaching the Himalayan foot-hills, she led a meditative and ascetic life by the Ganges, in Rishikesh, waiting to meet her Master. The locals soon began to call her Mira like the princess who relinquished all for the love of Krishna.

Time passed by and the sage who would help her in her quest didn't appear. Dropping all hopes, she moved for some months into a cave, where she lived like a *sadhu*¹⁰. Her passport visa had expired and she was running out of money. She decided to spend her last rupees at a *chai* shop¹¹ to drink a good cup of tea. While sitting down reading a book of poetry by Kabir¹², she was approached by a tall, impressive Indian. Looking at the book in her hands, he kindly told her that if she needed any help he could be found every morning beside the Ganga, at the Ram Joola beach. She respectfully refused his offer and returned to her cave. Two nights later, in her dream, the face of this man suddenly appeared to her. Was he The Master for whom she had been waiting for so long? At five in the morning, she went to look for him. He was at the meeting point and started to

9 Ganga Mira's official name.

10 *Brahmins*, after having completed their *dharma* or duty of family life, and marrying their children, have the choice of renouncing everything and becoming ascetics.

11 Place where people drink tea.

12 Kabir (1398-1440/1448?), Indian poet and philosopher that Poonjaji enjoyed very much.

laugh when he saw her coming. She sat down in front of him and had an incredible experience of awakening.

The following day he disappeared without leaving a trace. He had just turned his back on his family responsibilities to live the life of a *sadhu*. Ganga Mira was in ecstasy and desperate at the same time. She had found and lost her Master. She had neither a name nor an address. She decided to wait for him under the very tree where they had met and spent there eight months meditating. People started to consider her a saint.

He eventually miraculously reappeared. From that moment on they stayed together beside the Ganga living as Master and disciple. They walked and laughed a lot. Every daily event was a living teaching and pretext for a profound reflection that coloured their life with sacredness, magic and laughter.

A couple of months later, in Vrindavan, the town of Krishna and Radha they became lovers. Poonjaji decided that they should marry and when they returned to the Ganga, they made their vow to each other in the sacred river.

He later brought her to Lucknow to introduce her to his parents Parmanand and Yamuna Devi, commonly named Pitaji and Mataji. They immediately adored Ganga Mira, which for a family of pure *Brahmins*¹³, descendants of the great *rishi*¹⁴ Shandilia and originating from the mythical Saraswati River, was quite extraordinary! Parmanand had only wanted to be served by her¹⁵. On his deathbed, he had even said to his son:

-Always keep Meera in your heart!

Mataji had revealed to Ganga Mira that in her son's astrological chart, it was predicted that he would marry a young *yogini* from the West and my mother was therefore welcomed as a daughter.

When they were in Lucknow, Poonjaji and Ganga Mira were often staying in a house called "Vrindavan". One afternoon of October 1969, Ganga Mira was having a nap. Suddenly she woke up with a start! A man wearing a brown cassock was touching her feet while looking at her intensely with his magnificent blue eyes. She immediately recognized him. Saint Francis! Saint Francis of Assisi! An immense and divine fear took hold of her and with the hairs on her neck standing on end and her heart beating to bursting point, she ran straight to her Master's room.

13 Members of the priestly caste, the highest in the Hindu society.

14 Sage.

15 For the question of purity, *Brahmins* normally don't accept food from non-*Brahmins*.

-Master! Master! I'm scared! I've seen Saint Francis! It's him, I'm sure! Yet it's not possible! He's been dead for hundreds of years! I don't know what's true and what isn't any more. I'm going mad!

-Saint Francis?

-Yes, I saw him! He was as real as you!

-You jumped into another state of consciousness where the saints of the past live. I have often had visions of Krishna and other saints.

This explanation calmed her down.

In 1971, a few disciples who Poonjaji had met here and there during their walks invited him to give *satsang* in several European countries. It was the first time that he was traveling outside India. After a visit to Germany, Poonjaji and Ganga Mira went to Belgium where they stayed with her family at Wépion beside the river Meuse. Cornélia du Marais and Christian, her mother and brother, became Poonjaji's disciples and were renamed Durga and Satish. They followed him on several of his trips.

They then travelled to Switzerland and Italy ...Assisi! The place of Saint Francis and Saint Claire.

