

Kirtan at Kings Cross (Mahalakshmi and Jai Narain) 16 Feb 1985

The Universal Independent Ashram always celebrated the birthday of their Guru Dev, Sri Ramakrishna, on this day.

Ambikananda read from GSR [pp. 922-3] about a visit to Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar by Misra, a Christian devotee, and commented during his discourse:

"I'm sure you know there is no death. Death of body there is, but the soul is never born nor dies. It shoots down like a shooting star to earthplane here as a pilgrimage. But we don't know the real state of our own existence here; we are all confused and confounded up to this very moment.. So it's a great privilege to share the little experience we have gathered by practice and learning and hearing. Greater still is to hear the experience of a being who is likened to a god, who is very pure from birth, and who is holy as His Father is. And greater than reading or hearing is personal experience.

‘But be holy first, otherwise God cannot be understood. First be holy in your mind, in your body, in your soul, in your heart. Otherwise, the body pays tax for the soul dwelling there. But there can be relief, because God has become the doctor through the procedure of science, medicine, healing power, laying on of hands. And if you think you are not the doer, then with faith there is some sort of relief from the actual reaction of past desires.

‘Therefore, the state of desirelessness is the greatest state. If you want to be liberated, it is said, be desireless. Have no desire and you are liberated. So says Sarada Devi. But we think that devotion for God is even greater than this kind of liberation. Such a such liberation can be very selfish. If I am liberated what happiness is there if my friends are bound? If you are bound with so many fetters, and I am free, do you think that freedom makes me happy?

‘A lot of people here, I believe, are “liberated”, but I don't know if they have got devotion. This is my convinced faith, whether tied or tangled, or dying, or still in a form of crucifix, this is my conviction. It may not be yours, but I am spirit, I dwell in a rotten, dilapidated body-house. The shutters are bad, the foundation is damp, the roof leaks, there is rheumatism, pain and complaint all the time. We bear it, we suffer along with you, we send mental relief. But I pray that you may have less desire, though you are liberated, for as long as you have desire you are subject to the reaction. Liberation is like blowing out a lamp, finish, no more burning or scorching. But devotion is very difficult. God said to Narada, ask anything, health, wealth, anything, but not devotion, I don't want to be bound by your devotion. For devotion is love, love is God, and He doesn't want to be bound just like that. With devotion you have got God Himself in your hand, it's not an easy matter.

(Reading from GSR): ‘ "Sri Ramakrishna said to the younger Naren: 'Rama is one, but He has a thousand names. He who is called ‘God’ by the Christians is addressed by the Hindus as Rama, Krishna, Isvara.¹ "

‘Isvara is also a form of God incarnate. I have seen with my own eyes - I will tell you a bit about Christianity. Practising Christianity, ancestors are liberated. ... Christianity is liberating the Hindu ancestors, though Hindus don't like their children to be Christians because Christianity is an outcast to them. But Christianity also condemns - Catholicism condemns the others, like Protestant, Church of England. Who was it who made Church of England, Henry or someone, wasn't it? Because he wanted to marry another woman? So now the Queen is prayed for first in all this Church of England Christianity. Here she is first, but in the spirit realm it is the queen who will serve the workers and slaves.

¹ The personal God as opposed to the impersonal transcendent Brahman. The title is particularly favoured by devotees of the God Shiva

‘You are in the body now, so you don't see all this, you haven't got to the closeness of transcendental visiting; but "*The kingdom of heaven is within you*". When you are conscious that it is within you there is no leg, no hand, no head. You are not the doer at all. God is the doer inside you, and you just work like a mechanic. So we are the mechanics of God, when we have surrendered, and He is making use of this body, mind and soul. But before that it is very hard. If you twist your leg you will have pain, or if you think further you get confused, your mind gets heated, desperate, and you are not satisfied at all, there's just burning pain everywhere in body, mind and soul.

