

June 27 1992 Kirtan at Old Vicarage (Mahalakshmi and Jai Narain)

This became known as the 'Canopy' or 'Tent' kirtan, because Ambikananda had instructed the kirtan-givers to erect a kind of tent or room for the kirtan by setting up a canvas-walled extension from the exterior doors of the drawing-room to a point some 12 feet into the garden. The canopy room had to be long enough and wide enough to provide space for a sizeable number of devotees. The kirtan began in the kirtan room, moved to the sitting room, then to the canopy or tent, and finally back into the kirtan room. Ambikananda was pleased with this kirtan, describing as the 'best ever'.

In the tent extension Shiva Shakti read some notes she had taken in 1969, near the start of Ambikananda's mission, including: 'The world and its beings are enclosed in the prison of God's hand, which is also the play and lila of God. His fingers are prison bars. When you are one with Him you can break the bars and be free. ...'

The kirtan then moved on to that part of the programme which Ambikananda had specially prepared for the devotees, consisting of extended readings from Poem of the Man-God by Maria Valtorta.¹ Selected devotees were given photocopied passages from the visionary's account of the life of Jesus. A soft guitar background underlay the readers' voices as they read the passages from Valtorta, each one chosen for that devotee by Swamiji. Tryambaka's reading was about the power of singing and music. Mahayogini's reading came next and was followed by Sanjana's, whose reading comprised Jesus's words to the apostles regarding the Holy Spirit.

'You see how Jesus promises to his disciples,' Swamiji exclaimed.

Then came Gopal Christ, who read a complicated passage in which Jesus compared the infinite variations among human souls to leaves in a forest of incense trees. After prasad, devotees returned to the main kirtan room where there were more readings from Valtorta. These included a passage, read by Hari Om, in which the doctrine of reincarnation was condemned by Jesus.² Later, Sarasvati was called on to read a further passage, which concerned Holy Wisdom. Jai Narain too was called on, and he read Valtorta's account of Jesus teaching at the Temple on the subject of the four kinds of Divine Light: light of love, light of wisdom, light of beauty, light of knowledge.

There seems little doubt that Ambikananda had put the Valtorta readings at the centre of the kirtan (though he provided no expansion, comment or explanation to the texts he had asked to be read out). But it was also a kirtan in which songs to Shiva were specially prominent, with Tryambaka called on particularly to sing Shakaracharya's Hymn to Shiva at least four times.

Aug 2, 1992 Visit to Ramakrishna Loka

A number of devotees (Mahalakshmi, Jai Narain and Satchidananda) were present at Ramakrishna Loka for lunch. Ambikananda spoke mainly about the previous kirtan, and the readings from Valtorta. A bedridden recluse for the last twenty-eight years of her life, Maria Valtorta received a series of visions for ten years before she died. These 'dictations' give a detailed account of the life of Jesus from his birth to the Passion, and read like an elaboration of the Gospel. In 1960 the work was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books, and dismissed by L'Osservatore Romano, the official Vatican newspaper, as 'a Life of Jesus badly fictionalized'. In the 1980s, however, her name came up in the course of the Marian visions of the Medjugorje children. According to one of them, Vicka Ivankovic, in 1981 the Virgin Mary told her at Medjugorje: "If a person wants to know Jesus he should read the

¹ The Italian mystic and visionary Maria Valtorta (1897-1961).

² This caused considerable surprise among devotees who had been taught that the cycle of birth and death was absolutely basic. When asked about this apparent contradiction, Swamiji quoted Jesus's words on the necessity of being born again and, when some devotees told him that Catholics opposed the idea of reincarnation, he simply said, 'Well, they're wrong.' Ambikananda's methods, like that of most if not all gurus, included what he called 'criss-cross', or 'Come confusion, come delusion!', and this seems a prime example.

Poem of the Man God by Maria Valtorta. That book is the truth." Ivankovic repeated this message in an interview in January 1988.³

Swamiji's discourse:

You can't have light and darkness, you can't have God and Mammon, you have to choose. But that doesn't mean you have to lead a monotonous life. It's because it's so serious that everything comes at the end with a smile. You tell a person off, and he can't swallow it - but if he's afraid of that, what will it be like when death comes? If you're frightened of the ghost you can't see Shiva! Devotees must be very careful. The life of a devotee must be up to date with what is happening. If the life of a devotee is at a low level, there is suffering, paining; then there is only a faint idea, a residue.

