

Memorial Service for Sherifa

Franklin Merrell-Wolff
February 20, 1960

[Opening piano music and singing by Fay Newman.]

Yogi: Lacking a few days it is now a year since Sherifa left this plane to be upon what I have no doubt is a much happier and perhaps even more effective way of life. We should remember that in the work of awakening man, there is no termination; there is simply a movement in a different phase of time to time. Sherifa has merely shifted the plane of her activity. For us, however, here it involves to a radical, perhaps almost a catastrophic change in the program, the problems, of the Assembly. Perhaps it would be well to review our efforts during the past year along with the problem which we as the remnant of the Assembly here face. As of course you all know during the years that both Sherifa and myself were not actively engaged in the work, there was considerable decline.

The problem we face this year and the problem which we continue to face, at least for the near future, is the reactivation of the Assembly. To that end, in the past year it became clear to me that I would have to have some associate if I were to carry on in my part of this work. And I first began a search for someone who might be such an associate; and for the first time, and during that period only, I had the capacity to recognize certain signs to find one that would show the sign, and also be uncommitted and willing. Actually, I found six who showed the sign—responded to it. In about half of the instances they were committed or unwilling, but I finally found one who showed the sign, was uncommitted, and willing. And that is the one whom you know now as Lakshmi Devi.

The second step was to reactivate interest in the Assembly. Instructions that we have had are many years old, have been studied time after time, until it is evident that if the substance has not been taken out of them, the student is not likely ever to pick it up. Something new was needed to give a new impetus. We cannot afford to become stale. It is not wise eternally to read the same material. Sometime we must learn what that material has or there's something wrong with us.

I have available a manuscript, as you know. Actually there's quite a lot of it. Altogether when it's finally recorded, it will be some 800 pages, already written—not all of it re-written. And the results that have come from this group fully met my expectations and more than met them because I have been receiving the reports from Maybelle which are adequate to give me an idea of what the impact of this manuscript upon new members has been. It has stimulated more questions and more interest than I expected and I am gratified. Unfortunately we have not had the same result from the Chicago group. I intend to send to them an example of your questions to see if I cannot bring more light, or they cannot be brought to arouse a greater interest.

We went to Chicago, as you know, in October hoping to reactivate that group. Partly the fault may lie in the group; partly, no doubt, it lies in the changes that have

taken place in the city of Chicago. Other racial groups are beginning to dominate in it and others who have been in similar lecture activities had the same experience we had, namely, that even with good advertising, you do not get the audiences that once could be secured. You do not arouse, apparently, a lasting interest. At least so far, it does not appear that the effort has borne any substantial fruit.

There is an embryo, a group in Tucson, Arizona, young in age with something of the enthusiasm that goes with the young and I'm hopeful there. We had hoped to go to them in March, but it's not going to prove possible this year. The recording work is going on. I am now at page 565 of the book, so you're not going to exhaust it very soon.

Now, that is the way things stand as of now. The next step that's lined up is the reactivation of the ashram complex, including the ashram proper: the means of getting to it; the making of it, if possible, a going activity again; and the reactivation of the ranch as a subsidiary to it. To that end it is our plan. It's the plan for Lakshmi, Mary, and myself to go to the ranch when it becomes possible to do so. To make that possible and to effect the reactivation calls for an initial program of liquidation of real properties here; and then bringing in the necessary tools and programming for establishing permanent headquarters at the ranch. It is planned to put up adequate building where we can assemble as well as dwell. It is planned to make the ranch a place where members can retire, where they can live, say, upon their Social Security, and ultimately make that our prime center of activity. Of course, as you also know, steps along this line have been restricted by the limiting fact of probate of the estate not being closed. It appears that closure may take place next month and that then we may be able to proceed into the liquidating program hoping to establish residence on the ranch when vacated in September.

Now, that's an outline of what has been from headquarters with respect to Assembly affairs. What can be done in the future is to a degree, at any rate, upon the lap of the gods. The average age of Assembly members is too high. We need more youth. We need it badly. There are some elements of youth in Chicago that may be coming up. There is the potentiality, as yet not tested but very promising, in Tucson. And that is the way matters now stand, but I do want to express my appreciation of the response of this group. I have had excellent reports.