‘But when you are with God this burning pain *is* God, this crucifixion, this pain is God, this pain is bliss, this pain is relief for souls and neighbours.² Christ had the pain itself, the crucifixion, flagellation, nails, carrying cross, falling - all this for nothing but the vagaries and stupidities of our greed, our selfishness, our lust for power, name, fame, our possessiveness, our faults, our self-desire. And He is still crucified every Friday, these things are still valid. But when you step into the cross you know who else is suffering. He who has toothache knows what the suffering of toothache is.

[Reading]: " A lake has many ghats. The Hindus drink water at one ghat and call it 'jal'; the Christians at another, and call it 'water'; the Mussalmans [*Muslims*] at a third, and call it 'pani'. Likewise, He who is God to the Christians is Allah to the Mussalmans."

‘There is no difference, as this Gospel is saying, between Rama, Krishna, Jesus. If you are a true meditator, and you are meditating on Jesus, or your Ishta Dev³, or the Mother of God, or Sarada Devi, or the Catholic Virgin Mary, you will find out that they withdraw. These objects of meditation withdraw, and bring other incarnations. You can't go to the Father without going to the Son. So if you try to meditate on Sarada Devi you will find Radha, you will find Kali, you will find all the incarnations. Ramakrishna found out that at one point about 12 or 15 incarnations came, and included in that point was himself. He found all the forms. They know about it, and accept all forms as coming from the One. He has a thousand names and forms, and they come according to time, place, circumstance and environment.

[Reading] "Misra said: 'Jesus is not the son of Mary, He is God Himself...'"

‘Correct! Correct! Jesus is not the son of Mary, he is God, God born through the Word. But I tell you, nor is Mary Mary. If Jesus is not the son of God but is God, I tell you Mary is not Mary. Mary is an incarnation of OM! Everything comes from OM, and as a Swami has said at Shivananda's ashram in the Himalaya:

[singing], "*Om Jesus, Om Buddha, Om Virgin Mary.*"

‘And Mary is appearing nowadays, warning the people⁴ this very day, and it is the same Mary who is telling you, "Think of me, ponder on me, let your thought merge in me. Further to your knowledge, I am telling you I am not just Mary, I am an incarnation of OM."

‘That is what Mary told us, and you are lucky to hear it. I told you a long time ago that Mary was not just Mary. Everything comes from OM, the Word, all words, there couldn't be words without OM, *Sabda*⁵, Mother of *Sabda*, Omkara. *Vak* [voice]. The presiding deity of Omkara is goddess Sarasvati, *Vak*, and of learning. And Mary too is very great in science and learning, this Mary, the patron who saves the world from catastrophe of *bombe atomique*. She is always protecting, praying to ward off the destruction of the world.

² Swamiji was suffering at this time from various ailments including, perhaps, the first stages of his ultimately fatal heart condition

³ Chosen deity

⁴ Ambikananda was referring to apparitions of Virgin Mary then manifesting to children at Medjugorje, Croatia.

⁵ The Word, the Logos

[Reading] "Misra said: 'Now he (pointing to Sri Ramakrishna) is as you see him - again he is God Himself. You are not able to recognize him. I have seen him before, in visions, though I see him now directly with my own eyes. I saw a garden where he was seated on a raised seat.'"

'Everywhere you see God. After realization, there is no 'you', nor 'I' and all this. As Krishna has said, "All is Krishna. Look Arjuna, and you will see." But it is for you to find this out for yourselves.

[Reading] " Master: "Do you see visions?"

Misra: "Sir, even when I lived at home I used to see light. Then I had a vision of Jesus. How can I describe that beauty?"

'Yes, yes, Jesus is very beautiful. The world of Jesus is like the song (*sings*) "*Drown me deep in the sea of Thy love...Jesus, Buddha, Moses, all are drunk with the wine of Thy love.*"

'What is that wine of love? To taste it your mind has to rise above the three lower centres of eat, drink and make merry. Love is not without discipline. Love is very strict - fasting, penance, sleepless nights, the sleep of yoga...But it can happen at any time; it can happen now. When you take the name of that beauty, it's called *Sundaram*, when you say the name of Jesus, when "*two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them*"! Then Jesus comes and he puts out his hand, and this love is grace. But without the grace your search is futile, it is still just a groping in darkness. You must have the grace of God, the grace of the guru, and you must have the grace of your own mind.