'The Virgin was there [at the kirtan]; she has been warning a lot. I hear things are pretty bad, but it's good for the world to learn. Heavy warning. Without suffering people are too materialist, they can't anticipate. So war is a punishment in one way... All are affected, all suffer. The GSR says, the block, the victim and the executioner, all are one. But if you are not concerned, then even if the whole world finishes you are not affected. It depends on how much you are in the world and for the world, what is your mission, your work, your dharma, your madness. There must be peace on earth for men of good will, but there has never been peace from time immemorial unless in the golden age, and now it's the iron age, and that's the worst. For me it is better to die than see the world and friends in such a terrible state. I have always fought death, but now I'm a bit sorry to fight him again. Life is like a flower, one minute it blossoms, it's beautiful, then it retires; if you're very good it re-blossoms in a different garden, transplanted; it may even be offered, if you are very blest. Otherwise it's the cycle of birth and death, and so on and so forth.

'But this is not your headache. Your headache is to remove the thorns that pain you, that is man's first headache. Your problem must be beautified by holy technique. Man is dropped here, fallen, torn out of heaven, there's a fall. Then the game starts, Satan tempts. Perhaps you could transplant and graft yourself again, unify, unite yourself, the individual Self to the higher, these two joined in one - it's not easy. It's a chalice. When two become one it's a chalice, it's a blessed state.⁴ The great sacrament of marriage is when God makes two souls come together as one and blesses them, and they stay as one, and marriage forms part and parcel of spiritual life.

'But the rest is bitter. If there is no union, life is bitter. Jesus suffered a lot; Ramakrishna suffered; Krishna suffered, Rama, Christ. From the beginning to the end, who has lived in bliss, bliss, bliss? Even Ramakrishna for 12 years was crying, so that he came to the point nearly to kill himself. So what for ordinary microcosmic beings like us? But we throw a gem; the gem that we throw is the word, the word that is given, and it was at your place; that was the best kirtan ever [four weeks earlier] since we started kirtans. Unfortunately people don't know - as Ramakrishna said, "Go to the market place and find out how much it is worth." Kirtan is God's present; *kirtana*, *manana*, *sarvana*, three states to ponder. It all depends on one's interest. What I gave you to read [at the kirtan], it was all about darkness and light. Jesus himself gave a warning, "I am the Light of the World." Then he watched for the reaction. If people are interested... but if not, He accepted the free will. It all depends on one's interest. But then I went back, I asked Jesus, "How do the devotees receive you?" And he responded, "Very well."

'But this is the Word. You can't have better than the Word. First was the Word. Anything added to that or minimized from that will be judged. Don't add anything to the Bible, don't minus anything. Leave it as it is, except whatever is not written, and he has given that because so much is missing. But we are not adding anything, we can comment, but you can't be wiser than the Word. The Word is all knowledge absolute; that's OM; OM Tat Sat; That alone; I am existence, pure knowledge and love.

³ From Wikipedia, 2007

⁴ The standard figure-ground image shows a two-handed chalice and/or an embracing couple.

‘So Jesus was crying many times worse than Ramakrishna, crying, crying so much, not for realization, but for man’s benefit, crying to the extent of sweating blood. And we see how people have still not benefited. So in our position it’s much the same, when we give something. But I didn’t do anything. I just prayed to take the pleasure and the pain, send a Christmas present of being reborn, and see how it is received. Jesus was there, in the tent.

‘Anyhow, a seed is sown, Now it is up to them how they take it. You must have faith. And you must have grace. Sri Ramakrishna said, “Thy grace is my only cure.” The elevation of the spirit, the reassurance of the link, these are positive things, one must not fiddle, these are very delicate things. Ramakrishna said, “While there is the slightest defect in the telegraph line you don’t get the message.” The slightest defect in man and they don’t get any message. You might be here but you will not understand. If I say I am God you will not see me as God. There will be a veil, a crackling, a blur, a confusion. As Mother said, “Come confusion, come delusion.” So you have to be fine, very refined, and do sacrifice, and be aware. Even your breathing must be pure, etheric, breath is holy breath, you have to breathe God. This is health. This is the purifying: OM Ham-Sa, Ham-Sa, Ham-Sa, twentyone times, to purify the senses.

