

Dec 09, 1978

Kirtan at Ufton Rd (Shiva Shakti and Gopal Christ)

On this occasion some of the ashram's small children, Sri Lakshmi (aged 6), Kadamba (4), Sanjana (8) and Sastra (10), played the parts of various saints and avatars worshipped by the devotees. They were immaculately dressed, garlanded, fed and worshipped by Ambikananda and the whole ashram: Sri Lakshmi was costumed as Ramana Maharshi of Arunachala, Kadamba as Sathya Sai Baba, Sanjana as Sri Ramakrishna, and Sastra as Sri Sarada Devi.

Then Ambikananda played, sang and recited a new composition with words taken from a children's book of legends from the Puranas, 'The Marriage of Shiva':

'The Lord of the universe once breathed life into a golden egg. Out of this he proceeded to create the world. From the earth arose misty vapours that floated into space and formed billowy white clouds. Water began to flow into mighty rivers, and great chains of mountains appeared. In these, rishis and wise men made their homes.

'One such lofty peak was Mount Kailash. It was the favourite home of that Divine Yogi, Mahadeva. Here, sitting by himself, on a tiger skin, Shiva – Lord of the mountains – could meditate, undisturbed by the quarrels of the gods.

'Both men and women became his worshippers. This stern god, pleased with their prayers, often granted them their wishes.

'Among his devotees was Sati, the beautiful daughter of Daksha. Now when Sati came of age, Daksha, according to ancient custom, held a *swayamvara* (marriage by choice). He invited all the gods to it, from whom Sati was to choose a husband. He did not, however, invite Shiva, because he did not consider this god, who wore a garland of snakes, as a suitable husband for his lovely child.

'But Sati had taken a vow to marry nobody else but Lord Shiva.

'On the appointed day she came into the glittering chamber where all the gods had assembled. Sati was very disappointed when she found that Shiva was not present.

'Taking the fragrant garland of jasmine flowers in her hand, she threw it up towards the entrance, and prayed:

"O Beloved Lord Shiva, look on me with favour.
I have worshipped you for many moons.
Now descend, great Shankara, and receive my garland."

Ambikananda sang these lines with great pathos before finishing the story:

'Then with one mighty sweep Shiva was seen to open the door of the chamber and enter in time to receive Sati's garland.'

'Then he continued with his 'Guru' song:
'Jaya Guru Shiva Guru Hari Guru Ram...';

Again he stopped, and turning to the devotees said: 'I tell you, today a lot of sin has been purged... The Lord blesses all here. Blessed are those that come in the name of the Lord. A new leaf is offered in the Lingam every time a man is born in God - we'll try again.'

‘Sickness is required for our understanding of the impermanency of the world. Without suffering there is no understanding. To those who have¹ done bad deeds He is Yama [*God of Death*]. To those who have done good He is Vishnu.’

Swargananda then read a passage from Sathya Sai Baba about an experience of the presence of death:

‘...They smelt a fragrance in the room and felt an overwhelming fear in their hearts – Yama was present in the room!’

After prasad Ambikananda had a last word for devotees:

‘Love is our real Mother,’ he told them. ‘Love is our Mother, conquering without a sword.’