They wandered about the town. Poonjaji recognized each stone and path and had a very strong mystical experience. In a vision, he saw that he had been Saint Francis, that Ganga Mira had been Saint Claire and that they had taken birth again in order to love each other carnally. A great and sacred joy overtook them both and once back in the hotel they laughed so much that their neighbors couldn't sleep and the banging on their wall made them laugh even more!

I was conceived that night. After all, hadn't Saint Francis visited Ganga Mira in a vision some years back? Was it to announce my coming?

They continued their nomadic life to Austria, back to Germany and finally to Spain.

On arriving in Barcelona, Poonjaji's visa was about to expire and he would have soon to go back alone to India. The day before his departure Ganga Mira was troubled.

-I think I'm pregnant! Should we keep the baby?

She had never wanted to have a family and had sacrificed everything for this search. In a flash she foresaw all the difficulties that were awaiting her. Their life would never be the same with responsibilities of education and school...

He looked at her tenderly and said:

-Oh! A little Meera¹⁶!

She understood that she should keep the baby. Poonjaji reassured her and said that he would arrange for the birth to take place in Lucknow.

Ganga Mira returned to Belgium and applied for a visa for India. It didn't arrive in time, so I was born in Brussels on the 29th August 1972. My mother called me Ramani after Ramana Maharshi. At the age of one month we flew to India. My father was waiting for us at Delhi Airport and as he took me in his arms he named me Mukti "Liberation" and so Mukti it was.

He took us to Lucknow to introduce me to his mother, Mataji. She immediately made a *Punjabi*¹⁷ ritual with matches to see of whom I was the reincarnation. The oracle apparently gave evidence that I was the reincarnation of her late husband. My father however never spoke to me about my reincarnations. In reality, he didn't believe in past life nor in *karma*¹⁸ even though he was sometimes visited by visions. He saw that Ganga Mira had been his sister in the desert and also his daughter who had died very young in Tiruvannamalai and that she had to be born again to live a physical and spiritual love with him. Who knows? Perhaps that's why Ganga Mira immediately recognized Ramana's little room when she entered there for the first time in 1995! Anyway it's a crazy family story, with me being the reincarnation of his father and my mum being his deceased daughter!

After Lucknow, we went to Varanasi where my mother plunged me into the freezing Ganga crying:

-Jay Gange!

-What are you doing? Master said to her in great surprise. Are you mad?

-But the Ganga is sacred! She retorted.

My father called these years 'the golden years of his life'. My parents had a marvellous relationship, full of harmony, respect and joy. I never saw a fight nor did I feel tensions. My mother had an unconditional love for her Master to whom she was totally devoted. My father adored in her the beautiful woman and the disciple burning in the fire for Freedom. He was sometimes very romantic and would write such beautiful love letters. In the last years of his life, he would tell her: "The entire world came to me, but I came to you. Never forget it!", "When you are not here, to whom can I really speak?" The passion for Truth united them. They shared the same devotion, the same tender and amused attention

16 Meera was the name Papaji called Ganga Mira.

17 From the state of Punjab, in the North of India, from where H.W.L. Poonja comes from.

18 Law of actions and reactions.

towards me. Like any parent, they would see all qualities in me and I made them very proud. My father always found my silly tricks hilarious! Our family was an island of peace and happiness.

Satsang was always present in our daily life. Around every little anecdote there was always an outstanding comment that led us to the truth of things. It was an ascetic life, staying in ashram rooms and going for long walks that took up a good part of the day and on which he sometimes carried me on his shoulders. There were baths in the Ganga, encounters with animals, shopping at the market, meetings with seekers and visits to temples where my father loved to tell me stories about the gods which I loved as he was an incredible story teller.

Despite his love for the gods however he neither believed in them nor practiced rituals. He never wanted an *ashram*¹⁹ nor celebrated religious feasts nor sang *bhajans*²⁰. Later, in Lucknow he adored making people sing in public who were not natural singers. He himself didn't have a good singing voice. He also enjoyed bringing together several doctors with different opinions who would end up fighting each other! What a funny circus! In this I recognize him well! Already when I was still a small child he loved to play tricks on his disciples and we would laugh together. He was never unkind but any opportunity to laugh was appreciated!

