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1 Jan 1996 Swamiji at Old Vicarage

Ambikananda had brought a video of the previous 'Disco' kirtan at Newbury (Atmananda's house) which he had edited and amplified.

He said:

'If you want to watch a tape to start the new year it might help you unlock the gate of the year, so that's the main purpose why we have come. This is a straightforward sacrifice to start the year. We have condensed and joined many videos.

'Watching something previously just before Christmas has changed my life, so I have gone very Hinduism, As I told Shiva Shakti, just one word you can say to someone makes lifelong change. But you have to work for your wages, you can't bribe. Experience is a grace, we don't ask for all these things, but by giving myself I get so much unwanted knowledge about state of body – knee, ankle, everything - because of my dedication. But I am not looking for that...'

Ambikananda stressed the greatness of Ramakrishna:

'It is so good of Ramakrishna to say that just one sixteenth of his practice is enough. God, God, God, what a boon, what a clarification, what a clarified butter you lot have got for last 25 years! You have got the real clarified butter, all you have to do is turn that into ghee and make a homa sacrifice of your life at the end, mendicant stage, smear your body and roam about in great delight, isn't it? There's nothing much secret that has been kept, it is given so blatantly that you don't even appreciate it. It all goes like sound and music [laughs], but quite a bit has been given if you examine. Not everything is put into mantric form that is perfect, but at least it is more or less, it gives a clue. Either you reach the goal or you deviate, but if you have no onepointedness, if you deviate, then you go back to zero, to earthplane...

'I have so much faith in what I do. "Trust and believe."¹ It's a mysterious place where I live, lots of things happen there, but I am a worker and detached. Not long ago the Devil came and showed me his face, it was like a bird's skeleton with a beak – that's the face of the devil. Lots of released souls come and show themselves to me in thankfulness. Though I am not Christian I send a prayer to purgatory, to hell, and a lot benefit. It's not selfish, personal. Our place can be big, huge, it's all for somebody else. Jesus is always there.'

Swamiji went on to mention to his spiritual experience at Himlaya Ashram ² when he was 'bouncing' and 'saw the Virgin with child, and the Virgin gave me that Hallelujah – that's her word, she took it and gave it to Quintessence.'

20 Jan 1996 Glen Lodge, Notes from Shiva Shakti. Also present Madonna, Satchidananda
Ambikananda said:

'...Our asram is ever based on trust. When you break that trust you are in trouble - fined, or under observance. They have to know what they are receiving ... We have always given much more than people were expecting to get. When we give the gem and they are not ready they don't know what they are getting..

¹ Australian devotee Ronald McDonald had recently written and sent to Ambikananda a spiritual book with "Trust and Believe" as subtitle.

² June 20 1971. Witnessed by the writer.

‘You have to come to a conclusion in life, or when life ends over and over there is rebirth, recycle (but don’t worry, it will be taken care of by somebody beyond your power. Even the broken notes will be put properly)³...

‘Enough notes. The main thing is Oneness in a colour that never loses itself: the Blue One. Blue is the colour of profundity, like sea or sky. There is some blue on Madonna, and blue is healing, blue is power – Krishna – besides profound meditation.’

May 18, 1996 Kirtan Diddlesbury (Wales) for Sati

This kirtan was held in memory of Sati, a much loved devotee who had recently died. It took place in a primary school on the Welsh borders where Sarasvati was headmistress. Ambikananda was unwilling to have the kirtan at Eithen because there was some disharmony between devotees there

Ambikananda spoke a little at the start:

‘All we have is heart... But there is like nothing the language of the heart... You have to have a heart. Don’t develop a stone in it...’

After a song from Mahayogini he organized a special ceremony in commemoration of Sati. The devotees formed a ring, holding hands, and there was a ritual involving a black cloth.

‘Two minutes’ silence,’ he declared. ‘You will think of Sati. Eternal rest grant her... Sing one of her songs

A song was sung by Hari Om, and then Swamiji asked devotees to shake hands with each other. ‘Be friendly from now onwards,’ he told them. ‘Think of colour, the colour of love... Think of Jesus’s heart...’

