

Selection of Tributes to VIJAYANANDA

EXPERIENCES WITH SWAMIJI

Tributes to Swami Vijayananda received following his departure
by Vigyanananda and Mahajyoti

The tributes below offer an insight into the wide and rich variety of people who came regularly to Kankhal or who were influenced and helped by Swamiji from a distance. We have made a selection for translation into English in order to give English-speakers an idea of the impact Swamiji had on the hearts of visitors to Kankhal. The messages are in the main reproduced exactly as they were received, but I have removed a certain number of reflections which were too personal for distribution to a wider public. Swamiji, like Ma, has no successor. He used to say that the condition of disciple is measured according to behaviour, in so far as this follows the teachings of the master. Let us all try to live in the same spirit.

Jacques Vigne

From Mahajyoti

Mahajyoti was given her name by Vijayananda. She edits and distributes our newsletter, 'Jay Ma' and helps Jacques, as voluntary assistant, to coordinate and organise his tours. We would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her work following Swamiji's departure in distributing information and documents which enabled followers to keep abreast of developments during Swamiji's final days.

Dear Vigyan,

As I told you in my email, curiously, at the same hour, French time, that Swamiji left his body, I was reading the poem that I had written for him in Kankhal, after he gave me my initiatory name of Mahajyoti... It was "Le Sage et le Papillon" (The Sage and the Butterfly) and I had put as a sub-title "The death of a sage"... But you told me it was overly anticipating the end of our old Master and I removed the sub-title. I reinserted it yesterday, because I can just see him flying away with the butterflies into the clouds above us, looking down in amusement at all the poor souls on earth who have understood nothing... That was what the death of the sage was for me... the flight of his spirit towards another dimension (expressed in my own way...)

We are all feeling, not sad to tell the truth, but serene and certain that his final journey towards Ma will be wonderful. His portrait in front of me is constantly smiling at me... I feel he is happy.

Dinesh will take some flowers for me and also that poem which made him laugh that night in Kankhal... A tiny homage which came from the bottom of my heart...

Mahajyoti

From Jaya, a French woman who knew Ma and who often comes to India although she is a member of a small Christian religious community. Jaya sent this message just two days after Swamiji's departure.

Dear Jacques,

I have just received the news of Swamiji's departure.

The bond which united him with us, from one country to another, from one thought to another, will from now on be a vertical bond.

But, as you well know, the physical eye also plays a part sometimes in our journey, and so his absence will be felt.

To me, he will forever be an inseparable part of my first meeting with MA.

Also, I would be happy if you would lay a garland of flowers at his feet for me, and if you would include me in your thoughts for some moments during this time.

Our coming together with him, around him, is part and parcel of the most important times in our lives. Even more so for you than for me, no doubt.

I am sorry that I cannot be in Kankhal, to share these moments with you and with everyone.

With all my affectionate friendship.

Jaya.

From Premamayee, a French woman from Nice who regularly visited Ma during the time her husband Giorgio was a diplomat with the Italian Embassy in Delhi.

Dear Vigyanananda-ji,

Having just learnt in an email from the US that our dear Swami Vijayananda-ji has left his body to take his eternal rest at the feet of Sree Ma, I simply had to tell you, in sisterly friendship, that my thoughts and prayers are with you and the whole community of persons who were devotees of Swamiji in the Love of Sree Ma.

When a great being is liberated from his human state, it is certainly a source of Joy and Blessing for all of those who had the honour of being near him during his lifetime on earth, but the feeling of emptiness and the sorrow are completely understandable and human for those like you who spent so many years with him and were so close to him.

These are but a few words, but they come from the bottom of my heart; may they be of some comfort to you in your grief despite the true Joy of Sree Ma. In the Light of Ma, affectionately,

Premamayee and Giorgio

From Julia, who teaches yoga in Brest

Hello Jacques!

I have just heard the sad news from Dinesh. I hope you are well.

How lucky we are to have known Swami and thank you for having enabled us to meet and talk with him. I am with you with all my heart and I wish I could have been there. I am very glad that I saw him for a final time this summer. What a gift. I send you 1,000 thoughts of love and support.

See you soon

From Brigitte in Caen, a retired lawyer who liked to come and spend short periods with Swamiji in order to “recharge her batteries”.

Jacques,

I've just received the news. Is it possible? I can't believe it, what a shock... I know that for you, he was not only a guru, you were his spiritual son and you must be suffering terribly from his departure... (as we all are in our different ways, of course). I am overcome by a real deep sadness which leaves me feeling shattered; I don't want to believe it.

It's hard to imagine that magical place, Ma's Samadhi, without his presence, his smile, his welcome which was so personal for each one of us, his honesty, his intelligence; what a great man... what an example for all of us of humility and of light, which he transmitted to each one of us.

He succeeded in showing us that universal love for the other which is devoid of judgement or criticism, seeing in the other the light of the Self, which he knew so well how to bring alive.

Every day in February, when someone asked him, “How are you Swamiji?” he would answer: “Keeping going...” Did he still want to continue along the path for a little while longer to enable us to grow beside him, a little more, each time we came to visit him?

But how happy he must be to finally be able to dissolve into the Self, to be reunited with Ma, with Everything. There must have been days when he was almost impatient for that day to arrive? Perhaps?

When you have time, could you send me information about his departure? I would like to share it with those people who must also be suffering greatly in the knowledge that he is no longer...in our midst. Because of course we can never be parted from him, he is so much with us, in the eternal present.

From Karine, who works as a nurse in Tahiti. The subject of her email read “A ray of sunshine from Tahiti”.

Hello Jacques,

It's Karine, the nurse who goes to work in a dugout canoe... who you met during the trip last August.

I found out yesterday that Swami Vijayananda had left his body. The day before, I had started crying and I was wondering why... I am surprised that I am reacting this way; I can't define what I'm feeling but this has upset me more than I would have imagined.

I can't help thinking of you and I send you all my affection and my thanks for having enabled me to meet him.

From Huguette Declercq, who runs a yoga centre and school near Brussels and who was with Swamiji for a week in February 2010. She included the following text in her April letter to her students.

Letter from the editor: *Au revoir* Swami Vijayananda

Dinesh has just phoned me from Kankhal: Swami Vijayananda left his body on 5th April 2010. For those of you who didn't know him, he lived in the ashram of Ma Ananda Moyi. Every evening, at six thirty, he came to give us his darshan. I was lucky enough to see him again in February. Up until the end, he answered our questions about himself and about his decision to stay in India. The notion of karma and reincarnation often came up during these evenings, during which he would share with us his presence and the result of all of those years of meditation.

I remember one question. "How does one know that one has found one's master?" someone asked Vijayananda. "It's like a bolt of lightning," he replied. "It happens in an instant, in a look, and the certainty is there." When he spoke about desires, he said, "It is our strongest desire which impels us to be reincarnated." He also said, "Free yourselves from your desires."

Farewell, Swamiji, you know better than any of us where you are headed.

From Anne: Anne is a Yoga teacher in Paris and from time to time helps Jacques to organise his trips and retreats in India.

Dear Jacques,

It was with great emotion that I learnt that Swami Vijayananda had left his body. I was fortunate to hear his precious satsangs on four occasions. Some of his remarks moved me deeply, as for example when he said one day, all of a sudden, "The world is a projection of your mind." It led me to a powerful realisation...

He has at last gone to join Ma, forever, and has attained the Great Samadhi, the Parinirvana, the state of SAT-CHIT-ANANDA.

In Tibetan Buddhism, in order to help a deceased person to pass through the different stages of Bardo, in peace and joy, it is recommended to invoke the Amitabha Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light.

I am therefore going to repeat his mantra, over several days:

OM A MI DE VA HRI
OM A MI DE VA HRI
OM A MI DE VA HRI

From Jacqueline Ros

Hello Jacques,

I was in Paris on Monday. A great many people were there. It was a beautiful ceremony, and the sun was shining. There were magnificent flowers, many pale orange roses and petals for each one of us which floated down over Swamiji's coffin. There were freesias too; the perfume was wonderful, very delicate.

There was a musician, Nicolas I think, who played throughout the ceremony and a singer with a very beautiful voice. It was a lovely day. Swamiji was laid to rest under tall, slender trees. He has many people around him and is not far from some VIPs! Close by are some Napoleonic generals as well as people we hadn't heard of.

There were two ceremonies, one Indian with a *puja* like at the Samadhi, and we shared the light, the rose incense, the flame. Pudjupurag even had a microphone; he was very moved and very focused. Then there was another ceremony, sung by rabbis (I think) with children. It was moving. The children distributed *prasad* at the end and they were delighted because there were lots of sweets leftover, Suchard Rocher chocolates and fruits.

I also met a film-maker who'd been in Kankhal and had filmed the Kumba Mela and Swamiji. There's a photo he took the day before he left which is absolutely wonderful – Swamiji is there with his eyes twinkling with mischief. He plans to put all of the photos onto a website for us. I thanked him for this kind gesture. He will send the link to you and to Geneviève.

Nicolas, the captain, suggested we should meet on his boat in Paris in the autumn to share our photos or our memories or...

Afterwards, I went with Marie-France and some others to an Indian restaurant behind the cemetery to eat some rice. Then I jumped on to a high-speed train to come home.

It was a beautiful day, very emotional, and we felt as if we didn't want to leave. We stayed near him for a long time, talking.

When I left I felt very calm and at peace.

Lots of love. Keep in touch and take care of yourself.

This is the *kirtan* we sang:

JAYA BHAGAVAN, JAYA BHAGAVAN (repeated)

Shri Ram, Jai Ram, Jay Jay Ram OM (repeated)

Jaya jaya Shiva Shambo
Jaya jaya Shiva Shambo
Mahadeva shambo Mehadeva Shambo
Shiva Shiva Shiva Shambo

Bhavani jai jai, Bhavani jai jai
Kailasha Shakti Shiva Sankari jai jai
Nama Shiva OM Nama Shiva Om

OM bhagavan Om bhagavan Om bhagavan
Vijaya Nam Daya

Véronique's memories of Swamiji:

I met Vijayananda during a group trip with Vigyanananda. It was the middle of winter. We would go for satsang with Swamiji every evening, at the same time as the noisy *pujas* were taking place. He would be sitting outside, on the low wall surrounding Ma's Samadhi. It was very cold. The wind blew swathes of fog around us. We were wrapped up like Eskimos whilst He, in his Sadhu's robe, didn't seem to be shivering.

His piercing gaze intimidated me. I perceived him as severe and authoritarian, and unconsciously this echoed my issues with my father. I was therefore a little distant. Nevertheless, he was mischievous and affectionate, and took the hands of the women who held theirs out to him.

Despite the noise and the cold, which increased my feelings of exhaustion, I did not want to miss any of the satsangs. It was the first time I had met a Sage. My attitude was that of the critical observer, more in the mind than in the heart. I wanted to understand the nature of This Being who blessed the meditation mats or other objects and who had an answer to every question... I dared to ask a few questions of my own and this is the gist of the answers:

- To lessen the feeling of distance between oneself and others, when one is engaged in a spiritual search, we should practise Seva in the spirit of Karma-Yoga. (The next day, or the following day, the extract from “*Un Français dans l’Himalaya*” (A Frenchman in the Himalaya) which I was given to read during lunch was precisely on the question of Seva!! I was particularly impressed by this synchronicity which underlined Vijayananda’s message).
- Fear is a construct of the mind. (Swamijî illustrated this with the story of the dogs which we believe to be fierce). The absence of fear is Unity.
- We should pray frequently for the souls of children who are the victims of abortion and reaffirm their existence by giving them a name.