In 1974, we went back to Europe. We spent a lot of time in France and lived six months in Portugal at my grandmother's windmill that Poonjaji had renamed "Diamond Stupa Ashram". Durga's strong and direct character amused him and he often said that she was his fellow companion on the way. She considered him to be her Master and had total admiration for his *upadesha*²¹. Our days were spent walking in the nearby fields which I enjoyed a lot. Unfortunately, I was sent for the first time to the small village school during the daily *satsangs*. I was so frustrated that I put my uniform on the wrong way round in defiance and when I got home I hit my dad. Luckily it amused him!

My father meditated with me and asked me to explain what my experiences were. He liked telling the following anecdote. In France, while a disciple was meditating, I went up to her and touched her heart with my little hand.

-My Papa is here!

Then I touched her head and said:

-He's not there!

19 Monastery.

20 Sacred songs.

21 Teaching.

In his youth Poonjaji had been a Krishna *bhakta*²² and I could still see it in the love for Krishna that he transmitted to me. In the houses we stayed in there were often little ritual altars and I would frequently sit on them and play with the gods as if they were dolls. For me the gods were alive and were my friends.

The following event that my father was very fond of happened in 1975 when I was three years old. We used to spend time in Londa where some of his disciples had a house that they offered to him each time he was in the area. Poonjaji had been a mining engineer and because he had found minerals in that region, the government had built a railway line and little by little a small village had developed in which he had some very faithful disciples. I loved this little village right in the jungle not far from the rice fields. As always we went for long walks and I played with the village dogs. My father named one "Furious Doggy"! It was a particularly angry looking dog and was my favorite! One evening my parents couldn't find me anywhere in the house and looked everywhere for me, in vain. They then took torches and set out to search the jungle nearby. They finally saw me. I had gone for a walk alone with three big dogs!

-What are you doing here alone in the forest? My father asked me.

-I'm looking for Krishna! I replied.

I recall an anecdote. I was almost six years old and, for my father, education and therefore school was very important. He was becoming worried about our future. So far, our nomadic life had been easy but if I went to school I would have to stay for a long time in the same place and that would become a problem for the life we led together. Although my parents had taken their vows of marriage in the Ganga, nothing was official and Poonjaji was still legally married to his first wife who had been chosen by his parents when he was only eighteen year's old²³. They had two children, Surendra and Surendri, who were older than my mother! Hindus were monogamous and at that time divorce was non-existent. So for these legal reasons neither could my father settle in Europe nor could my mother live in India. At one point he thought of settling in Australia but it would have been a complicated procedure.

My parents were looking for the best solution for our family future when my father's visa ran out. He soon took the plane from Paris to Delhi. At that time we didn't know that our life together was about to end. The golden years were over. It was a real drama. Samsara! How you hold us in your grasp! My dad was my hero, my pillar of strength and I loved him so much. How could I live without him? My strong and joyful personality withdrew inside. This separation however, although very difficult to bear, was only physical. My father's presence was so imposing that it was untouched by the geographical distance between us. We wrote to each other very often and he told my mother to be patient. There would be a solution and he liked the idea that I would be brought up in the West.

22 A devotee.

23 Arranged marriages.

A year went by and the solution never came. Ganga Mira had never worked and found it difficult to bring up a child on her own in a big city like Brussels. Circumstances brought her to move to Venezuela where we lived for three years. I did part of my primary studies in Spanish at the village school. We had a little house in a beautiful natural park full of tropical plants at two thousand metres altitude overlooking the ocean on the horizon.

Each summer we travelled to India to see my father, and then it was as if there had never been a separation. My parents were together again and we were as close as ever. Our daily life seemed unchanged and each time we enjoyed beautiful months together.

In 1981, Ganga Mira decided to leave Venezuela and return to live in Belgium near to her father. Before making this big life change we spent a few months in India. My father waited for us in Lucknow at my half-brother's house. Surendra lived there with his wife Usha, his three children, Indu, Sanjay, Jaya and his mother. Surendri, my half-sister and her two sons, Deepankar and Divya, came to visit us as well and for two weeks we all lived together in harmony.

Afterwards, my parents and I left for Rishikesh where we stayed in a lovely *ashram*²⁴. I would bring baby frogs into our room and let them hop happily around.

Again, we spent our days walking between Ram Joola and Phool Chatti and bathing in the Ganga. We would also often visit Parmarth *Ashram*. There were statues of gods and saints, including the Swami Ram Tirtha (1873-1906), my great uncle who was a sage, poet and mathematician. My dad would tell me stories about them. And that's what I also did when I recently stayed there with my children, Arun and Satyâ.