Mahayogini sang the Fatima prayer: ‘I bow for those who do not bow, I pray for those who do not pray, I love for those who do not love, etc’

Swamiji set aside three flowers from the ceremony for Sati: two were for Tryambaka, one for Mahalakshmi. Later he brought in all the devotees and asked them say this same mantra three times in unison:

‘Glory to my Guardian Angel in the celestial court, Amen.’

He then began to laugh, a forced, theatrical laugh that went on for a long while, and asked devotees to do the same. After they had done this he told them: ‘You have defeated your evil.’

Next, Gayatri led devotees in bhajans of Hari Narayana.

‘Be in India,’ Swamiji cried out as Sada Siva played tabla to Gayatri’s harmonium. ‘Suppose you are in India, holy land, thrice blessed, full of joy, at the Ganges, dancing... Narayan the Protector!...

Hari, Hari, Hari bol!’

The bhajan, clapping, singing and dancing continued for a long time. Swamiji then said:

‘Contemplate on Hari Narayana. In your heart there is a lotus. Let that lotus of your heart open, and visualize either Shiva, or Krishna, your Ishta Dev, your Devi, your mystic friend, your Beloved. Join your Beloved in eternal union... Hari! Hari! Hari!... We are doing all this for those who do not, who cannot. Some do not know how to start, do not know the meaning of the mystic alphabet which is placed in these lotuses, the alphabet of the subtle body. The first time I met Sati, she was drawing kundalini, beautiful, all these petals, mantras, the mantra has Sanskrit letters...’⁴

At this kirtan Ambikananda devoted considerable time and attention to two new guests, Paul and Sue, who had been introduced by Brahma (‘Brahma has brought Brahmananda,’ Swamiji said, thus suggesting a spiritual name for Paul). From that time onwards Brahmananda and Brahmani played

³ This may refer exclusively to the taker of this note.

⁴ See Tantric scriptures, e.g. *Garland of Letters*, tr. C G Woderoffe

an important part in the ashram, not only in the restoration and maintenance of Glen Lodge after Ambikananda's passing, but also in their contributions to kirtans. They also frequently visited the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur Math in India, where they were initiated by the spiritual master and president of the mission, the late Swami Gahanananda.

June 2, 1996 Lunch at Glen Lodge

Ambikananda was cooking a meal for Sri Lakshmi, Jai Narain, Gayatri and Satchidananda. He was in prophetic mode, saying that humans in future times would be 'chalky and tubby, with no spinal sprout'. He went on to describe the sensation of losing your body as experienced by Vivekananda (GSR), 'but so much more if you experience it yourself, the fright of stepping into eternity. The more you go the more your limbs dissolve. Oh yes, jacket and all this flies of its own accord. Next you see your leg dropping, next you see your arm dropping, next you see you have no tummy. "What has become of my body?" Vivekananda said. And this I am seeing live, I am telling you. I see you disappear, I see all this in front of me, I describe it live, all this disappears, this is the untold frightening state of eternity, no one knows the end – "To My power there is no end, I am infinite Self." You get frightened, you become a bubble, and in that bubble only existence is Him, not you, you are only a reflection of his ray of love.

'Have you never heard any of this before? Make one step, I make ten. You see, in my last days I give you a lot of tips, but "Come confusion come delusion," otherwise you will want to be that and nothing else. You may not be able to work, or you may be silent, and you won't be able even to touch a pen because it is metal, it will cut you... It's all symbol, the sword of the Mother, the face of the Mother, the eye of the Mother, so then you have to meditate on the eye of the Mother, only the eye. A secret: the lotus eye, the eye of perfection, see nothing but the perfect of the perfect, the eye of God, sit⁵ like God, see like God, realize like God! But you are confined in a body of coffin, this body is a coffin.

'We have become rotten - so be rotten in the Mother, you see where the defect comes, falling in this earth, it's a secondary river, a channel in the sushumna⁶ of human beings. Here you find human beings struggling, so take that channel, otherwise we are doomed, lost, doomed to come back again and again. So we have to go back to these, we have to be reunited, in union with the You and I, united... One has got a sight of the Seer, by His grace... so live in the world as a living dead, say "Nothing is mine". The more you desire the more you are born, a pregnancy of brambles in your stomach. All kinds of problems again...'

Oct 26, 1996 Kirtan at Corfton Rd (Madonna)

Hindu Diwali festival at this time. At this kirtan Ambikananda talked informally with devotees for some time. Then he performed a little ceremony for the departed: 'It is right to remember them whenever you are eating or drinking,' he said.