This experience bore fruit. After this first trip, the heart began to leave the head behind:

- I experienced an inner reconciliation with my father. From then on, Vijayananda became the positive image of the Father.
- I also realised that I had been in contact with an Enlightened Being, an incarnation of the Divine.
- These satsangs left in my heart the memory of having been immersed in a vibrational flood of extraordinary spiritual Love. The magnitude of Vijayananda’s Love for Ma through His pressing need to be “anchored” to Her Samadhi, as near to Her as possible, and to receive Her inspiration. The Love of Vijayananda for Ma, repeating His words faithfully, with generosity and respect. Their deep bond in the subtle realms, both inhabited by Ma.
- These satsangs were like a three-way conversation and spiritual transmission, creating an extraordinary threefold lineage from Masters to disciples, to which we were privileged witnesses.

Véronique also sent an account of the ceremony on April 26th at the Père Lachaise cemetery, which she attended having travelled from St Brieuc:

"I am so saddened by the news that Vijayananda has left his physical body. My thoughts of compassion turn to you, his disciple, inhabited by him and by Ma.

But Vijayananda is reunited with Ma in her light and in that of the Self, where he is happy, and so we must all be happy for Him. Although we all feel a little like orphans, his satsangs and his writings mean that he is always present amongst us.

Thank you for your account of Vijayananda’s final days, which you generously took the time to write and send to us. Through these lines we perceive the love and respect of the disciple as well as the clinical precision of the doctor. The text has great value because it defines what it is to be a Sage and is of great help to us in understanding this.

I am also amazed by this wave of three swamis, disciples of Ma, who have left their bodies simultaneously... It’s the Khumba Mela, it’s as if they wanted to go at just this time. Do they

today remain Ma's direct disciples? Following their departures, may Her memory not grow fainter! May the vibrant fervour of Kankhal and of Ma's Samadhi continue! It is no doubt your role, now more than ever, to ensure the continuing remembrance of Ma and to secure that of Vijayananda too. It is your destiny. And Vijayananda will keep the memory of Ma alive here in France...

For Swamiji, and for you also, I went to his funeral ceremony in Paris on Monday. The ceremony which so transported us in Kankhal, singing Jay Ma, was beautiful and moving; it was an extraordinary meeting of Hinduism and Judaism in the Père Lachaise cemetery. Perfumed incense and sweets, orange flowers and fruits. Of course, you already know all the details. With all my heart, I thank all of those who organised the ceremony and enabled us to come together in memory of Vijayananda. Ma, "arriving in France with him", was there next to him (her photograph in his grave was very touching). You were there. I let fall a few petals for you and for Sandrine too. I met Sylvie Dupuis, Pascale Molho, Brigitte Reynaud Duport, her friend Fariba, the young woman who played the harmonium, Jeannot, the yoga teacher, François Roux, the writer.

In the afternoon, Brigitte and I went back to be near Vijayananda. I missed my train as a result. Time had become elastic... I will go back to visit Him as soon as possible in the little Hindu island which he embodies.

Things are so strange that last month, an inner necessity led me to place a photograph of him next to me, on my bedside table, next to the photo of Ma, before placing it directly in front of me in the space behind the screen where I go to meditate (my cave!).

From Michèle Cocchi, a psychoanalyst and psychotherapist in Monaco, who is studying the Vedanta:

Everything is the play of the Universal Consciousness, transcending all manifestations. Here is Being, which fills everything. Cosmic space in which everything which has been is and will be. Total absorption in which all of these forms, manifestations of the All, are dissolved. Our participation in the piece of theatre makes us lose sight of the fact that Only the UN-BORN is...

From Sylvia Lassy (formerly a Spanish teacher in Toulouse, Sylvia is now retired but teaches Yoga)

- One of the last satsangs(?) with Vijayananda

I came to Kankhal in August 2008; you were here for a few days at the beginning and then you left for Delhi to meet a group. I was therefore all alone; Caroline had gone back home to France.

I came to sit by Vijayananda as usual; I was alone and a little sad.

I sat at his feet and he felt my emotion; to reassure me, he said in a consolatory tone,

"Jacques will be back soon, won't he?"

And after a few words, silence fell; it lasted for an hour or maybe even more! What a feeling of well-being! I do not dare to use the word beatitude, even though that's rather what it was!!

I felt as if I was receiving a flood of love, which was at once very gentle and yet so intense! It was something like maternal love but it was also divine love. I received and received, I was filled with joy!

It was only after I had accompanied him a little beyond the authorised boundary, his hand on my arm and my hand on his, that I thought of the "Ocean of Sweetness" in which I had been immersed!

We received this tribute from Marie-France Martin. It is also an account of the things which had most impact on her during six months of satsang in Kankhal. She had decided to come and live here and had returned to France for four months to see her elderly mother and apply for a long-term visa for India so that she could remain at Swamiji's feet for the long-term. In March, she had an inner yearning, which led her to make a vow to attend every satsang during her time in India. By leaving for France on Saturday April 2nd, she "missed" only two of Swamiji's satsangs.

Montbrison, 9th to 14th April 2010
Swamiji,

A week has gone by since I asked for your blessing before my departure for France and a separation which I thought would last around four months...

Four days have gone by since, as Jacques said when he told me the news, you were dissolved into Brahman...

Three days since I received the news...

Now is the time when, in Kankhal, I would prepare my heart to go and wait for you for the daily satsang...

I hardly ever write, but I know that I need to write this... I must forget nothing of those last satsangs, during which we understood that you were preparing for your departure, but we imagined that departure to be in the much more distant future... two years from now...?

Swamiji, your insistence over these last few months on the importance of the Kumbh Mela... I think you had already decided when you would go, and that you would give to the Kumbh Mela all the energy remaining in your body. During the last few satsangs, I was amazed by the clarity with which you perceived and remembered each one of us, and everything that was going on around you.

A few memories of the very last days:

One, or perhaps two days before I left, you spontaneously answered a question about pranayama which I had put to you a few weeks before and which you hadn't replied to at the time. Pranayama is the control of the prana, the life force. It starts with breathing exercises, but that's only the beginning.

You also spoke again about studying the Bhagavad Gita, which you recommended we should read in an edition without explanatory notes, along with a study of the Sanskrit words. On February 17th, I know because you wrote the date, I asked you to write me a dedication in the copy of the Bhagavad Gita I'm working on... I had also asked you if a study of the Bhagavad Gita could be considered to be a meditation; you answered yes, as long as we tried to practise what is written in the Bhagavad Gita, and you quoted to me, "he who treats his friends in the exact same way as his enemies, I like that very much..."

About Ma

Someone from the ashram brought a photocopy of a newspaper article about the Kumbh Mela which you had probably asked for. I thought it was about the current Kumbh Mela, but in fact, it was about a Kumbh Mela in Allahabad during Ma's lifetime, and it quoted her:

Question: "All of these people, this crowd who come to see you, will they not all be saved? Only some of them?"

Ma's reply: "None of you have come here of your own free will. You have been taken and brought here."

You told us that on one occasion, you didn't want to go the Kumbh Mela, but that Ma had said you were a sadhu, and that it was an obligation for sadhus to attend the Kumbh Mela. Like the evening satsangs, which you said represented, for you, a *seva* to Ma, a sacred duty, you must have considered that being present to welcome us for this Kumbh Mela was your final sacred duty. There was a large group of us, but over a few days almost all of us left Kankhal. You told us that for her departure, Ma had ensured that there were very few people with her. You did the same. When only those closest to you remained, you left...

Because I never took notes during the satsangs, I cannot give exact dates for the following questions and answers, which to me seem very recent.

Towards the end, you often described the last time you saw her alone. She showed you her body and said, "This body is Maya, I am omnipresent." Your repetition of the story made me gradually understand that you were talking about yourself, in order to prepare us for your departure, so that we would know to look for you in the omnipresent...

Someone asked you if Ma would be reincarnated. You replied, "She has no need for reincarnation. She is omnipresent."

Edith: "How can we cope with separation from Vijayananda?"

You: "You are not separated from Vijayananda. Vijayananda is in your heart."

To Sonia. "If I had to choose a successor, I would choose you."

Sonia asks you to explain.

You: "You will see."

Some of your stories came from the Bible. You often spoke of the prophet Elijah. God had told Elijah that he was coming. There was a tempest, but God was not in the tempest; then came an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake; then a fire, but God was not in the fire. Finally, a light breeze came, and God was in it...

When we spoke of Brahmins, you said that to be a Brahmin was to have the qualities of a true Brahmin, first of which was truth:

A young man asked a sage to accept him as a disciple. The master asked him if he was a Brahmin; he replied that he didn't know, but that he would ask his mother. His mother told him that in her youth, she had served many masters and she didn't know who the young man's father was. The young man told the Sage what his mother had said and the sage embraced him and said, "You are a real Brahmin, for you told the truth."

Some humour about bathing in the Ganges: When you enter the Ganges, your sins fly away, but sometimes they get caught in the trees and fall back down on you when you come out!

It is faith that saves: One day, Shiva plays dead and Parvati weeps over his body. When passers-by ask her what the matter is, she explains she has no wood for her husband's cremation. People offer to help but she says only a person who is perfectly pure can give this wood, so the people go away. That evening, a notorious drunk appears. When he learns that only a person who is perfectly pure can give

the wood, he says, “No problem” and goes and dives into the Ganges. After bathing in the Ganges, he declares himself to be pure and therefore capable of helping Parvati. Shiva says, “He is the only one to have faith.”

You frequently insisted on the importance of reciting a mantra, saying it was a shield which protected us, and helped us to combat fear. When someone asked you, “How many times should I repeat the mantra?” you replied that if the mantra was recited perfectly, once was enough, but since that was unlikely to be the case, it was best to repeat the mantra constantly in the hope that one would be good enough!

You always said that you were not a guru. You said, jokingly, “I say I am not a guru but people don’t believe me.” Sometimes you went further, saying that if someone agrees that he is a guru, then he definitely isn’t. A true guru will never recognise himself as such. He is totally conscious that he is only a channel for the divine power. You guided us, but only as a channel for Ma. One day, you said, “Her disciples know perfectly well that she is their guru, despite her denials. They know within themselves.”

But you accepted that we could call you a sage. So one day, I asked you, “In your opinion, what does it mean to be a sage?” and you answered “A sage radiates love.”

Question: “How can I recognise that someone is my guru?” Answer: “There is love.” You also said that a true sage only reveals his true nature to very few people... and that a great sage has the power to transform those who come into contact with him.

One day, I spoke to you about the Buddhist belief in what they call “entering the flow”, the point of no return in spiritual evolution. I asked you if there was a similar moment in Hinduism. It was some time after my formal initiation by Swami Nirvananda, whom you had asked to do it. Both you and he told me, “This is Ma’s initiation. Your guru is Ma.” That day, you told me “A real guru will never let you down. A real guru will come and find you, even in hell, and will always manage to catch you by the hem of your trousers.”

The difference between a real guru and a false one? “The real guru attracts people in order to transform them. The false guru keeps them for himself.”

And also: “Ma drew people to her to detach them from everything else. When that was done, she pushed them away; she sent them back to themselves. I do the same.”

You talked about stages of spiritual transmission according to the Cabbala. “The first stage is when the master instructs a small group of disciples. At the second stage, he instructs the disciple individually. At the third stage, communication is silent; true spiritual teaching is silent, the disciple must understand from the inside.” You also said that true spiritual teaching is individual, and secret, because someone who listens when he is not ready will misunderstand.

About the great bathing rituals during the Kumbh Mela: Liberation is gradual. Only knowledge gives total liberation.

About rebirths in other worlds: A human birth is best.

You said, “*Traduttore, traditore*”, whoever repeats or translates always acts as a filter because his own *bhav* will inevitably come between the author and the reader or listener. I would like to recount your words without misrepresenting them, but I know that it is my own sensibility, my own *bhav* which means that I remember some of the things you said and not others, and to choose some words and not others. Others will make different choices...