We then went to Hardwar, a place I adored. Our room had a big terrace directly on to the Ganga and at the bottom of the stairs there was a private *ghat*²⁵ where we could bathe undisturbed. Poonjaji could spend hours on this terrace contemplating the Ganga and when we took a bath on the opposite bank, he would watch us and we would wave at each other. The terrace was often visited by a family of monkeys and I would ask my dad to catch the babies which he tried but each time a big male monkey would appear and we would take refuge behind the mosquito door and make faces at him! The door was so thin that when the big monkey who felt insulted, tried to get in we were afraid that he might succeed!

One day there was a nest of orange wasps on the terrace. My dad told me that when he was small he attached a piece of string to the wasp's waist and went for a walk with her as if she was a balloon. He then literally brought the story to life

24 Monastery.

25 Banks of a sacred river or pond covered with steps.

by handing me a string to hold which was attached to a wasp flying above my head! My mum exclaimed:

-Poor wasp! Untie her!

I let go and the poor thing flew away trailing her string!

We also used to give sugar to the ants. My father loved observing insects and the animal world in general. I think we visited all the zoos in India and Europe and notably the Albino gorilla in Barcelona's zoo.

Occasionally we would go to the market. My parents would walk next to me to prevent me from seeing the multitude of colorful objects that were for sale. I was captivated and wanted to buy everything including small statues of the gods dressed in their clothes and flashy green plastic parrots. Everything was colorful and attractive! After the market we would drink a good *lassi*²⁶ or a sugar cane juice, eat a roasted corn on the cob with lime and salt, and a *jelabi* or a *bharfi*²⁷ for dessert. We would sometimes continue to Harki Pauri by crossing the bridge and reaching a romantic little island on which the *sadhus*²⁸ had made their refuge. We would sit down beside the Ganga and take a bath with the water buffalos. When I recently returned there with my mother and my children, I was horrified to see how much everything had changed.

Some days we would also walk on the Kankal side towards the *ashram* of Ananda Mayi Ma, a great saint whom we had the opportunity to meet.

After Hardwar we went to Bombay, to the home of some of Poonjaji's faithful disciples. He gave *satsang* and as usual I sat on his lap and was busy either listening or playing. One day I called out to him to tell him something:

-Papa!

A disciple admonished me:

-Why are you calling him Papa? He's not "your" father! He's everyone's father!

He was right because it's a known fact that from 1990 the disciples called him Papaji. But for me, his little daughter, the world collapsed. Why did he say that to me? I was furious! My natural right to being my father's daughter was taken away from me! It was too much! I realized for the first time that some didn't know who I was and I sensed a sort of taboo.

26 Drink made out of buffalo milk.

27 Indian sweets.

28 Wandering ascetics.

From there we went to Londa. The house on the edge of the jungle had an extraordinary library of sacred Indian books in a small room connected to the living room. I loved to contemplate the beautiful illustrations of the gods and one day when I was alone I cut out all the images! As I thought that the house was offered I had presumed I could do anything I liked. I proudly showed them to my parents.

-Quick! Put all the books back as if nothing has happened! My silliness never failed to make him laugh. I have always kept these pictures and even today they are still in a file in my desk!

There was one day however that my father got angry with me. It was very memorable because it was so rare. In this same library there was an altar with Krishna on it. I had always adored Krishna but suddenly, I looked at the statue. It seemed emptied of any divine essence. Proud of my discovery I said to him:

-After all these gods are made of nothing but stone!

My father became mad with rage, and it took me years to understand his fury. Why didn't he understand my fundamental discovery since he taught that no beliefs should be entertained? It was a form of *koan*²⁹! I understood later that he didn't want me to replace one belief by another: to believe in god or not to believe in god is just one or the other of two sides of the same coin that is the mind. It's only when it returns to its source that one is in peace and not by keeping different viewpoints. True devotion is the absence of thinking and is better than replacing one belief by another. For a little girl of nine years old however, all this was too much to comprehend.

I remember a funny scene when we were walking in the jungle along the railway track and my mother decided that we should all express ourselves. We had to scream as loud as possible! My dad hardly dared to make a sound but she screamed louder and louder until at the end we were all three shouting merrily!

Back in Belgium a new life was waiting. It was difficult to adapt to the capital, life in a flat, the greyness, the cold, a strict school and the absence of my father.