'The grace of God. This grace of God is uplifting, it is elevating, it is beyond words. Words stop there, and when words cease the mind is lifted, it is raised, and the soul goes with it, just keeping the body warm. It depends on the amount of love you are emanating. God says, "Give me one and I give you 10. Give me 10 and I give you 100!" So a man can transcend space and time by this very love. Love is God, and Jesus is love incarnate. Ramakrishna is love incarnate. You know that. Beyond reading, beyond everything. If you have love you don't need anything, you just need to keep your body.

'True love is unselfish, true love shares, true love bears, it receives the cross, the slap, the suffering of others into this body, into the body of love. Love suffers for the neighbour, for the country, for the world – you can share the fruit of your love with those who are in dark. Love goes even into Hell and relieves souls there as well. All this is done only in this body. This body is a key, it's so important, don't misuse it, make good use of this body now... No doubt you are liberated, but what is liberation without what we are telling you?...

'It's good to be a slave to the Master God when He comes, it's good to be a worker, to visit the sick in hospital, to visit and say hullo to the neighbours, to the people...If you are just hungering after vision itself, well, vision is like reading a book, seeing a television – it doesn't liberate you, only warns you. A stitch in time...You can see evil in all kinds of visions, of monkey, of *abominables*, you can see evil also coming in form of bebies [beautiful women] ...if you have no discrimination you will be tangled with them, subject to them. Evil outlaws, they have fallen out from the law of God. Tell them to push off! What is in the beauty of a woman? The beauty of a woman is in her purity in deed, in mind, in word, in soul, in action. Beauty is the beauty of soul, it manifests, you can see light coming, you don't have to meditate, if you are very good you can close your eyes, then – wagons of love, and penance, and sacrifice. Unselfish. Love for love's sake. Close eyes like that, and even now you can see light coming. Can you see the light? You are blurred! Let those who have eyes see, or at least feel...

'...Now also, if you have true love, you have to be able to shed tears. The tears really wash the sin of the soul. When the soul is washed light comes, and this light fills the gaps where there is darkness. These lights illumine, these lights help. Light, light, God is light, Light and Love. And your body becomes light, this body becomes pliable, you can't see your neighbours rightly, you can't hear

properly, all this is filled with – you are not conscious of your – what is happening now, light is filling you from the toe to the head...

‘... When God is born in human form He is not recognized. When angels come in human form they are not recognized. A saint is not made, a saint is born, a leader is born, they know what they have come for, from birth they form part of their very own. And they know where they are going, and they admonish, they warn, and they give laws. So that if you love them, take up your cross and follow, and you will reap the goal also. [Jesus said] “As I have done you can do and even greater.”

[Reading] ‘ “After a while Misra took off his trousers and showed the devotees the gerua⁶ loincloth he wore underneath”... ’

‘This is only to remind you of where you should be. You are still what you are in your mind... Give me a warm welcome. Warm heart, warm feeling is your nature, is divine, is love. Evil has his deeds crooked and cold, and very different, deformed...

...[Reading] ‘ “Regaining partial consciousness the Master gazed at Misra and began to laugh. Seemingly in an ecstatic mood he shook hands with him and laughed again.”

‘Where holy friendship shakes hands – God always comes and shakes hands... It’s better that God touch you first than you touch Him. If God touches you, it’s a guarantee that you are His. But if you try to touch Him and He moves – there’s still something missing there, you are not completely pure, He doesn’t allow you. Purity is the first requisite, body, mind and soul. Bad thought will come in meditation – forget about it, keep thinking of the good thought, good is more viable than bad. Temptation will come, but “go beyond sandalwood”⁷... ’

‘... God is in His picture, I tell you. This picture will flash in your meditation, and then light comes, you will have a shock, you will deny it, will doubt if it has really come, then it creates a wave, then it comes back, it points to you like a rocket from heaven, a spiritual rocket made of light. Light touches, and even causes blood to ooze. Take my word... You may not believe, but light tips and makes you feel. In your very head...