“*Bhav*, do you know *bhav*?” you often asked. *Bhav* is a person’s emotional state. You said one must always be aware of one’s own *bhav* and that if you can recognise it, you can always communicate in the language of the other.

“Go to the root of your mind, you will find God. Because the root of the mind is God.”

When someone asked you a question, you made them come up close so you could look at them intensely. It helped you to know how to respond... “When you see someone, you firstly see their clothes, then their face, their eyes. You can see the soul behind the eyes. Learn to see the soul behind the eyes.”

I asked you, “Is it true that we become what we look at?” You answered that it was true, but that looking wasn’t enough, we need the *bhav* too. I’m not sure I have it. You added, “There must be love.” I continued, thinking of photos of Ma, “Do photographs work too?” You said yes. Swamiji, during these satsangs, I spent a long time looking at you. Now, I am going to spend a long, long time looking at your photograph...

From Régine Armoudom

Régine teaches yoga in Réunion; her family is of Indian origin. She wanted to come and meet Vijayananda but finally got to know him through the film by Luc Maréchaux which she watched time and time again.

Namaste Jacques,

Here are some comments by your Master which touched me deeply:

“**I AM EMOTIONALLY RELIGIOUS**” and “**I PRAYED WITH EMOTION**”; this state of BEING which your Master speaks of finds a deep echo in me because I feel it in the same way, in the emotional part of my Being.

(In particular, the intimate bond I have WITH THE HOLY FAMILY, on an archetypal level, relates to the chapter on the theme of the Holy Family in your book “*Le mariage intérieur*” [The Inner Marriage].)

Certain truths which your Master professes which my intuition, my sensibility, my emotional and divine Being, feel to be absolute truths. “**The meaning of life is to discover within ourselves our divine nature.**”

“**The guru gives mental guidance, psychic power to the disciple, AN ENERGY, and PROTECTION. When a true disciple meets a true guru, and when a true guru meets a true disciple, it is a WONDERFUL thing, but it is rare.**”

What I find extraordinary in your Master’s words is the ART with which he brings together the DIVINE, the WONDERFUL, the SPIRITUAL, the MENTAL, the EMOTIONAL and the ENERGETIC in his conception of the relationship between the guru and the disciple; it seems to me completely accurate, well discerned, and in all the **PLENITUDE** of this relationship. It is **marvellous**, isn’t it, Jacques? (Just like, it seems, one of the last things your Master said, before leaving his body.)

I suppose that your Master experienced this relationship in this plenitude with his Master, who was Ma Ananda Moyi.

I still listen with just as much emotion, **AND INNER TEARS**, these other teachings of your Master, in their truth, their profundity and in the integrity of what he says, from the heart: “**THE FIRST QUALITY OF A DISCIPLE IS TO HAVE BOUNDLESS FAITH IN HIS GURU; THE SECOND QUALITY OF A DISCIPLE IS TO HAVE AN INTENSE DESIRE FOR LIBERATION, WHERE NOTHING ELSE MATTERS; THE THIRD QUALITY OF A DISCIPLE IS TO HAVE INFINITE PATIENCE, AND NOT TO BE**

AFRAID OF FAILURES AND SETBACKS. THE FOURTH QUALITY OF A DISCIPLE IS TO KNOW HOW TO BEAR PAIN, SUFFERING AND DEPRESSION. TO KNOW HOW TO HOLD ON WHEN THINGS ARE GOING BADLY. PERSEVERANCE IS ALSO ONE OF THE QUALITIES OF A DISCIPLE."

Personally, I greatly admire the ABSOLUTE nature which He grants to his concept of a TRUE DISCIPLE.

I was very touched by the "very simple appearance" of your Master, the very great sobriety of his clothing and gestures, side by side with a great inner depth and richness which found expression in his eyes.

I was also very touched by his very simple and rather CHILDLIKE way of speaking, "Do you know "Tintin in Tibet...?"

I was also very moved by his great INNER STRENGTH, despite his rather vulnerable physical exterior, by the determination of his faith and his chosen path, and his perseverance to the end, despite everything!

This is everything, dear Jacques, that I wished to express in the PRESENT MOMENT, my feelings for your Master, thanks to the film which I have watched TIRELESSLY, "UN CHEMIN DE SAGESSE" (A PATH OF WISDOM), even without having met him physically, with all the sincerity of my heart, the words of a soul that is full of WISTFUL LONGING from not having been able to spend time with him, despite everything.

From Rachel

Thank you for your texts.

You must still be in Nepal at the moment.

Maybe you will have time to read these few paragraphs written in memory of Swamiji Vijayananda and of the brief moments I spent with him in Kankhal, as you requested in your last email.

I had reserved a ticket to arrive in Kankhal on April 15th and stay a month with Swamiji. In fact, as I was leaving Kankhal in February for Paris, Pushp Raj warned me that Swamiji's health was fragile, so I wanted to come back to India as soon as possible after the obligatory two months' break required by the embassy. Now destiny has decided otherwise. Around 10 days before I was due to return to Kankhal, Swamiji left his body, on Easter Monday. I remember one of the things he said, "The aim of the spiritual life it is to learn how to die." I read in your emails that he left his body peacefully.

I don't really feel that he's gone, however. I feel he is Here.

However, I do regret not spending more time with him. Because of my too short experience on this path, I feel that I need a guide who is physically present to help me awaken the internal guru, who I find it difficult to connect to and to trust.

So I pray, I pray with greater intensity to "meet the right people at the right time", as Swamiji told me during our last talk together. "The guru appears when the disciple is ready." But is it not an illusion to hope to attain such a level? All of that is so far removed from our western world. Is there a choice to be made?

Meanwhile, I am working on my own to introduce discipline into my practice. "We cannot nourish ourselves with the energy of the Master alone," he wrote in "Un français dans l'Himalaya".

I often have a tendency to want to go too quickly.

- I am impatient, Swamiji.

- "It's not a question of impatience, it's a question of maturity," he replied.

I ask only that my faith in God should grow in my heart and that I should feel free. But it turns out not to be so simple!

I remember this conversation with Swamiji, during a satsang. I asked him,

"Swamiji, how do we make our faith grow?"

"We have to deserve it. When we find a guru, we examine him from every angle. If we conclude that he is perfect, then we can have faith."

"Therefore few people have faith?"

"A true guru is very rare... But a true disciple is even more so! It is said that a true disciple can liberate his guru by the faith he has in him."

- "The Divine asks only to be able to give. It's people who are not available to receive. We must open ourselves in order to receive [the Divine]," he told me on another occasion.

I would like to have spent more time with him in order to continue to contemplate His perfection and to benefit from His energy. I take refuge in his qualities, especially his humour and his humility.

I remember, with a smile, the occasion in 2006 when someone asked him,

- "How long have you been hosting this satsang?"

- "Me? I don't host anything, (laughing); I just come and sit here every evening to listen to the arati and the singing to Ma. People come and sit beside me, and because they ask me questions, I answer them!"

When I was with him, I often had the feeling of laughingly innocently, like when I was a child; laughing tenderly and mockingly at this world which we believe to be so real and so serious. A laughter which elevates us above all the representations of our mind and which frees us from the heavy weight which we give to the interpretation of what surrounds us, and of what we believe ourselves to be. A laughter full of Love.

So there you have it. It's difficult to say any more about our conversations and exchanges. They cannot ultimately be described in words. I pray that I will never leave the energy of His presence. I pray that I will never forget that which he awoke in me. I pray that I will never again feel like an orphan who needed more time to spend with Him, Divine Source; and I pray that my journey towards realisation of the Divine will not end here.

Dipamrita came to visit Ma with Arnaud Desjardins. She then spent a long time with Chandra Swami, and then Amma. She is the co-ordinator of Amma's movement in Europe.

OM

I cannot imagine what Swamiji's departure means to you, the great mystery of the disappearance of form, the ineffable, and life which is...

I wish to share in these moments; we are all praying together this morning here in the Centre.

Hari OM

Bri. Dipamrita Chaitanya

Nathalie Hardouin spent several months with Swami Vijayananda. She is a specialist in sacred chants, both Gregorian chant and Hindu bhajans. She sang bhajans during the ceremony at Père Lachaise. Vijayananda often asked her to sing in the evening during satsang.



Hello Jacques,

I do not have words to describe the great emptiness I feel inside me on learning of Vijayananda's departure from our world. I tried to contact you on the phone number you gave me but without success. I learnt of his death last night and went to the Père Lachaise cemetery this morning (Friday) where he is to be buried. But at the crematorium, I was told that the ceremony would be taking place tomorrow, Saturday, and to contact the family for more information. I don't know if you will receive this message and be able to give me any more information. In any case, I will go back tomorrow as it will help me to mourn and to accept his departure. I read on the internet that he left in a state of Samadhi.

It was an incredible piece of good fortune for me to be able to meet him.

Spring is bursting forth with all its vigour; I think Swamiji chose his time to go...

I send you my very warmest wishes.

Nathalie

Testimonials/Tributes to Vijayananda

Received by Mahajyoti

Joyful homage... to Vijayananda

Oh India, “mon Amour”!

by Mahajyoti

Le vieux maître est assis
Nous lui disons merci
Il est vêtu d’orange
Au loin coule le Gange !

The old master is here
Our thanks are most sincere
He’s dressed in orange robes
Beyond, the Ganges flows!

One day, we will fly away like him, perhaps not so far... and surely not so high... but we’ll do what we can!

When I saw his photograph for the first time, on the cover of his book ‘A Frenchman in the Himalaya’, it was in France in the spring of 2002; I was on retreat with Jacques Vigne, up above the town of Vence on the Côte d’Azur. At that time, I kept on forgetting his name, so I called him “the old man with the big beard”.

I didn’t know then how much I would be moved by him, sent into a spin of emotions as if I was in a washing-machine...

Following Jacques Vigne on my first trip to India, wrapped in a makeshift Punjabi and a big white shawl in an effort to blend in, I came and sat down before the little orange slippers of “the old man with the big beard”.

The first reaction was that we immediately started laughing together... and in my travel journal (which I called ‘Fleeting Impressions’) I wrote (Jay Ma N° 67-68 – Winter-Spring 2003):

“It’s time to explore Kankhal, the temples, Ma’s ashram, her Samadhi, the puja and...and... the resident idol: VIJAYANANDA, 88 years of mischief, heart, intelligence, spirit and living spirituality.

He is young.

Nothing escapes him. You feel you want to give him a big hug and stroke his beard, but NO, some people bend forward to brush their lips against his big slippers. Like a refined but kindly father-figure, he “takes the measure” of each individual, listens and tells stories... “Hein...? Hein...!”

Between two bouts of my coughing, he has me striking up an old song from the early 1900s which my grand-mother sang with my great-uncle Achille: ‘She won’t fill up my glass with water again, for the old nag, the old shrew is dea-ea-d!’

Fortunately, his gentle attendant, dressed entirely in white, often gives him Swiss throat sweets which he immediately passes to me and which do me no end of good.

The group is somewhat shy and few questions are forthcoming, but he has the art of captivating his audience by his teachings and his key pieces of advice, which blend the practical and human with the divine. He seems to probe each one of us with his piercing gaze... He has understood everything... He is pleased that I have made a portrait of him. As I was drawing it, I had the impression that my fingers were bringing him alive, as though giving him a new birth. Back home, his eyes had followed me everywhere from his place on the easel. I had drawn him before I'd even met him, it was as though my hand was being guided. I'd sent the portrait to Jacques Vigne, and asked him if it looked like Vijayananda. On the telephone, his delightful reply was, 'It's not merely a good resemblance, it shows his soul...'