My father had recommended me to meditate every day and to speak English. I collected his letters and in a small notebook I wrote down some of his words such as "Vomit the past!", "All is illusion", "All is mind", "You are already what you are" ... I started to write poems that pointed to an ontological search.

One funny event that I remember is that my school gave us a form to fill in during the class for some kind of register and we had to reply to numerous questions:

Father's first name: Master
Father's date of birth: 1910
Mother's date of birth: 1947

29 Sentence that destabilizes the mind.

Father's profession: Sage

For me these facts were very natural but little by little I began to realize that in the society they weren't at all! My father was the same age as my maternal grandfather, my maternal grandmother Durga was ten years younger than my father, my mother was younger than the two kids he'd had with his first wife and I was younger than his five grandchildren! How could I explain to my school friends that my parents didn't live together but that they still loved each other and that they were ritually married but that it hadn't been official which explained why I used my mother's name? Children asked me questions that sometimes put me in an awkward situation. From then on, I decided to be discreet about my life.

Every year my father promised us to come but it didn't happen. My mother didn't have the money for us to go to India and quite some years went by. As she didn't benefit from any financial support, she had to take small jobs so that we could survive this period. For both of us it was a hard time and our monastic life only increased our fire for something else. This existence seemed absurd and grey like the color of the clouds that formed a roof over Belgium. It was fortunately also interrupted by wonderful sunny holidays in Sintra, Portugal, at my grandmother's windmill near to the Atlantic Ocean.

During all this time the exchange of letters with my father lessened the geographical distance between us. His letters carried great love and great teaching.

In 1986, my mother had saved some money and decided we should go to India. It was about time! I was turning 14 years old.

We arrived in Delhi. My father was waiting for us at my half-sister's home. I got such a shock when I saw him! He looked so much older and I hardly recognized him. He too must have been surprised seeing me because he had left a little girl only to find a young lady whom he didn't know how to approach. He was sometimes very tender and other times very cold and strict. In India the relationship between parents and children changes at adolescence and one doesn't show one's affection anymore. Rules and barriers are preventing the natural flow of love. He had enjoyed my childhood mischief but now I had to behave like a well brought up young woman and that didn't fit at all with my rebellious character!

I also didn't know that in Lucknow, six months previously, my father had almost died. He told us that one night he felt that death was coming so he sat on his bed propped up with cushions in a lotus position and faced the wall. In this position if death came he would not be found in a degrading posture. He had always lived as a *yogi* and would die as a *yogi*! This story moved me and showed me what strength of character he had!

Death didn't come to him then and, in fact, a new life began. It was no more a personal life but it was given to others. It was no more a life respecting his

preferences but entirely dedicated to a “teaching” that would benefit the whole world. It was a life in which we no longer had a place.

A short time later, a young American yoga teacher who had a few disciples came to see him in Lucknow. He had had a big experience of enlightenment. Poonjaji liked him and treated him like a spiritual son.

The day after our arrival in Delhi, the American and a few of his students came for tea. We then all left together for Hardwar where we stayed in our favorite *dharamsala*³⁰ with its terrace overlooking the Ganges. The American’s group stayed in the tourist bungalow opposite us on the other side of the river. They came to visit us every day and we went for walks together. Spontaneously their questions provoked enlightening responses from the Master. I was fully into adolescence and sometimes rebellious. The American, finding me cumbersome couldn’t understand why Ganga Mira hadn’t left me in Belgium. At that moment I realized that he didn’t know that I was his Master’s daughter. I kept silent.

In those days many carried the concept of celibacy and thought that a free being could no longer have desires nor maintain physical relationships. They believed that he had to be *sattvic*³¹, pure, disincarnated, detached, ethically irreproachable. He had to be a saint. Yes, sainthood was the undoubted sign to recognize a liberated one. What a difficult concept to drop! A free being is not a spiritual superman. He appears as a normal human being with good and bad sides. We are all the Self and whether or not ignorance leaves, the creation will always manifest in its duality, as it always has been. There is therefore no change, no sign, and no special behavior that will show if someone is free or not. The disciples who had this false concept of purity left their Master as soon as they saw that Ganga Mira was his wife and I Mukti was his daughter, furious and disappointed that he wasn’t the embodiment of their utopian ideal of perfection. After this, Papaji decided to be discreet about our family ties and this sometimes put me through awkward situations that caused suffering. This taboo made me doubtful about the Master and, thus, about his teaching. I had to renounce my own identity, my birthright to be his daughter, to be somebody. What a “let go” he expected from me! It was almost inhuman.