Now, I wish everyone here this afternoon to say something. I'll ask Mary to follow me and Lakshmi to follow her, and then let us go around clockwise beginning with Bill, Maybelle, and so on; and a little later Fay will sing for us that song which was such a favorite of Sherifa's, "Maitreya." Mary.

Mary: Yogi, Lakshmi, Fellow Students. Greetings, love, and adoration to our beloved Mother. Countless numbers have stood in her presence and sensed something of her unworldliness, and yet how many recognized the veil Divine that put on the appearance of a human being assuming the outer human nature in order to tread the path and point the way for others to travel—embodied aspect of the One, the divine force in the universe and in the individual. All this, she was. In her whole consciousness, she was all the other aspects of the Divine. She stood for all this while working in the universe to bring down something not yet expressed in the material world and to transform life. We have been unusually blessed in having two such great souls as our teachers. May we never underestimate the priceless help we have received when in one or another of her

divine aspects would move into the personality to point out to us the weaknesses of our own nature that they might be brought to the surface to be looked upon, overcome, and with her help, transformed, for transformed they must be if we are ever to become carriers of the Light. Sometimes I feel as though Mother is right here with us. She hasn't left us at all. I do believe that she still guides us from her new frame of consciousness, we still have her help, and that we always will. And now that Yogi is out of danger with our precious Lakshmi at his side, we renew our pledge to carry on the work that you so dearly loved to the best of our abilities.

Yogi: Thank you.

Lakshmi: Our beloved guru Yogi, and Regent Mother Mary, in memory of our Sherifa Mother Wolff. For the little bit that I have known Mother Wolff, I am very grateful. I have been very fortunate in that little bit of contact, but I think that I will prefer today to leave the bulk of the superlatives to some of you who have known her so much better than I; and, instead, I would like to turn my attention to something of her work. Mother Wolff was of course in her own right a great woman. I don't have to tell you that. She would by herself have done very great things, but in company with our guru, she was able to do greater things; and I think the Assembly of Man is the beginning of a very great work, for this work is not finished. There is a phase of it done, but it's something that has to be carried on. And I think any of us would be presumptuous to think that we could step into her shoes and take over her work and carry on exactly as she had intended it. It's for us to continue the work in the way we understand it, just to be ourselves. To take on her work would be to become a shallow imitation of the real thing. So we have to do the best we know how and do it in our own way, for to carry on the work correctly, that is, in the way which she had originally planned, we would like to know, perhaps, what was in the minds of the founders at the time. What was her goal? What was the reason for founding it? I think if we were attempting to imitate her, nothing would come of it, of the work. We have to find out what she had in mind. And I think that the way to do that would be to try to think of the goal that was hers. And if you can think of some very high goal, the evolution of mankind, the bringing down of the divine force for the transformation of the world, the seeking of the Divine within ourselves, enriching all of nature; her goal was certainly not less than these and perhaps it reached far more—perhaps the world of duality into the Absolute. But as high as we can reach, as high as we can put our own goal, that would be a step in the right direction—a thinking as she had thought and carrying on the work as she intended. Of course, we can't overlook the little things because we say there are no little things; and all the little things are important. But if we set our sights high, the very highest goal, then everything, all the little things will align themselves automatically. And even in our little everyday things, sometimes we wonder, is this right, is that right? But if we can connect it up with the goal and so start in the right direction. And there are plenty of little things that we have to do right now, and some of these things are outlined for us. There have outlined some problems in the path before us. And so I think the most fitting monument that we can build to Sherifa is to carry on the work that she had originally intended.

Yogi: Bill.

Bill: Yogi, Lakshmi, Regent Mary . . . and Fellow Students. On this day of memorial to Sherifa we give our love in heartfelt appreciation for all our great divine Mother represented and has meant to us. On this day of commemoration of the sojourn in the higher realms, I'm sure her consciousness is much more at home there than it ever could be on this plane. I like to think that this realm was even quite familiar to her consciousness while she was still abiding with us. I'm sure it was. As one of a higher development can help those in lower planes, I'm sure that this great soul will look after each and every one of us at the time of our passing and with great love and understanding help us to our rightful place wherever it be according to our nature and our development. Through consecration, dedication, and our desires, we have invoked a higher life that we may be to a more or less degree helpers in the divine plan. In all our ignorance, inefficiency, and shortcomings we ask of thee, Sherifa, help us to be more closely that which in your greater understanding you would have us be. Thank you.