‘All these things have to be done. But too many times and we are repeating the same record. Well, those who are bored, let them buzz off, clear off. Here they have the clear-off to go to night clubs and different places for pleasure, but there they will be sorry, their children will be sorry. Those who are messing about face unprepared death, an unprepared death condition. Drought, earthquake - you can’t stop all this, drought, famine, earthquake, hurricane and so on. A lot of things are beyond men’s power. God gives free will, but you shouldn’t make anything worse, try to minimize others’ suffering. There is a law, the ten commandments, which shows you how to live - if you can’t find yourself there you are one of the outlaws; and nature itself abides by the law, the law of God: night, day, sun, seasons, flowers.

‘Students have holidays, but there is no holiday here, there is calling straightaway: stop the heart, stop this, stop that, get ready, no messing about. Spiritual life is very bitter, the chalice is bitter. It’s very beautiful, but it’s bitter for those who cannot comply, for the worldly wise who want this and that, both, who want the lion’s share. God is so merciful, he will no doubt give you, but you shouldn’t take advantage. That’s why I say, if I have no legs I have mind; if I have no mind I have a heart; if I have no heart I have ears; if I have no ears I can still breathe. As long as the last breath is *there*, I have an opportunity. It’s beautiful. See the hope. Hope, then faith and charity. Hope must be for something. I hope I will be meditating. I hope I will be singing. And hope is the last warning: I hope you change. If you are guilty you are forgiven. I hope you change – the only thing is hope. Hope is an action, an interval, a chance to be practical.

‘The devotee is a bit of a rogue, therefore suffering, darkness, storm, rain, cloud – all these are symbols, because there “the Sun does not shine, fire does not burn...”⁵ The man has so many lives to try and attain. Knowledge and love are there at the end. But now knowledge itself is given. So swallow it, hear it. After you hear you dissolve, you become camphor, where there is no residue. You dissolve in pure knowledge, pure existence, and you attain even to bliss, unseekingly. Unseekingly. Give bliss to those who want bliss; but I myself don’t want it. Ramakrishna knows where there is pure love with unwanting knowledge. Therefore he seeks a devotee ignorant perhaps like himself. He got his knowledge through love, he prefers that to a big Vivekananda, as long as he sees Narayan with love.

‘So that’s the meaning of God seeking his devotees like a mother cow seeking her calf. God is a beggar for his devotees. He begs, he begs, and he knows that here there is no motive. He can be pranky, mischievous, like the gods are pranky - Ramlala with Ramakrishna, making faces, disobedient, and Krishna, and all this. They sport in this world. But the seriousness reaches out far beyond even renunciation. It’s not for knowledge and pride, it’s a natural gigantic stride, the first step

⁵ Mundaka Upanishad

of Lord Vishnu as dwarf.⁶ Some people have got such renunciation. The very first step was transcendental aloofness and renunciation. “He who is aloof while living is alone aloof after the destruction of the body”⁷

‘This one who is ignored here, he is visited, he is recognized from above, from spheres, spirit worlds, psychic worlds, from faery, story, dreams, nightmares, from the liberated ones, the bound ones, the free, and the ever-free. He is the recognized son from the four cardinal points of existence, of the square of the dice. Any number is good. One is very good, one is the One. Two is: you and I are the same, you and I were together once. Now you call me S, like reverend, but you also were, but you have been low now. How do you recognize me? Because of something; you recognize the power, it’s seen, it’s recognized - not in this world but in the other worlds. In this world the power is blurred, the power is, “When I see I shall believe”, for the St Thomas devotees. But in the other worlds they come and call, “Hullo, you are so and so.”

‘So there are things happening. Don’t dilly-dally. Life is short. Pull up the sock. Listen well! That word which you may not hear, that word is a chance Eucharist, giving an opportunity again to curb the pride, the intellect, to tuck yourself in the room that has been kept for that purpose and abandoned. Open the room, clear away the dust, light an incense, put out some flowers – all this is to create an atmosphere. But let your soul be acquainted in a transcendental mystical relationship with God. God is in heaven, but also He is everything, animate and inanimate.