A Spanish *swami*³² and two South Indian disciples came to visit us. One was thin and the other fat so we nicknamed them Laurel and Hardy! There were some beautiful *satsangs*. Their hearts opened and their devotion was so touching that it made me cry. I saw that my father was a perfect Master although some of his actions seemed “imperfect”. I had to give up all archetypes including ethics and sainthood if it was Peace that I was looking for. Peace is here when no idea or ideal is entertained. This new vision allowed me to transcend the controversial

30 Guest house for pilgrims.

31 Pur, the highest of the 3 *gunas* or qualities.

32 Monk.

behavior of my father and to recognize the greatness of the Master's indication. I had to sacrifice who I was in life to be able to realize who I am in reality.

One year later, my mother and I went for a short trip to Amsterdam. I was fifteen at that time. On the way back in the train, my mind stopped. Suddenly I understood, not mentally like before but really, what my father had indicated all these years. I was at the source of everything and infinite revelations sprang out of me uncontrollably. I went from exaltation to the fear of death and panic of going mad. I didn't sleep for a whole month because of the force of this experience. School continued and I had to pretend to act in a normal way which, no doubt, saved me. Luckily Ganga Mira, who had already had similar experiences, could guide me. We called my father to tell him of my glimpse. He told me that I was very young to have such an experience and he didn't give me any advice. Soon afterwards I received a letter telling me how happy he was and that being the daughter of parents like my mother and him I had nothing to do and that I was already free! He also wrote that I should not be afraid of death as it is just a thought borrowed from others. He announced that he was going to send me disciples! That was surely the last thing I wanted!

From then on life seemed absurd and the nonsense of existence was present in each gesture and action. I couldn't find any interest in the activity of those around me. I wrote many poems and wrote down my spiritual experiences while searching and searching. The ontological quest bore into me and everyday I shared my discoveries with my mother and grandmother. The same passion had always tied the three of us together and *satsang* was omnipresent in our lives.

We spent our summers either in India to see my father in Hardwar or in Portugal at Durga's windmill.

In 1990, my father, this unstoppable nomad, was getting older. He decided to settle down in Lucknow. A new era started. Osho³³ passed away and an uninterrupted flow of *sannyas*³⁴ came to see the one they named Papaji. He became famous.

In 1991, I began to study History of Art and Archaeology at U.L.B., Brussels University. My dad was very proud of me.

In 1992, Ganga Mira went to Lucknow to see Papaji. When she came back to Belgium, I decided to visit him as well. It was the first time that I would be going to see my father alone. He came to pick me up at the Lucknow airport. We were both very happy and moved to see each other again. He took me to his new house where he lived with several disciples. That was a new experience for me as up until then we had always lived together as a family and the students would come

33 Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh or Osho (1931-1990) was a spiritual leader who's *ashram* is in Pune.

34 Monks, Osho's disciples.

either for *satsang*, for tea or for a walk with us. A new way of being with my father was thus imposed on me. I slept in his room and he gave me the bed next to his which apparently was a privilege that some could not bear! The disciple's jealousy hit me unexpectedly. I was young, hardly 20, and unprepared for it! When it was time to eat my father sat me down next to him and to my immense surprise a woman threw herself on the ground screaming, crying and banging the floor with her fists saying that I was sitting in her place and that it wasn't mine! Now, with distance I find this scene hilarious! I felt like in a movie. As inherited by birth, I had never been proud of being the Master's daughter but I started to understand that it was considered to be a privileged position and was therefore envied. So far, I had led a simple life without scheming court behaviour and I watched all of it with total incomprehension. To calm the atmosphere I got up, gave her my seat and went to sit at the end of the table!

There were many more anecdotes of this type. They gave me the opportunity to reflect on why people go to see a Master. There can be, among other causes, dissatisfaction coming from the ontological question of why we are born and the unavailability of our death, desperation due to psychological problems and the search for well-being or the need for a paternal or maternal figure. Some seek the Master's indication and others his love or attention. So, for many different reasons, disciples find themselves at the feet of the Master and form a *sangha* or spiritual community which is a mini society where all human tendencies are being displayed.