Yogi: Maybelle.

Maybelle: Since I was old enough to think everything for myself, I've always believed that there is a life hereafter. And even though I've gone out into the world to be bombarded with other ideas, still the idea was so implanted in me when I was young, that I couldn't help but keep it there; also it was so innate that I couldn't get it out of my system. And so in spite of all the outside influence that I had been subjected to, I still believe in the life hereafter, but I also believed in death as it stands. But since I have come into the group and we have studied and gone into the matter more fully, I realize now that there is no death; there is only transition. We live here on this world for awhile and then when we have finished, we depart; we depart this life for another life. We give up what we have here for a life that I am sure is much bigger and much vaster than the life that we have here. And Mother has made this transition. The curtain for her has rolled down on this one act of her life, but it has risen on another. Unfortunately we couldn't make the transition with her, but Mother, as some of us have already said, has not wholly left us. She has left with us a great heritage of her writings, her teachings, her advice, the comfort that she has given us when we have been in distress, all these things she has left with us so that we are not alone even though she has gone. But it is up to us to use this heritage constructively rather than to let it dissipate itself through wrong use. In some ways Mother seems closer to me now than she ever did when she was on earth. Just why, I cannot say, but I was thinking how it is in homeopathy you get rid of the grosser physical form and you have the living essence left, and so I feel that that is what it is with Mother and that is the reason that I feel so conscious of her all the time. I read a statement once to the effect that a person cannot pass through a room without leaving some trace of his presence there so that whoever might be trained could detect. Mother certainly has left ample evidence of her passing which those of us who were in close contact with her will never be able to eradicate because she has become so integral a part of our lives. And I hope today on this memorial day that we will take increased devotion to the cause to which she gave such a large part of her life, the bringing of spiritual Light to all mankind.

Yogi: Thank you Maybelle. Harry.

Harry: Yogi, Lakshmi, . . . Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, Lakshmi has virtually taken my entire speech. I wanted to talk about Mother's influence on us here and discuss the plans that we have in the future, which I feel are so very, very important. On all of us, Mother has left some mark—something more than just a memory, something more than written documents—a mark that goes deep into our hearts and into our minds. And we on this plane in our present stage of development can do very little to accomplish in the method she wanted us to accomplish these things without a much greater development on our own part; however, what we can do, what we can accomplish is the outline that Yogi has given us. Actually, I can only reiterate what Lakshmi has said, that our abilities on this plane are to set our hearts and our minds to the physical accomplishment; the spiritual development that we are trying to follow will undoubtedly improve, but the physical accomplishment, the rebuilding of the ashram, the development of the Assembly through the younger people, the responsibility of the older people who have received the guidance over these years, these people who can guide the younger ones, who can impart the wisdom that they have gotten from Mother, some of us here in the group, well the entire group, the Chicago group, or wherever, some of the older members do have the knowledge locked within them. For them to bring it out is a monumental task in itself almost as difficult as it is for the younger ones to find the time, the money, and the ability to do the physical work that is involved. But I myself have had occasional glimpses of knowledge that I can't express, but I feel it, I occasionally recognize it, and sometimes I can put it into words; and I feel that you who have been with the group for many, many years can impart this type of knowledge, can find within you the ability to give the others the incentive to carry on Mother's original intentions. But our future depends on both phases being developed; but that if we try to spread too much of the physical work over the entire group that would be a sort of a loss of concentration of power, and the same thing applies to the knowledge that the Assembly represents—a knowledge that we have gained. If we try to spread it over too large a portion, that the power behind it would be lost, but I've always felt that if there were two segments working together—the ones who impart the knowledge and give the incentive and the other segment who accomplish the physical necessities—that the group could be cohesive and that our future could become more intact through new blood, new life, the work that Yogi is doing in imparting his knowledge, perhaps, as he says, leaving out the old stale words and putting new life into the new, these things represent a change that is taking place now that mean the entire future of the Assembly. And as we accomplish it, as we work together and move forward over perhaps the next decade, I think that Mother's guidance will always be with us, her presence will be felt, and that the real accomplishment will come in this next decade. And I think that most of us with divine help will be here to see the accomplishment moving forward.