So when I saw him for real, I already knew him.

"I'm your son, then," he said playfully.

Who knows? We're allowed to dream...

I had also made a portrait of Ma, which I gave him. Three "greats" are here with us, we have the triad: Swami Vijayananda (kind father-figure, divine gentleness), Jacques Vigne (psychology and meditation) and Swami Nirgunananda (his neighbouring fellow-hermit, a former biologist, who also went from science to the love of Ma!)

It's up to us to take what feels best, or what hurts most!"

That's what I wrote then...

Dear Vijayananda, I see him still in my mind's eye. Everything happened most unexpectedly in the midst of those memories of songs from the Belle Époque which reminded me of my grandmother (who passed away at the age of 104).

"Do you know this one?" he asked me. "What about such-and-such? And there's also..." Swamiji seemed to be having fun...to the utter amazement of the group I had brought over, each one of whom was wide-eyed, never having expected this kind of sing-song spirituality...

The old Master was beating out the rhythm with his small fist on his orange robe and humming along too...

That was my first meeting with Swamiji... Laughter and joy!

That laughing energy, transmitted also by Ma, has never left me.

I felt deeply touched.

Since then, after several return visits, I have understood that India was also back home in France and that "the presence of absence" could also be a kind of inner guidance. To be a good disciple to one's master, is it not simply to be a heart which revolves around a star...? Even at a distance?

I knew that the physical absence of our guides would become their presence if I knew how to understand the teaching I had received.

And I also understood that the greatest gift was to have met them, those whose Absence now surrounds us with their Presence...

Over the years, when I phoned Vijayananda for his birthday from my home in Nice, I would hear his voice muffled by the scarf with which he carefully covered the hand-set, which was never very clean, and he would greet me with the words, "Oh, it's you Mahajyoti! You're still in Nice; is the weather good over there, *hein...hein?* I always have lots of pretty women calling me on the phone...*hein...?* You're still doing a lot of work for Jacques... Take care of your body; it's your vehicle... But don't talk too much about me...you'll never make me into a star!"

Nothing could have been further from my mind! On more than one occasion, however, I was pleased to be able, thanks to Jacques Vigne, to transmit the teachings which he had received from Ma Anandamayi...and also through our little brochure 'JAY MA'.

I had nonetheless translated into English a collection of his satsangs called '*Les Entretien de Kankhal*'; and then I translated '*A Frenchman in the Himalaya*' into Italian, which became the first book of Jacques Vigne's to be published in that language. It was a first sadhana of seven months of concentration, solitude, silence and happiness.

I also helped to distribute his wonderful DVD '*Vijayananda – A path of wisdom*' (by Olivier and Luc Maréchaux) by having it subtitled in English and Italian.

Swamiji also remembered the poems I had written for him in Kankhal, which greatly amused him. He would stroke my hair with its little clasps which he and Dinesh called 'butterflies'.

One evening, in his small room in Ma's ashram at Kankhal, he gave me my initiatory name of Mahajyoti (from Maha = great and Jyoti = light). A name so radiant that it must be earned...and always with laughter...

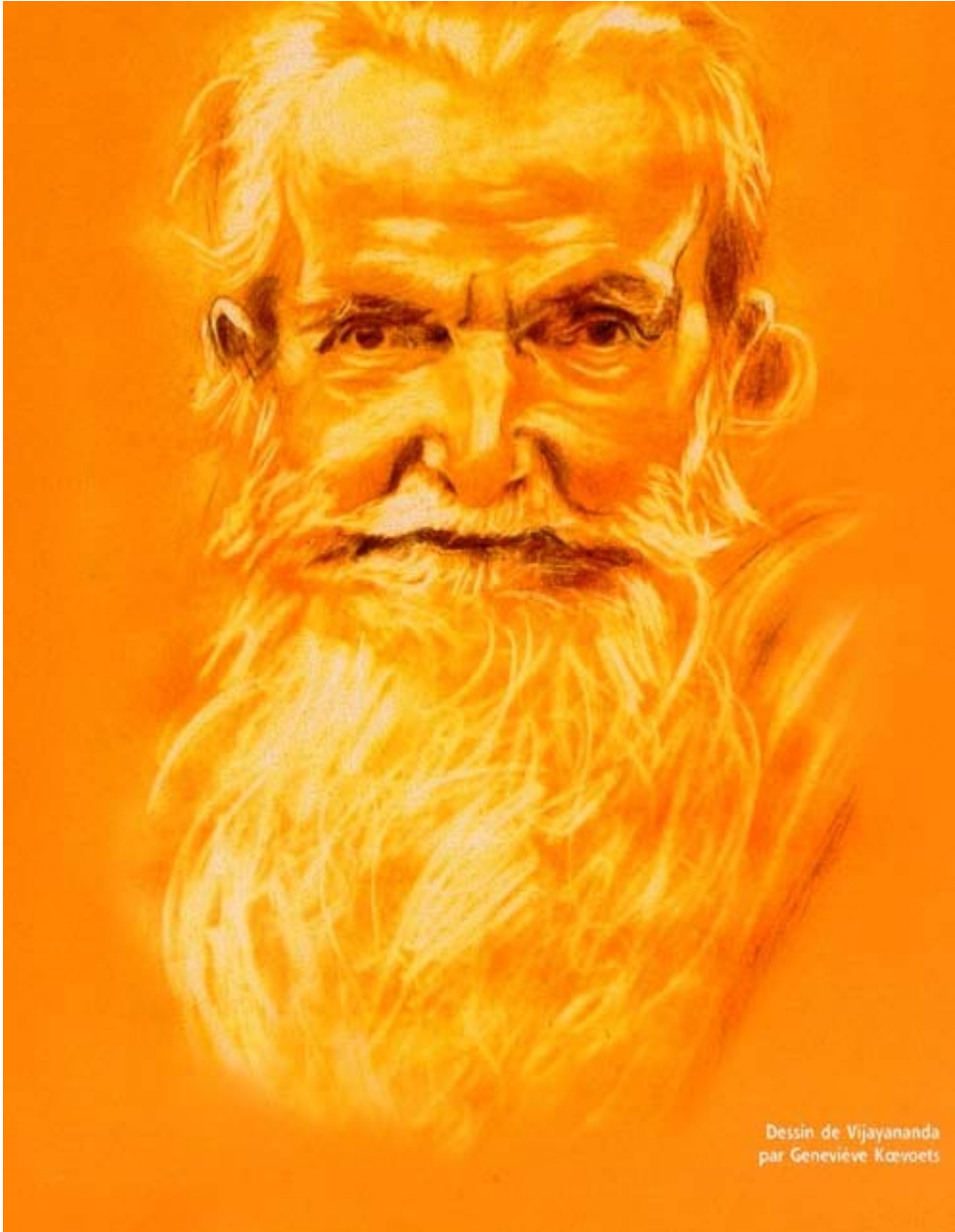
He too liked humour, that strange but sometimes misunderstood thing which some people often mistake for frivolity, but which in fact conceals the ability to stand back and observe, analyse and de-dramatise certain feelings. It is the task of each of us to detect the depths concealed behind humour, according to our different natures... And since I'm not one to lose my head, I have continued to express myself with joy and humour... Even in these circumstances which I refer to as Swamiji's "take-off"...with the butterflies... I am constantly seeing his portrait, which smiles at me, and I feel that he is happy. He's there all the time, scolding me, teasing me, keeping an eye on me, encouraging me...smiling at me...

Besides, our journey will henceforth continue with his disciple, Jacques Vigne...

It's not goodbye, Swamiji, but "Until we meet again..."

And by thinking of You, we will rise up happy! *

[* Translator's note: Mahajyoti writes, "*nous nous leverons de bonheur*", a play on words – hard to render in English – on the word "bonheur", which means happiness, and the phrase "de bonne heure", which means early or in good time.]



Portrait of Swami Vijayananda by Geneviève (Mahajyoti)

O Inde, ô mon Amour !
(Mes deux Indes) – par Mahâjyoti

Oh India, “mon Amour”!
(My two Indias) – by Mahajyoti

A Vijayânanda...le vieux Maître en orange... For Vijayananda... the old Master in orange

Les singes sont énervés
Les chiens sont efflanqués
Les vaches sont avachies
J’avoue que je fléchis.

The monkeys are on edge
The dogs are under-fed
The cows are all weary
I admit I’m bleary

La boue et la misère
Les cris et la colère
Tintamarre de clochettes
De klaxons, de sonnettes

The mud and poverty
Yells, animosity...
The car horns and hooters
The beepers and tooters

Poussière et pollution
Les mendiants à foison
Les sadhus, les gourous
Les sourires si doux!

The dust and pollution
Beggars in profusion
Old masters and sadhus
Sweet smiles and gurus

Lentilles et choux-fleurs
Le train et sa lenteur
Les valises en bataille
Vite que je me taille !

Lentils, cauliflowers...
Trains couldn’t be slower
Suitcases in a rout
Oh, quick! Please, let me out!

Il y fait froid l’hiver
La mousson? Un enfer...
La santé qui me quitte
Ca y est, c’est la bronchite!

It’s cold here in winter
The monsoon? A nightmare...
How fragile my health is
I must have bronchitis!

Les rickshaws dans le vent
Les ventilos branlants
Les robinets cassés
Les plats trop épicés

The rickshaws in the wind
The taps that never swing
The rickety old fans
Spicy food down the pan

Enfants si miséreux
Moustiques si nombreux
Horaire si matinal
Douleur abdominale!

The children are so poor
Mosquitoes by the score...
We get up so early
The pain in my belly!

Enlevons nos chaussures
Nous sommes des impurs
Les grolles qu’on doit mettre
Nous font des « pieds de prêtre » !

We must take off our shoes
We’re so very impure
When we wear old slippers
We look like old beggars

Et pourtant la puja
Résonne en nous déjà
Le Samadhi de Ma
De marbre blanc est la !

The Samadhi of Ma
Where the joyful puja
Is sounding deep within
The white marble shining

**Le vieux Maître est assis
Nous lui disons merci
Il est vêtu d'orange
Au loin coule le Gange!**

**The old master is here
Our thanks are most sincere
He's dressed in orange robes
Beyond, the Ganges flows!**

C'est le « satsang » du soir
Qui redonne l'espoir
Et qui nous restructure
Pourvu que cela dure !

So full of hope we sang
It's time now for satsang
To put us back on track
Oh, may we never lack!

La visite des temples
Tout ce que l'on contemple
Les guirlandes de fleurs
Nous ouvrent grand le Coeur !

The temples are dazzling
And our hearts are beating
We put on our shoulders
Long garlands of flowers.

C'est du miel et c'est doux
L'EGO est prêt à tout
La spiritualité
Chasse la méchanceté !

It's like honey, it's sweet
The EGO's hard to beat
But spirituality
Keeps meanness at bay!

Ma est l'Enseignement
C'est le jaillissement
La lumière qui pénètre
Et la foi qui va naître !

Ma is all the Teaching
The light that shines within
And now it will spring forth
That our faith may be born!

Inde, l'imprégnation
De TOUT a eu raison
Tu es comme une fleur
Lotus du bonheur !

India, the immersion
The flower of passion
Sweep EVERYTHING away
Lotus of Joy...always!

Tu habites chez moi
Où tu vibres de joie
Je t'aimerais toujours
O Inde, o mon Amour !

Inside of me you live
Strong vibrations you give
I will love you "toujours"
Oh India, "mon Amour"!