Poonjaji often told the story about a king who opened the gates of his palace to all the subjects of his realm. The festivities were sumptuous and although each one was certain that he would greet the king, once inside the palace gates they got lost in the heavenly gardens, wandering between extraordinary flowers, perfumes and captivated by beautiful men and women, delicious food and more. Pleasures and desires. When the night fell, no-one had taken the time to see the king. Yet to the one who had gone to see him he would have given his kingdom!

It is the same around a Master next to whom all tendencies get very intense. We saw that around Osho! There were even poisonings! Some forget why they are there and get lost in intrigue, manipulation, jealousy, the fight for power, position, politics and profits. For them it is about who is the closest to the Master, forgetting that they had come for peace and freedom. I began to understand how the world worked. In certain letters that he wrote to me he complained about it: "Why do these people come to see me? What do they want from me? You must help me like Kamali³⁵ and only let in those who really have fire for the search."

It seemed that, in the opinion of some disciples, I was only considered as the biological daughter of their Master and, therefore less worthy of his love than them. To erase my desire for freedom has been one of the ways they used to dismiss me. In the jungle of spiritual concepts, detachment is a profound belief.

35 One day, Kamali, holding a sabre, was staying at the entrance door of the *satsang* hall of Kabir, the poet, her father. She told the disciples that only the ones who were ready to have their head chopped off were allowed to enter. No one passed the test.

So, in this way, the family was the first thing to which one had to turn his back to. Consequently, the Master's biological family had not to be taken into consideration. His real family was the "spiritual" one. Was it not only from the concept "I" taken for the body-mind that one had to get detached from?

I decided to cut short my stay and my father said goodbye to me on the doorstep. He was very emotional as was I. Nobody could prevent the love we had for each other.

-This house will always be yours! He told me.

I never saw him again.

My return to the West was difficult. These events had caused me a profound depression, intensifying my desire to free myself. The ontological search became my only life guard. I saw that these obstacles had to be overcome. They were tests on the "path". The quest often takes mysterious shapes.

One day, my father told my mother that as he was old and I was young, he had little time to help me in my quest to freedom. This explained the tough situations that he put me through which would hasten my journey.

I wrote a lot, finished my university studies and obtained my master's degree with the highest distinction. My father was filled with admiration. We continued our epistolary exchanges. In his letters, he wrote to me that I was the bridge between the East and the West. He often asked me when I was going to help him in his great job and told me that I was born to be free and that one day I would sit on his seat and speak.

Leaving my mother in Brussels, I went for one year to French Guyana where I was carrying out archeological excavations in the Amazonian forest. My father, being older now was having health problems which we were not aware of. His state became critical and he was eventually transported to hospital. It's only when he was dying that someone phoned my mother. It was the 6th September 1997.

This event was enormous. Ganga Mira was devastated. She knew that she could never surrender to a Master again. The extreme urgency of this situation gave her the fire for freedom. It was time to put into practice what he had taught her for thirty years! It had to be now or never! She sat down and closed her eyes. "Don't land anywhere!" In a split second, the "I" disintegrated from where it springs and she radically realised and surrendered completely to what she really is.

She immediately called me....

-Your dad... Her voice was choking.

-He's not well? We must see him! We must take the first flight! I replied.

-He is already dead! She answered.

In a flash all my references disappeared. There hadn't been one single day in my life when I hadn't thought about him and now he was no longer there....

-Let us go to the cremation!

-We won't have time to get there!

For a long time I regretted not to have been able to see him one last time. I did my own puja for him. Every day I picked beautiful flowers and sat in silence beside his photo.

In the same month, two earthquakes destroyed the Papal Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi.

A short time later I caught a flight to Belgium. A disciple from Lucknow came to visit us with a parcel.

-It's your inheritance! He solemnly told me.

My heart was beating very fast. My hands were trembling. I opened the parcel: an old pair of my father's socks.

My inheritance is spiritual. Obviously, it was his indication that he wanted to leave to me and not a pile of bricks!

During a whole year after his death, my father visited me every night. The dreams were so alive and full of love and teaching. They washed away my wound of not being able to ever see him again.

It's interesting to observe what happens after the death of a Master or when Buddha, Jesus and other such beings depart. Their life becomes an hagiography, legends and myths are created. From their simple indications, religions are built and dissensions are formed. I have seen it with my own eyes. Their story is deformed to create History, this *mala*³⁶ of lies and omissions! Their real message becomes concealed.