Yogi: At this point I will ask Fay Newman to sing the song "Maitreya." "Maitreya" came to mean at one time a very great deal to Sherifa, and as you probably remember, Maitreya was the name which in prophesy was given to the next Great Buddha, somewhat corresponding to the Vedantic Tenth Avatar. We have some evidence that she has the right to use the name as a title at the present time. Bear all of this in mind as the reason why I've asked for the singing of this particular song.

[Fay Newman plays the piano and sings "Maitreya."]

Yogi: Thank you Fay. Murray, could you . . .

Murray: Mother and Yogi, Lakshmi Devi, and Fellow Students. Mother was a glorious . . . and a living Presence. I have heard her referred to as an ogre, also as a saint . . . and to all of us she was the foundation behind the group, that to which we turned in our troubles, that to which we recognized as being . . . at all times as a steadfast rock in her love for the students and her desire to see the students grow and express their potentialities. And that we have heard referred to as an ogre, wouldn't that be a reflection or projection from our own personalities, and isn't the saint also that which we can recognize in all and everything, for we have that potentiality within ourselves to recognize what we will here, and we will recognize what our goal is. We will recognize what needs to be expressed. Fortunately, where Mother is now that which is earthly is left behind her and only the saint remains, that part of her that was expressed in love and compassion and desire to see growth. And I know that at the present time she has carried on her plans started here, working on the inner planes to see the Order grow as individuals, as an effective focus for help to humanity and to see the Ashrama Sangha flower into the original plan of a real base of spiritual development. Anybody can erect a monument, dedicate a building in memory of somebody, but how many of us have that rare opportunity to help dedicate our lives in a monument such as this which is not a static something, but is growing, growing as our goal to . . . that our imaginations and spiritual work grows, something to go on possibly for centuries hence spreading upon what we have input, and be a beacon for centuries to come. How many have that opportunity? And how many will dare to dedicate themselves to that end? We wouldn't be here if we didn't have that within us that makes it possible. We all have it, and we all can express it—express that which Mother herself expressed: the love that transforms into something living, something that is eternal, the desire to radiate or project or express, what you will, the Divine that is always seeking such recognition and expression. That type of a monument, we can be proud of. That type of a monument is what we will have. Thank you.

Yogi: Thank you Murray. Peter.

Peter: Yogi, Regent Mother Mary, Lakshmi. Now, judging from the talks of the different students who . . . teachers, I think that we have at least something in common and that is that we all take in the past and look into the future for the development and the progress of the Assembly. Mother, of course, was the greater worker, or the harder worker. She laid a foundation of this work which we can probably compare it with any physical structure. The foundation seems to be one of the most difficult things to lay down because it usually involves problems that have to be eradicated, have to be solved before the work can go on, before the structure can proceed. But, just the same, the finishing product, which is the goal as has been mentioned before, is also difficult. Through the progress of a building, whether it's a structure or whether it's a work such as this, there have to be changes as we go along because times and conditions will delete or make difficult, if not impossible, the way the original plans were laid out. This seems to be the point where we have reached and a change is being made; and let's not forget that the finishing of the job is just as important as the foundation and it also is just as difficult. So it's up to us to maintain our structure and follow the foundation when a change is necessary to accomplish the goal which was laid out for us to follow.

Yogi: Thank you Peter. And now Peggy.