Mahajyoti – (Geneviève Koevoets)
On return from India – November 2005

(Free translation)

Reminiscences from Richard Lavergne: 16th of April 2010

In 1998, I set foot in India for the first time in my life. I had waited until I was 40, or rather life had left me to wait until then. Together with some friends from a meditation group, I was on a trip to the Himalayas where I planned to get some of India's holy places "under my belt". Heavens above! For years I had pored over the writings of Indian sages such as Yogananda, Aurobindo, Swami Ramdas, Mother and others. I had been meditating and following the programmes of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi for around 20 years, but I felt I had to visit this spiritual "El Dorado" where saints flourish like daffodils in the spring; I had to experience it for myself...

So we set off on the mountain roads – or rather road, since there are not many roads leading to Gaumukh at the source of the Ganges, to Badrinath and Joshimath...

Magnificent landscapes, extraordinary people and dizzying altitudes of 4,500 and 5,500 metres... Two weeks later and a few pounds lighter, we came back down to Rishikesh, Yoga capital of the world.

We stayed at the Dayananda ashram on the banks of the Ganges, and the next day set off for Haridwar to visit the ashram of Ma Anandamayi, the very great 20th century saint who lived there and whose physical body lies in a mausoleum known as a Samadhi.

I didn't know who we were going to meet, we were just passing through. I sat on the white marble steps (everything was made of white marble); an old man and some children were also sitting there and as we talked I learnt that a Frenchman lived in the place; I was told I could meet him if I wished. The place had a luminous atmosphere, there was a powerful energy, and the people were beautiful.

Imagine my surprise when coming towards me I saw an elderly man with white hair and beard, wrapped in an orange robe – the distinctive dress of the monks of the ancient order of Shankara founded several centuries ago. The Sannyasin have renounced the external world, its attractions and mirages; they are known as "Swamis". But this man was a Westerner and I felt as though I had entered a different age in which Merlin himself might have come to life. I have to say that at that time, I knew nothing about this man. What struck me first were his eyes, which were piercing, unfathomable and benevolent all at once, and which could see into your very depths. Here was a man, made of flesh and blood, but at the same time a completely impersonal being. Behind those unfathomable eyes was an eternity and a presence at every instant. Later, I found out that he had cut short his meditation in order to come and meet me...

(Prior to this trip to India, I had read articles by Jacques Vigne; I had never met him personally, but I felt he must be a fine person and that to meet him would certainly be very enriching. But where? And how? There was no internet in those days.)

We chatted and laughed with Swamiji, whose intellect was extremely sharp despite his already advanced years and who, in spite of his dedication to the spiritual path, was anything but ignorant of the lives of ordinary people. He told me another Frenchman would be there the next day, that his name was Jacques Vigne and that I could meet him at the evening satsang if I wished.

And how I wished it! With hindsight, I can see that this sequence of cause and effect was utterly extraordinary. A few days before leaving for India, I had expressed a particular desire, and it was very soon to become a reality. Two years later, I bought a

magazine (GEO) at the airport and read an article on a female yogi (a yogini) who lived winter and summer alike on the plateau of Tapovan at an altitude of 4,500m above the sources of the Ganges. She was known as “Mataji” and less than a week later I found myself sitting by her side, singing bhajans (lively and rhythmic devotional chants accompanied by tambourines, bells, etc...). The conclusion I draw from these experiences is that when the time is right, a path opens before us and we are literally carried towards a particular destination.

I thus met Jacques Vigne (Vigyanananda) the following day. There was a strong connection between us and we remain friends to this day. I have been able to visit other parts of India with him on organised trips, experiencing extraordinary meetings with other spiritually advanced beings, and have also arranged gatherings here in France, where he has been able to visit us.

Henceforth, on each trip to India I would spend several days attending satsang with Vijayananda and was thus able to immerse myself in the sacred energy of Ma Anandamayi, and that of her devoted disciple. Vijayananda always placed himself on the same level as whoever was speaking to him, with simplicity and humour, and he would tell a number of anecdotes from his life with Ma, which plunged us into the realms of the extraordinary. The topics alternated between answers to very personal questions posed by some of those present, but which could be helpful to everyone, and general explanations on Indian and Vedic traditions. We thus deepened our personal experience and were able to compare it to the spiritual paths taken by people such as Vijayananda. Despite the deepest and most sincere aspirations of most of the people in our group, as Westerners we felt we were very much “small fry”. Vijayananda knew this and made everyone feel at ease. I also learnt that he met with many people who had received the teachings of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, as I had, and that he spoke of him with great deference and respect; I was deeply grateful for this, as for many years in France we had been treated as lepers. These days, many more people have followed similar paths and have had the bitter experience of finding themselves the object of France’s “lay inquisition”.* [*Translator’s Note: “inquisition laïque” is the name given to the investigation by the French authorities of people and organisations practising different faiths and religions] I was thus able to meet this holy person, for Vijayananda was undoubtedly a holy person (even if I am not “qualified” to judge) in 1998, 2000, 2003 and 2006. We could feel that physically he was becoming weaker, but his presence remained every bit as intense and old age had done nothing to dull his lively mind.

Like many sages of the 20th and early 21st centuries, he has left this world. He contributed, as they all did, to the preservation of the light on this earth; for what is the role of the sage if not to guide his fellow human beings, suffering and struggling in their daily lives, towards the light? Their active silence provides a counterbalance to the chaotic and destructive forces which might quickly get the better of all life on earth. Most human beings live as though life was to be taken for granted, without realizing that it is the fruit of a subtle balance between creation and dissolution: Sattva, Rajas, Tamas. And our ignorant behaviour continually threatens this balance.

I dare to hope that the Divine Mother, to whom he gave himself totally, in the figure of Ma Anandamayi, will welcome him in one of her abodes. Sadness and grief are not appropriate, for this man lived an extraordinary life – not in the human sense, for his only possessions were a basket, an umbrella, his orange robe and a pair of slippers...

Where others wear themselves out laying waste to the world in order to build financial, industrial or political empires (to mention but a few), he held court each evening, seated on a plastic chair, and dispensed golden wisdom in the name of his queen, Ma Anandamayi, with darshans, prasads and private meetings.

He holds a special place in our French hearts because as a Frenchman he wove a bond between our country and India, a very special relationship. There is a very particular love between the two countries which is not based on mercenary interest, or at least not entirely...

This love for India has produced great French or French-speaking spiritual teachers; for although Gaullish – whether revolutionary, conservative and royalist, Napoleonic or absurdly ideologist – the French are capable of a spiritual genius which has given birth to Guénon, Jean Klein, Arnaud Desjardins, Yvan Amar, Swami Vijayananda, Satprem, Mother... and apologies to those I have forgotten and those I haven't heard of!

To conclude this very personal tribute:

Jay Ma, Jay Vijayananda

OM Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

Homage to Vijayananda from Caroline Gere

Thank you Geneviève (Mahajyoti)

I received a message saying that his last words were:

"The emotion of separation is much stronger than that of the Presence."

Perhaps it is an invitation to meditate on the Presence, to enjoy it fully, instead of weeping at the moment of separation or when the absence makes itself felt.

And what if absence was merely the appearance taken on by Presence in order to perfect a teaching?

We do not weep over a Master. With all his being, he teaches Love and Detachment.

So I feel the emotion which his departure arouses, but I do not weep. I smile at Swamiji.

Om Shanti Shanti ♥

(Sent by Caroline GERE – 11-04-10)

From Martine Pécelet

Hello Maha Jyoti!

The departure of SWAMIJI VIJAYANANDA is in the natural order of things, the most natural possible, especially at his age... nevertheless, even if in our hearts we know that everything is within us and that he is there within us eternally, omnipresent like MA, and all the great souls dear to our hearts, nevertheless personally speaking I was surprised by the emotion I felt, which was stronger than I expected... It is true that I spent a month with him and received an enormous amount from him during that time and that everything has happened so quickly...but his imminent departure was undoubtedly foreseeable. He told me one evening when I was saying goodbye that he was tired and that he did

not want to prolong his life any longer... I carry with me in my heart his Love, his joy, his brilliance, his humility, his sense of humour... and everything which I perceived but cannot speak of and everything he taught me which I am not yet aware of...!

So there we are... I have to get back to work as I have a lot to do and I'm on my own...

In the bond that links us with our beloved Masters, MA, SWAMIJI VIJAYANANDA.... AMMA...!

Martine / Vidya (my initiatory name given me by AMMA)

(08-04-10)

Sent by Isabel Fournier

Dear friends,

After a final and moving ceremony in the temple, in front of Ma's Samadhi, we accompanied Swamiji to Delhi in the name of everyone.

He will travel to Paris and in a few days there should be a Samadhi at the Père Lachaise Cemetery. Be assured that he rests at peace. His face was calm and peaceful.

At his penultimate satsang, Swamiji referred to the following poem, mentioning that it strongly resembled the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and that Kipling had probably taken his inspiration from it. An ambitious programme to be attempted in the name of Swamiji.

Take care of yourselves,

Isabel

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute

With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!

Rudyard KIPLING

From Michela Bianchi, who published in Milan the Italian version of Swamiji's book *A Frenchman in the Himalaya* (MC Editrice)

Dear Geneviève....

Can you imagine? The poster for the launch of Swamiji's book in Italian, along with the portrait of him which you drew, and which I'd hung in our office at the publishing house, came unstuck and fell off the wall, all by itself, on Tuesday April 6th, the day after Vijayananda's departure...

From Kiran Grave: "A Saint never dies ..."

Thank you so much for those wonderful tributes to our beloved Swami Vijayananda, a true son of Ma. Swamiji had such a long and close relationship with my family esp. my grandmother whom he met when he first came to India: He and my grandmother both had an exceptional love for Ma, and very often during our satsangs with Swamiji, he would remind us of Maharatan (the name given to my grandmother by Ma; they spent time together especially at Almora in the 1940s, where a strong bond was formed between them) and the common bond they had in their intense love for Ma. Both my daughter Ananta and I were stunned by grief, but were forced to look beyond, and one night full of sadness as I prayed looking at Swamiji's photo, suddenly I felt his voice within me saying, "Look, I have not gone anywhere, I am right here. Go now and read "Conversations with Vijayananda on some aspects of Ma's teachings, edited by Jacques Vigne". So I opened the book at random and the sentence staring me in the face was; **"A Saint never dies."** Yes Swamiji is always with us within and without. It is up to us to make the effort to realize the truth, however difficult it may seem!

Thank you and Jacques so much for keeping us in touch. Any news or tributes to Swamiji are heaven sent.

Jai Ma, Kiran

From Christina Plueckhart

Since Swami Ji left his body, I experienced interesting inner processes.

When I was in Kankhal for the first time in August 2009 I met Swamiji for one evening. At the end of satsang I was with him, my boyfriend alone talking. His divine love was flowing so strong that I felt bliss and silence. Before leaving he said to me: "You are so sweet, that I wish to keep you here." At this moment I didn't really notice the importance those words had for me. Until later I was back in Germany, he crossed my mind, I remembered his words and the sweetness of his being. The inner voice was so strong that I couldn't differently then taking a flight to India, being there. And then I met you, offering me your holy space to be able to be in his presence for two months. This time was very important for me. Now, the search continues to find the peace within my self. It is quite a challenge to keep sadhana here in Stuttgart for me.

One day Swamiji related to me with the remembering for my name and Jesus energy. And finally he left his body an Easter Monday.

Tears are in my eyes. I am so grateful to have been able to meet him and spend two amazingly strong months.

A couple of days ago I had a dream where I had his holy darshan. It made me realize that he left his body, but he is everywhere.

Part 2

Patrick is a hospital psychiatrist in Paris; in 2007, he achieved the considerable feat of bringing 150 of his French colleagues to meet their Indian counterparts at a congress in Delhi which Jacques helped to organize.