‘So this is the state to realize. Sometimes we say mantra, sometimes prayer, meditation; this is one way to attain, if a person has true love. But sometimes a person cannot do all these types of bhakti yoga; we are speaking of transcendental love alone, love of Satya Yug, golden age, pure love of God. Well, maybe this love is not matured, ripened or developed, then the person has to go on the ABC of work and worship, work and worship, everything with a spirit of detachment, thanking God, working diligently. But nothing is to be for ever, all this will go eventually. Duty for duty’s sake, that’s all.

‘So spiritual life is not an easy life. It is too serious to speak it seriously. People will do it if they want to, if that is their need. But if they are not made of that, don’t disturb their faith; give them courage and hope. If a person is desperate, say, “Have hope.” Otherwise the question of hope also will not arise. But when you live in *that*, that is sufficient. *Tat* is self-sufficient, there is no need for anything else. This is a beginning with abundance. Then it’s self-supplied, you can be pranky, a child. You have to wait a bit in creation time, but sooner rather than later it will materialize, unexpectedly it will come, you will get it. But as you have no desire you live on pranks, you live on fantasy.

‘Come and watch the video of the last kirtan. Video is more beautiful than the kirtan in one way, because you can see the whole thing in a panoramic way. While you are there you concentrate on what you are doing, you are absorbed in that, can’t see who is next, you just grab left and right, and by chance they were there, they were so blest. Then you realize it was not you, it was the Holy Spirit that was working.

‘We have come, we have sown the seed, and now it’s the devotees’ headache. You can’t force it, God respects free will. Well, it’s true that the “good doctor presses the patient’s chest and forces medicine down the throat”,⁸ and sometimes we do that, but it’s not easy, when the medicine itself is bitter, to go on the chest as well, you might kill the patient then and there. It’s a western world, a western philosophy, and just the idea of God and meeting can blow your mind. On top of that, to stand on your chest – it’s elephant on elephant! The whole thing collapses! You have to be a little balanced.

‘I am so serious I am severe, but we speak yoga of love, and yoga of love is very forgiving and compassionate. What you are talking about is discipline, and that doesn’t get you anywhere. It may

⁶ In his dwarf incarnation, Vamana, Lord Vishnu covered the three worlds in three strides.

⁷ *Vivekachudamani*

⁸ Ramakrishna’s definition of a good doctor.

give you such a pleasure to do something, wash something, but if every time I say, “This is not washed enough,” and ten times I make you do it, though you are willing you say, “Oh, he’s always nagging at me, what’s wrong with it?” Love doesn’t see faults, love is very perfect, pure love is perfect, it eliminates a lot of things; love is perfection, perfection is forgiveness, perfection is transcendental, it’s achievement, it’s what you are trying to do: if you have love, you have already done it, finished it. Outwardly it might be dirty, but in your heart, in your soul, it is clean. Love is not an outer demonstration, that’s what we are saying. So if you have love, people sometimes cannot see.

‘Ramakrishna says, In one man there is more power than in another. Everyone may meditate, but the power of receiving is different, power of link, of connection, of approach, power to receive and to manifest is different – jada samadhi, fully conscious of something, consciousness becomes aware of reality: now I am a link. These are a little help, I don’t say they are an end, but even yogis don’t attain – “Out of thousands only one or two come to know Me.”⁹ God sends his saints, his mystics; they may be sick in bed, but their power is tremendous, they are all over the place without being physically present, like Anne Catherine Emmerich who discovered where the Virgin’s place was. And today it’s history. These are the messengers, only known in the spirit world, by God, the angels, the dead. Where one man manifests power they all go there, they are attracted, but this kind of power we don’t use. Life is only here to attain to something. Without that life you can be very well but you are dead. In one way better to die and finish with all this.

‘I must not leave what I have got already, go too much as a curber, unless it is an order. There are [other] devotees also. There’s a lot of research going on, so I want time for myself. I just happened to be free today, [but] I am busy with myself, busy with [other] realms, I am busy with the living, busy with the dead, I am busy with a lot of things. Plus material things, so I don’t want to sleep, just rest. My time is quite limited in one way.

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⁹ GSR