‘Ramakrishna has created a loka for his devotees. Whoever calls on Him even once will be liberated... ’

A second discourse came later, after Swami Ambikananda had led devotees in the Lord’s Prayer, and shown a way of crossing oneself: Father to the head, Son to the heart, Holy Spirit to the left side, Amen to the right side. The word ‘Amen’ is very important. The Lord’s Prayer was recited several times on end.

There followed a long, mysterious, and wonderful episode of prayer, meditation and music, during which ‘Christian’ images were shown on a screen, and a white sheet was held like a sort of tent by two of the children, Sri Lakshmi and Sanjana. Beneath this sheet Swami Ambikananda performed ceremonies of initiation for a number of devotees, including Hari Om, Julie and Steve.

When this episode drew to an end, devotees enjoyed mahaprasad. Next Swamiji read extensively from a book of the life and visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich, the 19th century German visionary and stigmatic whom Ambikananda had introduced briefly at the previous kirtan at Kings Cross (December 16). Emmerich’s vivid descriptions of events in the life of Jesus and Virgin Mary had been written down by the celebrated Romantic poet, Clemens von Brentano. One lengthy passage described how everyone outside the Catholic Church was a heretic and should not be heeded. This seemed

⁶ Ochre cloth worn by Hindu renunciates

⁷ In Ramakrishna’s parable the woodcutter is urged to go beyond the sandalwood forest to even greater treasures.

aggressively uncompromising to many devotees, not to say disrespectful to our Guru Dev, Sri Ramakrishna. People began to get restive as the reading continued. Those who later read Brentano's transcriptions of Emmerich's visions could not but be impressed by their poetic power and detail, and it was to these visions, particularly of the Passion, that Swamiji responded most strongly, and did his best to incorporate into the ashram consciousness. But many devotees resisted this process, being particularly wary of Emmerich's insistence on the exclusivity of the Roman Catholic way. This seemed to contradict directly the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna, as for instance in a reading earlier in the kirtan: 'Rama is one, but He has a thousand names. He who is called God by the Christians is addressed by the Hindus as Rama, Krishna, Isvara, and by other names.'

Ramakrishna was famous for his saying, 'As many faiths, so many paths'. However, at this kirtan Ambikananda's discourse, based as it so often was on direct vision and spiritual experience rather than dogma, was not to be sidetracked by such considerations. His reading from the visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich went on for a very long time. As Ambikananda said himself, it was 'like a sacrifice'.

When at last his reading came to an end Swamiji addressed the devotees:

'Suffering plays an important part in spiritual life... But you need health in mind and in body, warmth in house, because not everyone is a yogi.....A true vision must transform the being, and that transformation causes an internal [change] – like every day the star is there even if you don't see it. You can't see glory of the star in daytime, but as soon as twilight comes then you see the star of Bethlehem, and then the moon of love, and then it stops to give you sign, and then the Child itself appears...When God Himself has come rite and ritual drop. When the Child is born there are no more breathing exercises !...Blessed is fruit of Thy womb. Now it is all worship, glory, presence, joy. But the Saviour must be born into yourself...

'So if you have been meditating on Mary, and all of a sudden Mary comes and talks to you, then your meditation stops. Your ear is so attentive to what Mary's order is to you. You ask, "How shall I carry out what she wants? How reject my will and accept hers?" You are praying to her to carry out her will, isn't it?...

'Do you think I have come just to celebrate the birthday of Ramakrishna? Yes and no. Is it just Jesus? Yes and no. Just Mary? Yes and no... I tell you, I am going somewhere, and I am benefiting. With all respect and no pride, I want you to suffer with me. I am going there, and I want you to be aware that you travel yourself there. Why should you depend on this engine [i.e. his body]? This engine packed up many times last week, in the shopping centre. Death doesn't knock, he just comes. But I pushed him away, I am not ready to die now – can you do this? I have no physical strength, but spiritual Shakti brings help...