Jacques

I am saddened by this news. I met Swamiji twice. The first time was when I came to visit with Didier. I was struck by his simplicity and his wisdom when we met him, which was in Kankhal. He talked to us about his knowledge of Judaism by referring to the Holi festival and its connections with the feast of Purim. He was well-informed about Jewish thinking and was enthusiastic about many different subjects.

I met him a year later and filmed him. He was tired and we went to his room to talk. ...I was impressed by his considerable memory as well as by the modesty with which he talked about his life.

I am glad to have met such a sage and I speak of him often to those around me.

In friendship,

Patrick

From Carole

Thank you, Jacques, for all the details you have shared with us.

Kankhal will not be the same without Swamiji but he will remain with me always.

I remember in particular a satsang with him in October last year when I asked him about love, the life of the couple. He insisted on the importance of being capable at one time or another of one's existence of living alone and of finding union, that inner strength inside oneself. At the time, I was irritated by his reply, which went contrary to my deep aspiration to build my relationship with my partner. With time, however, I have realised that we can be separated from those most precious to us not only by the break-up of a relationship but also by death, and that in these circumstances, being able to live alone assumes its full importance.

From Antonietta

Antonietta has for many years been a disciple of Swami Chidananda of the Divine Life Society and vice-president of the Italian Yoga Federation. In February 2010, during an international yoga conference in Rishikesh, more than 60 people came to Swamiji's satsang –, to my knowledge, the largest group he had ever received. The meeting is described in the text 'Swami Vijayananda –Les derniers jours' [The final days of Swami Vijayananda] and the notes taken during the satsang by certain members of the group, including Antonietta, are in the questions-and- answers document for this last period.

Dear Jacques,

We have just received your email with the news of Swami Vijayananda's departure. We hadn't heard from anyone else.

Of course, there is a mixture of "human" sadness at not being able to see a true sage again, but also there is the joy of having at least been able to meet him.

Along with the entire group, we are infinitely grateful to you for having made this meeting possible.

I can tell you that the whole group was very moved by the visit to Kankhal and the meeting with Swamiji; everyone thanked us for this extraordinary meeting, which was so enriching and all the more appreciated for not having been part of the official programme.

The meeting was an invaluable gift from Ma, through her disciples (you and Swamiji).

I will ask the group to send their memories and impressions of the satsang, and thank you also for writing about our group's visit to the Kumbha Mela.

I cannot forget Swamiji's sweetness and his availability, and how tired he must have been after placing so many meditation mats on the heads of our friends in the group. It is a true blessing for all of us.

From Yves Baudron

Yves is a Sanskrit scholar and a member of the Ramakrishna Mission in Gretz

Dear Sir,

I thank you most warmly for your two messages. I don't know if I'll be able to be at the Père Lachaise cemetery but I will definitely go and perform *japa* at Vijayananda's tomb. The cemetery is a place that is dear to me. And I will be with the sangha in my thoughts.

You know as well as I do, death is nothing. For a spiritual being, the passage is accomplished with absolute inner peace and harmony, in simplicity and in the Light. Some choose to dissolve into this gentle Light of the Ultimate Reality, whilst others prefer to take a new body in order to continue serving the Divine and help relieve human suffering. In my view, the ideal of the bodhisattva is the most beautiful of all.

For the moment, all that is asked of us is to be ready, in all inner humility. Ready to serve, simple instruments at the service of *Adhi-shakti*. Each present moment is a precious gift. None must be wasted for, in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, "When the flower has blossomed, the bees come of their own accord to drink the nectar."

In all friendship in the Lord,

Yves Baudron - Devamitra

From: Roberta Concu

Hari Om.

I'm going to write in English because my French is scholastic and I can explain myself better this way. My name is Roberta, I'm part of the Italian group of Sarva Yoga and I was in Rishikesh from Feb. 13th until the 28th, and I had the great pleasure, through you, to meet in Haridwar Swami Vijayananda.

The news of the passing of Vijayananda shocked me and deeply moved me. These are the same emotions that I felt when I met him, since then he never left me; I keep him in my heart. As soon as I saw him I realized the fortune I had in meeting him and after the sad news I'm even more aware of it.

His satsang left me a deep impression, he transmitted a great sense of peace and serenity, and he transmitted energy so powerful that I can still feel inside me.

His humility and simplicity have been such great teaching but what I learned, that goes beyond the few words whispered, is surely the energy that he transmitted, that was truly strong and dazzling.

Before Vijayananda's blessing, he asked me if I was Indian and told me that I had been in another life (it must have been the braid and the colour of my hair and eyes), he then asked me to bow to him twice and blessed me twice.

From that moment on, after getting back to Italy, different episodes happened to me that I initially called coincidences but today I don't believe they are anymore; from finding Ananda Mayi's book in a small bookstore of my town, the only volume hidden under other books, to the picture that I bought in the ashram of Haridwar that I felt I needed to frame and hang in my room, to the meditation mat that was given to me by Vijayananda and that gave me strength to start a true, constant and deeply felt, meditation journey, and lastly a trip of three days that I will take at the end of May, booked a week ago, when I didn't know about the passing of V., to Paris where he was taken and where I will definitely go to give a tribute, but with the awareness that now his Great Soul is everywhere and I will be able to approach and find that energy in every place I will be...

A big thanks to you J. Vigne for the opportunity and precious time you gave us...

Roberta Concu
from Italy
(Sarva Yoga)

From Bruno Jactat

Dear Jacques,

A warm thank you to you for having shared with us Swamiji's last moments in this physical world. We met him only once, but these are some of the things which made most impression on us:

We were all gathered around him, avidly awaiting his words, and he said:

"There are three types of knowledge:

The most useful is to sit down and seek oneself.

The exchange between master and pupil is quite useful.

The least useful is the group exchange with a master, as we are currently doing."

He was smiling enigmatically as he spoke...

Bruno

From Mié

I am Japanese, I understood few of his words but his simple presence, under the moon, is Love and Joy.

Mié - Jai Ma

From Daniel

Dear Jacques,

I didn't know that Swamiji had left his physical body on April 5th. But I had a kind of intuition, because for the last ten days or so, his face kept on coming back to me in my memory, and I was wondering why... During this time, I often wondered also about his state of health, and whether he was still alive.

The memory of him came suddenly to mind so often during that first week of April that I felt an urge to look at photographs of him which I'd taken during a visit to Kankhal with my son in January 2007.

(The same thing happened when my mother left her body over 10 years ago).

Testimony from Swami Divyabhavananda

Dear Mahajyoti,

Thank you very much for the information. I have forwarded it to interested devotees in France. This is a great blessing for France, for the whole of Europe and the Western World. We cannot even understand how great a blessing it is to have this great Indian Rishi's Samadhi in Père Lachaise. Certainly his blessings will help to bring peace to a troubled world.

I should be very grateful hearing from you a report about the puja and ceremonies, whenever you have time. All of those who are unable to attend should be very interested.

With love and thanks,

JAI MA,

Swami Divyabhavananda (15-04-10)

From Kiran Grave

Dear FriendsJai Ma...

We are deeply saddened by the loss of the three maha rishis.... Swami Vijayananda is an integral part of all of our lives... he managed to touch all our hearts with his sweet sense of humour, his unconditional love, and his x-ray vision which penetrated the deepest depths of our souls! He always reminded us that this is all a great maya [illusion], a khel [play] by Ma.

On our last visit to swamiji he told my daughter Ananta and me, "I am not this body... I am forever Omnipresent".

Unfortunately, we are unable to be there with you all on the 19th to witness the last rites of swamiji but his words have given us consolation and hopefully they will help you as well. He is forever with us....Jai Ma. (16-04-10)

Account of Vijayananda's funeral ceremony on 26-04-10 from Claude Poivret

Dear Mahajyoti,

On Monday morning I left home at 5.20 a.m. and arrived in Paris at 10.50 a.m., in other words with a delay of one and a half hours (problems on the line...!).

I took the metro and was at Père Lachaise by 11.20 a.m....

It's difficult to estimate, but I think there were around 200 people at the ceremony. I knew some of them. In particular, there was Swami Muktananda from Canada (very tall in the photos and dressed in orange) whom it was possible to meet at the Sivananda ashram at Rishikesh in 2003.

Pushparaj led the Puja and Arati. It was a moment of such intensity that it still makes me

3-Yes, Geneviève, but is it possible to translate into words those moments which were filled with such Spiritual Light? Here, then, is a very shadowy snapshot.

....There were a great many people, all very much turned within themselves, who gathered around the coffin covered with white candles and wreaths of flowers; the flowers were too extravagant for Swamiji in my opinion, so that when we were offered some of these flowers to give to Swamiji, I threw him a dandelion instead. I would have preferred a buttercup but I couldn't find one... The gesture filled me with Joy and Love. It was deeply moving, especially because on the coffin there was a photograph of Ma whose eyes were looking straight at us...

The puja, the singing, the incense, were so redolent of India that there is no need to describe them to you. We no longer knew quite where we were... "Nowhere," Ma would say...

We also experienced some moments of silence... Poignant... Intense....

Then a gentleman said a few words, in particular about a conversation between Ma and Swamiji about what was to happen to his body.... Swamiji said to Ma: "I don't mind" and Ma told him that a body which had performed such a sadhana should be neither burned nor thrown into the Ganges... and so on... But you know about this too...

Some people were crying; personally-speaking, I felt He was all around us and not in that little box. He was everywhere, especially in the trees. Why the trees? A mystery!

At the end of the ceremony we received the blessed prasad...

For me it was thus a wonderful occasion, very joyful... I will go back and meditate on his tomb and think of you...

Forgive me, dear Geneviève, for being sooooooosilly in telling you about one of the most deeply moving times of my life.

Lots of love from Jacqueline (26-04-10)

4-Dear Geneviève

Homage to Swamiji Vijayananda:

We think we have understood the lesson, the "reason why" we are going round in circles. You, dear Swamiji, are the Mystery which inspires the poets and you wish to lead them along the path of self-effacement. How could we not have thought of that?

So here we are:

Jesus had a donkey for his "pope-mobile"; you, Swamiji had two beautiful souls*...
[*Translator's note: Play on the French words for donkey, "âne", and soul, "âme".] Yes, you were carried on the wings of humility... Jesus had a manger, a simple trough, as his throne; and you, Swamiji, had an ell* of pavement. [*Translator's note: Play on the French words "auge" (a trough) and "aune", an archaic term for a measure of length, which translates as the equally archaic English word "ell"]. Love was your velvet carpet and your speech was Joy. From these places you offered your voice, day and night, praying for humanity.

Allow me also, Swamiji, in Paris on Monday, to thank you for your sadhana by placing on the samadhi a droplet of reflected paradise, this treasure which mirrors your heart, a flower of

gold named Buttercup*. [*Translator's note: The French word for buttercup is "bouton d'or", or button of gold.]

Jacqueline Bolsee

Message from Elena Almirall Arnal (Spain)

Dear Geneviève,

I have received your emails and I am very, very thankful to you for all the information. I am a disciple of Swami Rameshwarananda here in Spain and it was Him who asked me to visit Swami Vijayananda last year. Even though I was able to be with Him only for three days, His light has been guiding me ever since. I wish I could have been there to say good-bye but everything you sent me has helped me to feel a little closer. Maybe I can go to Paris soon and visit his grave. I hope so.

So, again, I want to thank you from the heart for the exception you did with me. I understand these days might have been incredibly busy for you, so I appreciate it very much.