Over the years that follow the guide's death, some tendencies crystallize. The Master has such an intimate connection with each seeker that it eventually leads some of them to think that he or she is the unique spiritual son or daughter to whom he left his ultimate teachings. The archetype of the chosen one is a big trap. This entitled some of his "successors" to build *ashrams* and temples, save the planet or raise it spiritually, wear white or become spiritual leaders with marketing brilliance and who only stay in five star hotels while asking fortunes for their *satsangs*. All this in the name of Papaji, who, for his entire life, simply

36 Necklace.

said: “You are that which you are already, there is nothing to change, no practice nor beliefs to follow and no stones to erect. Just don’t go into the mind”.

On a small scale all that could be seen with humour or bitterness, disgust or acceptance, but looking at things globally, from an eagle’s viewpoint, everything is perfect, each one is at the right place, everything and everyone is the Self.

Soon after Papaji’s death, Ganga Mira was asked to give *satsangs*. In 1998 we went to Tiruvannamalai. The Lucknow *sangha* disciples welcomed my mother and still today many of them live nearby and regularly come to her *satsangs*. For the following years, she was invited in many different countries around the world. Didn’t her Master foretell her that he would give her his Lucknow family, that she would inspire the whole world? Didn’t he tell her that he would come to her one day with the robe and bowl and prostrate at her feet?

I can say that I had two Masters, my father and my mother. My total dissatisfaction of this existence led me to search for something else, to have glimpses, revelations and to solve different *koans*. Over the years, I have been obsessed with some of these questions: What did Ramana Maharshi mean by illusion? Is enlightenment a state to attain? Everything is mind! Was *Sat-Chit-Ananda*³⁷ still a belief? What did Ramana’s “I-I” mean? I began the long job of *Neti Neti*³⁸, effacing beliefs one after the other. It was a systematic demystification of thoughts that brought me to perceive that the “demystifier”, the “I” was a thought as well. At that moment, I realised, in a flash, that something is always present, independent of experiences and demystifications and that this “something” is myself.

Who one really is, one is already, so this is not to be attained. There is no teaching, no practice and no path to follow. The indications given in *satsang* are not dogmas or new beliefs to be acquired. No! These are arrows that are aimed at destabilizing the seeker’s mind. H.W.L. Poonja was the Master of non-teaching and his unexpected responses freed the seeker of any reference. To the one who identifies himself as “I”, the body-mind entity and to all the events that are attached to it, the Master says “Nothing Ever Happened”! To the one who, in an instant, a “finger snap” as he liked to convey it, perceives that in fact he is nobody, and that no happening has ever taken place but identifies with these spiritual revelations, the guide will say: “Everything happens”! This isn’t a play on words but a living way to help the seeker to get rid of his platforms and mind markers while inciting him to let go if even for only an instant, so that the Self can reveal ItSelf. There’s nothing to do, nothing to learn. The message is very simple. The seeker is urged not to go along with the first thought “I” which is the creator of all thoughts. “I” appears and the world appears. Does the world exist without “I”? Without “I”, there is nothing to say, nothing to think about, nowhere to land. It is for this reason that Papaji advised people to keep quiet, and he often said:

37 Truth, Knowledge, Bliss.

38 Not this, not that.

-You aren't a bag of rice to be tossed from one place to another!

I live beside the Atlantic Ocean in Portugal with my mother and my two children Arun³⁹ and Satyâ⁴⁰. My grandmother Durga also spent her last years with us. A short time before her death she revealed to us that she had at last seen that the "I" was just a thought and after a last and timeless glance and in deep peace, she died in our arms. Her ultimate word was "OM".

Ganga Mira gives *satsang* throughout the year. My children often attend and sit for a few minutes. I took them to Tiruvannamalai, at the feet of Ramana Maharishi, to Lucknow and to the Ganges. I wanted to show them the places where I lived with their grandfather Papaji. It was an extraordinary pilgrimage that made them ask many ontological questions. I think that my father would be very happy to see his grandchildren following his footsteps.

Still today, Papaji touches the heart of those who are thirsty for Freedom. His simple, precious and uncompromising indications drive the seekers back to what they always are. *Satsang* benefits the world. This is what he always wanted. It's a unique happening where "Nothing Ever Happened"!

My father passed away, the Master lives.
My gratitude to him is infinite.

Papaji Ki Jay!

OM

Mukti Decoux Poonja

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39 Arunachala, the mountain of Ramana Maharishi.

40 Reality.