Later he spoke about scripture: 'You have to take a scripture yourself and dig into it and sow the seed. For us to come and do it - in one way it's quite boring and tedious and hard labour, and it doesn't always work because the mind can fly and leave the scripture. But you have to be compatible, and you have to be a bhakta by yourself... The volunteers who don't seek a result, product or fruit of their work, these are the ones who are affiliated above earthplane, these are the miracle workers, appearing and disappearing on the earth, these are the guides. They may not be the engine but they are the guards in the train, to take these passengers to their destination.'

After some more talk he played guitar and sang,

⁵ i.e. meditate

⁶ In Tantra the mystic channel along the spinal cord up which the awakened Kundalini travels

‘Jai Ma Durga, Jai Maha Shakti.’

He followed this with a Sanskrit chant to the Divine Mother.

‘Keep on the vibe,’ *he told the devotees.* ‘Now we will do *japa* on the Name of Shiva. You have got your *jap* [beads] with you? First, you chant OM 21 times for purifying the mind, intellect, ego, heart, the senses - feeling, touch, sight, smell...

AUM AUM AUM [*The harmonics coming in higher – is it a fifth above main note? - sounds like an invisible heavenly choir joining in to the voice of Ambikananda and the devotees*]

‘Gong, gong, gong. Do it three times. When you have good health it’s good to do it all day, but when you will be old like me you will not be able to do all this. When I was young I didn’t know even the meaning, but after I was chanting this I was going in trance, or in between. And at Kedarnath in the caravan, and even when I was still doing cooking in the kitchen, washing up, I could hear - and I am out of the body. So health is very important, and freedom from distraction, responsibility so that you can completely dedicate your mind. And we will now couple it with ‘OM namah Shivaya, Shivaya namah OM

Finally Shiva Shakti sang a hymn to Mother in the form of Bhavatarini, the name of the Divine Mother Kali at Dakshineswar. Devotees took up the refrain:
‘OM Bhavatarini.’

9 Nov 1996 Swamiji at Old Vicarage

Ambikananda has just come from Peterborough Hospital with Satchidananda. He was talking to Nita, Sada Siva, Mahalakshmi and Jai Narain, and enjoying the meal prepared for him, especially the trifle (‘I have come for that!’).

He told us he had begun to watch television late at night.

‘...Mind over matter, false gods, snakes, all this. Well, in vision we have seen worse things, it was nothing, just to awaken westerners. Therefore you pass the time, instead of sitting in bed, restless and twisting, being possessed. So you get up, sit , then you flick something. I have tummy upset, I can’t read. Ramakrishna says everything is said in the book, but if you are not well how can you carry out anything much? I do as much as I can, but when you are not well – even the Vedas say that there is no yoga if you are not well... So you are restless, you are possessed ... We watch the news, see what is happening. Otherwise you cannot convert people. You cannot speak just spirituality, you have to entertain them and talk their language and to their level. So in one way I am aware of what the world is...

‘When you fall asleep you go further, you go like a rocket, plus the combination of pain, of medicine, side effects, plus eating very little – everything matters a bit... Everyone is subject, Ramakrishna was quite sick, Vivekananda had asthma, Sarada Devi had heavy gout. Plus also vagaries, my own life, karma, everything, works here. Maybe there is quite a bit to pay back before you go. Who else is going to pay it back?

‘ ... Of course this kirtan singing of the name of God, it “pulverises mountains of sin”. We like to have Diwali kirtan, to come out of the body, expand, dilate, to have kirtan with tabla, harmonium, heart and core of India, where ancestors have been practising in a cave satsang... But now it’s just a dream. Once I had such faith but that’s enough; you may not know everything but at least you know the main thing. Do when you can, which depends on memory, and then you are like the kundalini snake, when everything switches off – television, house, book, homework, so you breathe the mantra in and out, in and out, bring it in the mind, the subconscious, put the mind – do it automatically because “This is your Life”!...

‘...Everyone’s life is their own, and therefore their suffering is personal. A bit of suffering, a bit of stretch, a bit of craft, you hurt yourself, and of course if you are very willing you hurt most *here [i.e. in this life]*... When you are a voluntary it’s not easy; Sarada Devi said, “Be careful, don’t just take responsibility for others if you can’t yourself – “. They are just ignorant, you sit and pass exam for them but when they come to job they can’t do anything, they expose themselves...