Hope to meet with you someday, Geneviève. In the meantime, I send you my love and warmest regards,

Elena (30-04-10)

From Edith Bouterin

I finally understand why Vijayananda would say over and over, "I am not a Guru." He didn't want us to fall into idolatry and it was probably a way of reminding us, modestly, that he considered himself "only" to be Ma's intermediary!!! In any case, he has again made me a very beautiful gift; its message can perhaps be shared with those who carry Him in their heart! The night before his departure, I couldn't sleep and I decided to use the opportunity to meditate. Very clearly, his words sounded in me with his characteristic voice, full of such great gentleness: "Whether I am physically present or not, it doesn't matter; I am always with you, in your heart. Continue to trust, all will be well." A few hours later, I learnt that he had died... So when waves of tears threaten to sweep over me, I remember His beautiful words!!!

From Aurélie, who spent about three years in Kankhal with Swamiji:

Dear Jacques,

Full of emotion, I have read all of these messages which speak eloquently of the love for Swamiji which innumerable people hold in the innermost recesses of their hearts.

I'm sending you the following extract from a poem I wrote when I was living in Kankhal...

*Comment puis-je Vous remercier
Pour tout ce que Vous m'enseigniez
Par votre subtile présence
Vivante et immobile danse?*

How can I thank You
For everything You teach me
By your subtle presence
Lively and immobile dance?

*Cette paix que Vous révélez
Cet Amour que Vous prodiguez*

This peace which You reveal
This Love You shower on me

*Sont à la fois but et moyen
Destination et voie sans fin*

Are at once the end and the means
Destination and journey without end

From Bruno Ducoux

Thank you Geneviève,
Here is a message which I sent to Jacques.
Very best wishes,
Bruno

Dear Jacques,
Thank you very much for the moving message you sent us. I haven't yet been to India and I never met Vijayananda physically, but thanks to you I met him spiritually. Vijayananda's departure came at the time when all Christians – Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox – were celebrating Easter, the passage, the Resurrection. As I understand it, Vijayananda's leaving his physical body means that he no longer had need of it in order to receive and to give. Freed from the dimensions of space and time in which we survive, he is living freely, he is; there is no more separation and, no doubt, no more suffering...

Affectionately,
Bruno

From Eliane Mazzoleni (Switzerland)

Dear Mahajyoti
Thank you for sending all of these tributes, which continue to fill our hearts with happiness and joy.
Thank you for continuing to distribute all of these wonders and for sharing them with us. Swamiji's gentle face; even though I never met him in person, it was by means of a bond linking our hearts that he, through Jacques, guided me towards Trulshik Rinpoche, like an arrow straight to the heart, and that is the right path for me.

I myself must face up to several changes and new choices. As Swamiji said... "Wake up, look out; you're in a jungle... There are lions..." My faith reminds me not to neglect that which is most precious inside us, the divine flame which asks us to listen to that which is so sacred inside us: life itself.

In the Dharma
Eliane

From Véronique Vauvrecy

Dear Vigyan, Dear Geneviève,
I am very moved this morning to have read these tributes, which you have gathered together into a priceless document so loaded with intensity by all of the people around the luminous Being that was Vijayananda. An immense and wholehearted thank you to both of you!
I was waiting with such baited breath for this document that during the night I woke up singing Jaya Jaya Shiva Shambo as we did during Vijayananda's funeral!
I am thinking intensely of you both
Véronique
Jay Ma !!

From Claudie Sablon

Dear Geneviève (I'm not very good with Indian names)

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, I cannot ever say it enough, for this wonderful collection of tributes following Swamiji's departure.

Very emotional. In any case, I start to cry as soon as I think of him and also, when I was near him...all of his divine energy unsettles me, but the emotions are so profound!

In any case, He is here, he remains in our hearts.

I think it must be hardest for the people at the Kankhal ashram and all of those who saw him often and were able to receive his teaching directly.

What joy, what a blessing to have known him.

We will await the JAY MA with impatience.

A thousand thanks for your devotion and for sharing with us.

Warmest wishes, thinking of Swamiji

Claudie

From 'Petite plume'

A few words about the author of these lines

My relationship with Ma Anandamayi began when I was 20 years old. After a first trip to India, in October 1977, when I went to two of her ashrams without meeting her in person, an extremely strong bond was established with Her. For three years, I assimilated what I had received in India and I also had occasional dreams in which Ma gave me certain teachings. Without even having seen Her, I literally fell in love with her person, or rather with the Divine which I could perceive very clearly in Her. I finally spent a week in her physical presence during Christmas 1980; we were far from the crowds, only fifteen of us in all, including her retinue (around ten people who followed her wherever she went). Ma is to this day my spiritual Mother, and the most important person in my life. I have decided to give a full account of my experiences here because of course that makes it a much more interesting read!!! In consequence, I cannot sign this text with my usual name... I will therefore sign it "petite plume" [little pen]...

Last Satsangs with Vijayananda

(Kankhal, March 2010)

March 26th

The word satsang comes from the Sanskrit; *Sat means the truth, that which is Real, Being... Sanga* means company, assembly; *satsang* therefore means an assembly in the company of truth and, by extension, in the company of a sage. Interestingly, it also means to assemble the truth within oneself. And in fact, this is precisely the work of the sage, to help those people present to recognise their true nature, which is non-dual. Satsang is informal and, according to circumstance, can comprise questions and answers, silence, meditation...

In Kankhal, satsang takes place at 6 p.m. in the courtyard of Ma Anandamayi's temple, in front of a low white marble wall opposite the samadhi. At that time of day, there is singing inside the samadhi for the *puja*, a veneration ritual which takes place morning and evening. It concludes with *arati*, a ceremony during which flowers, incense and above all a flame, sacred fire, is offered to the Divine. Both the *puja* and *arati* are accompanied by singing and punctuated by the blowing of conch shells, drumming and the ringing of bells... The whole ceremony is broadcast to the outside world by means of loudspeakers, with no shortage of decibels. One is thus immersed in a torrent of devotional sound, which of course is the whole point of having the loudspeakers! There are moments when the volume is so loud that one can only wait in silence, as all verbal exchange becomes impossible. On top of this, a quite different sort of ambient noise emanates from the street, only a few feet away, which is punctuated in turn by the sound of engines backfiring and the regular beeping of horns as rickshaw drivers, motorcyclists, cars and vehicles of all descriptions delight in advertising their presence with a joyful cacophony in order to force their way through the traffic... At sunset, the flies – few in number – are swiftly replaced by...an army of mosquitoes! There is little malaria in northern India but repellents of all kinds are a good idea... It was therefore in this very Indian atmosphere that Vijayananda presided over satsang for many years. I met him 32 years ago, in Kankhal, when he came down from the hermitage at Dhaulchina where he'd just spent several years. I was then one of a group of osteopaths who had come hoping to meet Ma Anandamayi. After going to Varanasi and finding She was not there, we decided to try Kankhal. We were made welcome and told, "Ma is not here, but her disciple will come and meet you." At that time, the Kankhal ashram was in the middle of the countryside and we could hear the birds singing. It was October 1977, it was 25 degrees Celsius, and Vijayananda received us sitting on some lovely rounded, white rocks which did for chairs and which were part of a dry riverbed, a minor arm of the Ganges which the water only reached in times of flood. We felt very comfortable there and in the near distance I could see the Ganges glinting in the sun. It's rather curious that many years later, I moved into a new house which overlooks the river Loire; from the terrace I can see a dry riverbed which is only under water when the Loire is in spate... And when the sun shines, I can see it reflecting off the river in the distance...

In 1977, Vijayananda was in his early sixties. He was a warm and friendly man and the quality of that which emanated from him had such an impact on me, at the age of only 20, that without knowing anything about the spiritual journey, it became imprinted on my heart. In order to give us immediately a practical point of reference for our respective paths – at least, this is what I suppose – far from embarking upon a theoretical introduction to spirituality, he talked to us of...the very French actor Louis Jouvet! It was my first satsang with him, and perhaps one of the first he had ever given, and he talked to us about this actor's stage presence... It didn't seem very "spiritual" and yet... His speech was punctuated with silences, he exuded Silence... It was rather surreal,

meeting this French doctor in a far-flung region of India, somewhere near the Himalayas, and hearing him talk about Louis Jouvet's stage presence! But from a practical point of view, we were capable, on leaving him, of deciding to become people who were developing a real quality of presence... A few years later, I spent seven years making a foray into the artistic life as a singer and I had to do a great deal of work on this question of presence. It is presence which determines the attention which the public gives – or does not give – to the artist. That first satsang was thus highly pertinent, remarkably so in my case anyway. From a more fundamental point of view, it could be said that the spiritual journey consists in being more and more present. Entering into the Presence. Becoming Presence... Total Presence being in fact Brahman, the Divine...

In 1977, Ma was still alive and so there was no temple or samadhi. I vaguely remember the entrance to the ashram, which was pale in colour, probably white, a small, peaceful little building... In 2010, the landscape is very different; the sprawling suburbs of Haridwar have taken over. No more trees, no more birds, the minor arm of the Ganges has been channelled into a kind of canal... We're in the town!

When I see Vijayananda again for the first time, 32 years later, my heart contracts; he's sitting lopsidedly on a chair, and his poor little body is quite emaciated in his orange sannyasin robes; he is unable to raise his head, which is bent over his left shoulder, and his voice is hard to make out unless you bring your ear really quite close to his lips... Fortunately, Jacques manages to understand what he says and repeats most of it in a deep voice matched with broad smiles.



We are therefore able to understand what he says, even though I know that the essence of a sage's message is not to be found in his words. I know that a sage represents above all a non-linear transmission, which is not received by means of the intellect, and that a sage can touch places so deep inside ourselves that we are completely unaware of it... When we realise that the most crucial blockages are situated precisely at this deep level (the causal body), we begin to measure the importance of what is at stake, the importance of meeting a true Master at least once in our lives who is capable of touching the innermost depths

of our soul... There are not many of us seated around Swamiji, fifteen at most. So few next to a sage of this calibre, it's a miracle! It is also true that the conditions are somewhat demanding and apt to discourage all but deeply felt aspirations. Those present are thus encouraged to enter into the relationship by other means than with their intellects! But Vijayananda pays a heavy price for this; he too is immersed in the merry din of background noise, and has to make exhausting efforts to make himself heard, repeating almost every one of his sentences. Nevertheless, I can detect no sign of tension in him. He is perfectly peaceful and relaxed, even though I suppose that his body's worsening condition means that his continuing physical existence requires almost constant effort...

I ask him a question which is very important to me. "What happens when we carry someone in our heart?" Over the last two or three years, I have felt an increasingly strong urge, during my meditation, to open my heart to certain people (family, friends patients...) who need help and to keep them in my heart for a few moments. I have often noticed that it has a real effect and I want to know more. Vijayananda replies, "It's very important. That's what true blessing is." When he says that, I feel the encouragement he is giving me. Something very powerful, as though he were saying, "Yes, yes, go on, that's it. That is the practice, that's what you must do." I also feel...that I must open my heart more deeply and more widely and that in doing so, the process will become more powerful (at the moment, it's only just beginning!).

A sage is not satisfied with simply developing a very profound intelligence and consciousness, he also develops his heart. He is a source of love. In reality, he opens his heart to each person who comes to him and welcomes them into his heart. The bigger, deeper and more loving his heart is, the more powerful his blessing. At this level of being, the heart is not only a tool for knowledge, for perception (the intelligence of the heart), it has become the capacity for action. That is what I had not understood until now, the capacity for action. We could also say that the sage, because he has renounced his separate identity, is one with Brahman. So if he carries someone in his heart, divine grace is immediately directed towards that person and starts to intervene in their existence, facilitating positive changes in that person and in their life. The more profoundly the sage is united with the Divine, the more loving his heart is...and the more powerful his blessing becomes! That is why it is important to approach a sage with all of our "antennae" – physical, psychic, energetic and spiritual – as open and receptive as possible! But it is up to each of us, whatever our level, to open our hearts wider and deeper, to make them more welcoming, in order to transmit something beneficial to those around us...