Peggy: Yogi, Lakshmi, Regent Mother, Fellow Students. The symbol of the three garments seems to have been working in my consciousness to try to formulate into a little talk that symbolizes bringing Mother in rapport with this plane. One symbol is of *love*; one, I would say, is of *unity*; and the other a symbol of *beauty*. The first one is from a recollection I have of when we were sitting around the fire at camp, and as we all know, the outer rim of the fire in the old kitchen it got pretty cold. It was warm close to the fire, but the stream would be on that side, and this one particular day, night rather, I was on the outer rim and my back was pretty chilly and Mother said here, give Peggy my coat, because she was sitting close to the fire, . . . and I was way over there and I took it and I was very grateful for it. The next symbol—to me these inner experiences are very true when they come in a certain phase and generally we don't talk about them but when we're together and we feel that we want to reinforce that love that we have—was an inner experience I had when I was living at San Fernando and Mother had that lovely dark blue satin robe on that looked so lovely on her. And we were talking and she said, "I'm going now, Peggy," but she said, "I'll always be with you." And it seemed as if she left and yet we were talking and our consciousnesses were together and that's the way it is now. I mean we all have mentioned it and we all feel it. And it is the reality to me because that's the way I seem to be convinced of things—that the conviction went with it. And the third was the one since she's passed where I saw her in this beautiful pink colored robe in the chiffon that she always said she loved, these soft clinging fabrics. And that was the symbol of beauty. And she just looked so wonderful. And then about three weeks after that, having seen her, I was over at Penney's and I saw these scarves and there was this same color of this that I'd seen on Mother. I'd never seen it in a scarf. I'd never seen it in a dress. And as we know how things can be intermitted from point to point, it was just as if Mother said, sort of showed it to me and I bought it and the sales lady said, "Isn't this a beautiful shade," and I said, "Yes, it is." That's why I wanted to take it, because I didn't want to wear it. It just seemed like it was part of Mother's consciousness, and so I bought it and I put it on the table at the Second Degree every time we have a meeting because it's a symbol of that beautiful consciousness that she had, which was a wonderful combination of the strength and the beauty that she had, which to me is a most inspiring combination and uplifting. And so I know that Mother is with us and she will help us in this work and guide us and guide the work and that no one can change my idea about that. Thank you.

Yogi: Thank you Peggy. And now Fay.

Fay: Yogi, Mother Mary, Lakshmi, Mother. Probably, Mother should have been first. Peggy mentioned beauty. I know that she was the first one of us to make a lot on that point about Mother. But this point was very close to me . . . And all weekend he's been thinking that even though this seems to be a feminine cycle where women have freedom in the outer world, we don't find women of Mother's great beautiful in the outer world. The qualities—I myself have been trying to be a mother in a small way on the physical plane and because of this I feel closest to Mother in that plane because I can see the great problems that she had with her children as I have with only my two little ones. The great responsibility that a mother has in molding their character, in being a teacher,

in being a nurse, in being the healing quality that cools their brow when they're not feeling well, when they're sick, when there's problems. And all these things I can see in Mother because of just having the small experience on the physical side. The abilities that she had of healing; you know the great experience—I'm sure all of you know the experience that Harry and I had with the healing of Mark. And these are qualities which seem to be in the . . . should be rising now with the freedom of women and still we don't see it in the outer realm. And for this reason, Mother is the great example that we should bring to others because when we go somewhere, why not say a word of healing as she did. We don't have to criticize all the time. We know that there are terrible things going on, but I have found that perhaps that when we're with other people just one word of some encouragement brings out a quality in that person that may turn something new in their life. I have an . . .¹ I've also participated in teaching music, which also gives me a great opportunity to say things. When you're in a teaching capacity you do have opportunities that might not arise in other lines. And there's a lady I met, she was 65 years old and considered by others old, and yet she had always wanted to express herself in a musical way. And I said, "Why not? You love it. Let's do it." And she started and her whole life has been changed by this one little thing; and this is what Mother had pointed out to me so strongly: that just one word in the right direction and the whole life is completely changed. And I don't see why—we're not of Mother's caliber; we know that—and still we can think of these things when we go places and we're with people constantly, there are words of power and meaning that will sway masses. And Mother had this ability and I . . . Well, you know that we just can't express enough joy in having been on the physical plane with her and still feeling the impress of her being with us.

Yogi: Thank you Fay. And now may we all together sing "The Love Divine" with Fay playing. Let's rise.

[All sing.]

Yogi: Let us close with our usual words.

Let there be Peace within the Universe.

Let the Power of the Warriors of Light be made manifest.

Let Wisdom guide us and Love protect us throughout our lives.

Peace be with you.

And with you, Peace.

¹ There appears to have been a problem with the tape recorder at this point.