‘You have to remember once and for all, you can’t go every minute to the book. What goes in your memory goes in subconscious and is reborn in you, it’s God’s work. And the body is a temple so it has to be looked after a little bit... OM memory, OM system, OM *corrépondance*, when the mind sees such things, such things – Oh, I’ve got this, got that! - plus if you exercise your breathing, control, you have discipline over your vagaries and whims, your fantasies – all this adds interest to your wealth, but you have to put it into practice. Not just a one-day meeting to explain the quality of realization, that doesn’t give you fruit of immortality straightaway. The scripture chooses its target, its subject. You can’t explain fully the scripture,. Even Shankaracharya said, I cannot, it’s pollution of God to say what He is...

‘Future generations will be deformed – many times I have said it – drugs and all this, we can see in a flash! What I see is not visible to everyone. It’s a warning, a guide, if you follow that you avoid that pitfall, the path is very slippery, temptation and all this. But it’s maya, you have to go through the squares... If you’ve done something wrong repeat the name of God, it will “pulverize”. And have faith in Kali.

‘I like to suffer, and that’s why I am suffering now as much as I can. That’s my belief like that. Yet when there is pain I can’t sit [in meditation] – now what are you going to say? Restless, possessed, possessed!...I observe everything around. I know what experience is, I know what visitation is, I know out of body, and I know spirit also. So I can’t deny myself if I am subject to something...Though it is locked my door is always open for beggars...

‘...I come here, pay a visit, it’s Diwali, and all this matters. All is taken a bit into invisible writing and report, especially the Goddess Lakshmi. We are the worshipper of the four aspects of the Mother, out of love. Not just Kali, but Lakshmi, Shiva, then the other gods come, Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi, too much to go on! Worldliness falls asleep and you go on in a different state. So I would be sorry not to have come, and you are just here in a Diwali. I have wanted to come, to sit, have two or three or four cups of tea plus the trifle which I have been longing for for quite a few weeks!

‘...Devotees are devotees, that’s why you meet for kirtan, it’s a clapping hand of bliss, all should spark like that, a little dome of OM, and bliss escaping, the fragrance, the perfume, the god inside, “in the palm of your hand” as Sarada Devi said. This is the state you expect when you come, forget everything, that’s why we have joined, to join the family first, not just to give lecture, book and all this. It’s enough to see devotees, have day-to-day news, but mostly we want to see people. To see devotees, it matters, it’s togetherness to reconfirm, to reunite, to transfuse the blood, the thought.

‘There is something, an element that slowly in course of time but not straightaway, will have an effect, like a medicine, slowly, slowly. It will not increase just like that, there is evolution in spirituality, there is test and all this. But don’t be a hypocrite. What God hates is hypocrisy. He is so simple, have that simple childlike faith, and don’t flatter. Spiritual practice is normal; just like you breathe, drink, digest, so you breathe, drink and digest life which enables you to keep your light. And if you concentrate much you get rid of pain and all this. But I like to suffer a bit, as much as I can, anything that helps – so many dogs come to me! And even the three goats⁷ subconsciously visited me then, when I was pegged⁸ and sick. Animals are very psychic, like the lizard⁹ and Shirdi Sai...

⁷ Rescue animals living on the bank above Glen Lodge.

⁸ i.e. bed-ridden in hospital and unable to move.

⁹ An episode in *Shirdi Sai Baba Satcharita*.

‘...Gout is Him, Invisible pain, electrifying gout, is Him, though I am not so Christian now, I go back to Hinduism, to where I belong. [I had] a share of the visitation of pilgrimage and this and that. But what affects me is the bunch of devotees. How will they fare, how will they live, if there is catastrophe? My worry is devotees and the end of the world. A new era, how do you restart? Yu have to have the stamina, and the house, a little bit of something to survive, especially for your family, so I am not too pleased when youngsters have family nowadays, you have to think of the consequence. But Babaji’s child is the great exempt. It’s just like when Jesus was born and one old lady was living in the temple just to see time of baptism¹⁰ and now she is happy to die. “That’s the child I was living to see.” ...

¹⁰ Presentation.