At the end of the satsang, Vijayananda gives each of us, individually, a little orange yoga mat. Each time, he begins by placing the mat on his head; then he places it on the head of the person he's giving it to, who has come to sit right next to him. When it's my turn, he says, "The last teaching that Ma gave to me was this: 'This body is maya [this body is an illusion]; in reality, Ma is

everywhere.’ He added, “This means that we must see Ma in everything and everyone, all of the time.” He looks deeply into my eyes several times. Seeing Ma everywhere does not, of course, mean seeing her face everywhere! It means seeing her essence, her true being everywhere. She is one with the Divine. “See Ma everywhere” could be translated as “see the divine essence everywhere, in each thing, in each being.” During their last meeting, then, Ma in fact gave him the key to Awakening, and the method for “attaining” awakening (making it a reality) in all circumstances, and not only when meditating in a far-flung hermitage. It is clear that she also gave him the accompanying blessing, in other words, the ability to put these instructions into operation. In any case, I see this as an order, as if Ma in person, through the agency of Vijayananda, was saying to me: “Go on, off you go; train yourself to see the Divine everywhere, I give you my blessing.” I had already been telling myself for some time that this was the solution. But I was only capable of perceiving things this way for short periods at a time. I am sure that it will now become easier. In principle, I still have another thirty years or so left to live, so I should have enough time to make a few attempts!

March 27th

In the evening, satsang with Vijayananda. I arrive a few minutes late. I then see that S., who has joined the group, is sitting at the old man’s feet... I am thus witness to an utterly charming scene. S. is a good-looking young woman of about 28 years old. She has great poise; the way she moves is graceful and self-possessed. In front of the lithe young woman is the white-haired old man, his body twisted like the trunk of an ancient oak tree. Both of them are, however, in the same movement, a movement of the heart which springs forth from deep within. They seem completely happy to see one another. There is a true meeting between them. It is very striking, and the two photographs I took reflect only very imperfectly what happened.

A romantic but hasty view might conclude that the old man is delighting in the company of this young woman. He is giving her a little of his great experience and in return, she is giving him a little of her charm; she is nourishing him with her femininity, her youth. She may even be reassuring him as the ordeal of his death approaches... But this would be to misunderstand the true nature of Vijayananda. He is no longer inseparably merged with his body. Age has no hold whatsoever on his mind. His heart does not fear death. He has known for a long time, and has seen time and time again during his meditation, that death is an illusion. He has discovered Eternal Life, Brahman, the Infinite, probably in his hermitage up there at Dhaulchina many years ago. He knows himself to be infinite. To judge by his indomitable gaze, and the fierce will which can still be read in it, he has been brave enough to face up to every one of his fears and to examine clearly each of his illusions. He has been heroic enough to give up any kind of hiding-place in which to continue to nurture, at all costs, the illusion of the ego... No, what unites these two beings is not something ordinary or even “romantic”. It is much more wonderful than that. She is totally

turned towards him, with all of her being. And he too is completely open to her. Their exchanges are from soul to soul. This is what makes their relationship magnificent. I gradually come to understand – especially when he continues the following evening – that he is giving S. blessings for her entire life. He knows, he feels, that he will not have another opportunity to do so. She perhaps does not know this, in any case not yet.... I have never seen such openness. She is receiving everything, losing nothing. It fascinates me; I cannot take my eyes off them. I savour the beauty of their relationship as it unfolds beneath the surface of their verbal exchanges, which are sometimes of no great consequence, their jokes, smiles and, sometimes, more serious questions... This young woman has the makings of a true disciple. It's so rare! She has great inner strength, astonishing in someone so young, and she is, I presume, very able. Vijayananda knows this; that's why he is passing on so much to her. Most likely, she will be asked to achieve huge tasks! I learn later that S. studied at Sciences Pô [Translator's note: *Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris*, one of the most prestigious universities in France] before setting off alone for India, most intrepidly for a girl of her age, where she successfully undertook a variety of different activities, starting from scratch each time. She is currently working at the French embassy in India and is already in a position of trust, as advisor to the ambassador. Talking to her later confirmed all of my initial impressions. In addition, this young woman, who can be most charming, is extremely hard-working and a person of great integrity. At the very least, she has a great future in the diplomatic service...

I then talk to Vijayananda about a project for a book which Jacques has suggested to me and about two books which I have written but which have not been published. He gives me no indication along the lines of “write it/don't write it”. Instead, he says: “When you write, you are not writing for yourself or for a readership of scientists or specialists. You are writing for people, and they should be able to read you without difficulty. You should make yourself accessible to the reader.” Then he adds, “If you are to be published, then you will be.” I tell him that when I understand something, or when I have a significant spiritual experience, I like to have it confirmed by a competent person. “Yes,” he agreed. “In order to pass something on, you must be entirely convinced of it.”

March 31st

At 4 o'clock I enter the pure white building of the samadhi and sit down. The only other person there is a sannyasin, seated in a corner. I find myself absorbed in a deep meditation during which, mysteriously, I am impelled to carry out all of the practices I regularly do in France... From time to time, I open an eye; someone enters the temple, often a pilgrim, and spends some moments in meditation or prayer before going on their way... How wonderful it is to see these people come in, receive whatever it is they are to receive (and also perhaps to give/give up a layer of identification with their ego, gain more dedication) and then leave. It touches me very deeply. The singing, the puja has

already begun. I now feel impelled to think of all of those people who are dear to me – family, friends, patients, everyone, everyone... An immensely long list which slowly unwinds inside my heart... My mind is relatively silent; I carry each person, one by one, in my heart and entrust them to the Divine Mother... The singing continues, so beautiful, so enchanting. I have no desire to leave the samadhi, which is slowly filling up as the time for arati draws near. Satsang would normally have started some time ago, but Vijayananda is late; from time to time, I go outside to have a look and, seeing that he is not there, return to sit in the samadhi. I feel deeply at peace... Arati begins; the samadhi is full. The flame is brought to me, and like the others present, I make a gesture symbolising that I have received the light...

After all of this, I feel at last that I have done that which I had to do. The arati is not yet finished but I go outside and join the satsang, for Vijayananda has just arrived, very late as it's at least 7 p.m.! What marvellous timing... If he'd come earlier, I wouldn't have allowed myself to stay so long in the temple, and that would have been a pity. I am therefore completely peaceful and happy as I come and sit down. By what mysterious sense does he perceive my more than usually luminous state? He immediately draws me to him and places his hand on my head several times, blessing me with a goodness which imprints itself upon me, and the depth of which I feel more and more each day... There, at that moment, that goodness is so tangible, I feel how much he is bathed in goodness. He is TOTALLY immersed in goodness. I ask him to bless a book which I have chosen as a present for my son. It's in English and he certainly won't be able to read it this year, but I'm sure that one day his English will be good enough to do so. In any case, the little bookshop next to the temple has very few books in French, and I can translate some passages for him in the meantime. Vijayananda holds the book in his hands for eight or ten minutes, whilst asking me questions, which is a long time for a blessing. I don't ask him to write a dedication; he would do it, but it would be too much of an effort for him. The book he hands back to me is thus truly impregnated with spiritual energy. He asks several times who the author of the book is and explains with great emphasis that when someone writes a book, he also transmits his nature, his being. The author is significant. I don't know the author of this book but his articles ring true and, above all, are written in a contemporary style which is accessible to a young man. I explain to Swamiji that my son grew up close to Arnaud [Translator's note: Arnaud Desjardins, French film-maker, author and spiritual teacher] and often stayed at his house, even whilst he was still in my belly and then as a baby, a child and an adolescent... Vijayananda makes no comment (that in itself is not enough to prompt someone to commit to a life of asceticism, even though it obviously helps). I feel, when he hands me back the book, that he has done something specific, he has filled it with a positive energy which will help my son on his journey. He then also blesses a medal which my husband asked me to bring back to him in France.

As the satsang comes to end, I feel Joy and Peace as I did as it was starting; the last of all, the shortest and yet the most marvellous... It's as though, purified by three hours of meditation in the samadhi, with each cell of my body more open and more vibrant, Vijayananda was able, by gently patting my head in blessing, to show me clearly, patently, the extraordinary goodness in which – on which – he lives, and to transmit to me not a sensation but a tiny particle of it.

A tiny particle of his being, his nature. Since then, I have felt a very strong bond with him. Even more than a bond. Vijayananda has not left me; in a sort of a way, he has entered into me, his being is present inside my being and continues to touch me, to move me, to liberate me... I met Vijayananda for the first time when I was 20 years old, right here in Kankhal; it was November 1977, at which time he had been living at the ashram for about a year and a half... When we next meet, I am 52 years old and in the meantime there have been 32 years of asceticism, sometimes all-out asceticism, and it's not over yet...! And he stayed here all these years, living in the room in which Ma said to him, "Sit here." A memory has just come back to me of a satsang when he told us laughingly that when he was at the ashram at Varanasi, no one had thought to provide him with a bed; he didn't mention it to anyone, so for quite some time he slept on the floor until someone finally noticed! I imagine that someone promptly, and with some embarrassment, brought him something to sleep on ...but he said nothing... If it was the divine will that he should have nothing to sleep on, then that was fine, perfect. From 1986, he sat every day on the little wall inside the temple for satsang. We had the same spiritual mother, the same spiritual affiliation... I sometimes felt some apprehension in the weeks before my departure. If only Vijayananda is still there. And I prayed, "Please, wait for me." But immediately afterwards I felt certain; he would be there for the Kumbha Mela, I would see him again. And all my anxiety disappeared straight away. Now, as we say our final goodbyes, I think about that... I thank him, silently, for staying until now. I know he will not live much longer, that none of us will see him again. And I feel immense gratitude. It must be so uncomfortable to endure a physical body in such a condition... So uncomfortable to stay here for us, day after day, whilst being entirely free, from the moment he leaves his body, to enjoy boundless Joy, infinite Beatitude... Whilst he could quite easily, given his deep level of inner achievement, lie down and die from a peaceful heart attack, bringing about his own death as highly advanced yogis are able to do... I know intuitively that he will not live beyond the Kumbha Mela (though I did not imagine that his death was imminent, however). We have to go, the time has come. We take leave of each other peacefully, soberly, with some luminous smiles...

May 7th 2010

I thus learnt of Swamiji's death on Monday April 5th, like the other members of the group. Jacques announced it very soberly. I remember the response of a very advanced spiritual teacher whose Master had died. It is impossible to imagine, when a disciple is very close to his Master, or even

completely one with him, the degree of love which unites them. It is inconceivable. The relationship with the Master is the deepest, the most beautiful, the strongest of all human relationships, even more than between a mother and her baby. Someone asked Vijayananda how he had felt on the death of his Master and he replied, "It's like a burning brand in an ocean of peace." In other words, terrible pain in an ocean of peace (and acceptance). Jacques remained very down to earth, discreet. He kept watch over Vijayananda two nights in a row, managed to do everything he had to do during the day, and was still able to organise things so that we could come back to Kankhal the following Wednesday. He deserves our heartfelt thanks for everything that he does for others, even during difficult times. Vijayananda has allowed his withered body to wither away a little more. He allowed nature to take its course, and the process of dying to play itself out, without trying to avoid anything whatsoever. Almost at death's door – but concealing the fact – he received a young Indian student to whom he was close and who had just sat his exams. Vijayananda questioned him with the same interest and concern, and perhaps even with the same sense of humour as ever... Even the way in which he died, accompanied by Izou, is another gift of himself... He did it for her. It was his final gift. I was unable to be sad for him, not even for a second. He is FREE. HE is Victorious in Beatitude. He is Vijayananda. Jay Ma, Jay Ma, Jay Vijayananda!