'The seven nether worlds are in your body, and the seven higher worlds also are in the body, the whole kingdom is in your body...With hands raised like that, you are a virgin marrying spiritual life, marrying to unite, to join. You are marrying love. Christ is a big chalice of love, and you with your ounce of love are receiving that in the big chalice, and you will become one with the whole chalice... Now suppose you are a sinner, naked, exposed, all your sins, what you do, exposed, right on the cross, and people are there saying, "Crucify! Crucify! Crucify!" That's why he said, "If you love me take up thy cross." The cross of love is the greatest, because it's then and there. And this Mary watches...

'...the Virgin is pushing Brahman. This Virgin is coming. The Virgin received the word, and she conceived. She said, "I am very pleased to be the handmaid of God," something like that, isn't it? And the same Virgin is giving you the Word, the most powerful Word, beyond flesh, a word beyond, a word that is OM. OM means all Existence, all Knowledge, all Bliss Self, Sat Chit Ananda, Self, Self, Self, Self. The beginning end without beginning, she is giving you that. And this work is not started, we are browsing...You see, "Know one thing and everything shall be added."

‘...Bless God, bless His ministers, bless His angels who come, who watch you, help you, advise you, ward off accident, and are helping you continuously when you pray... Worship all these gods, brahmarshis, devarshis.⁸ Have the grace of all these that have realized. Then you start your meditation, and when you get something in your meditation, dedicate that again, and send thought. Have dual consciousness, don’t sit meditating in bliss when there is an accident or when people need to be helped. Send thought, the power of thought is very transcendently active....

‘Ordinary gross people are tangled in their gross world, they are very busy, even when I am there they can’t see me, now in my subtle form. I tell you, I can watch everybody’s word when they criticize me, I still don’t mind at all, it’s just like I’ve got earphone in my thing, “Listen to this one, what he’s telling, listen to that one, listen to that one.” When things go well you praise me, when things go wrong you blame me, What do you know about me? *Ha-ha-ha-ha!* I am not affected. If it is not true why should I be affected, and if it is true why should I be affected just the same?

‘...You are still identifying with the body, still impure, and where there is impurity God cannot go like *that* to the devil, we wrestle every night, wrestling like monkey, *dab dab dab*, I know he is strong, but I have got more Shakti, more love, more power from God, I have no physical strength, but spiritual Shakti ...

‘...People think they have so much time! *Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!* But time is so short! Jesus is showing a cross on the moon and fire fighting. *Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!* You never know, If you want to know God, it’s time... Change, be good, be helping, give service. God created man in His own image. They have been bound by Lucifer. He has fallen, it’s not their fault. You have to bear your brethren...

‘...I tell you, Ramakrishna’s birthday was just a pretence for our coming here. Ramakrishna’s birthday was just a pretence...

Raja Ram: Then what was the reason, Swamiji?

‘The reason was to bring you to do like I do. If you love me, do as I do. Become like me. You will change! *Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!* It’s so simple, isn’t it? ...I have given most of my things away and now I am giving even my head, which is not accepted by you, not here, but in heaven spirits are ringing, are crying, “Me, me, me,” are clinging to the feet there. The opportunity that you get here! It’s better to spend 15 years here than 15 minutes in purgatory....

Satram: Swamiji, this all seems to be about sinners and sin, and yet for years you’ve been telling us not to say that you’re a sinner otherwise you may become one.

Sw: ‘That’s also true, but you have to be aware. Don’t take advantage. Watch your word, watch your deed, your heart, your actions, watch your thought. Watch all these, you will be judged, not by me, I am taking you to the good side but I am warning you, if you accept light you must accept darkness.

‘... I didn’t read these books before. I had a call first, then I wanted to find out more - the Virgin herself was supplying me, she is still supplying, and it is not finished. As I was saying, the work has hardly started...I am telling you what I am doing, and if you abide here, I am getting somewhere to the goal of all my life, not forgetting what I have already done. Ramakrishna already reached the goal, then he practised different religions - Christian, Mohammedan, different, different... Spiritual life is a matter of faith after all....Either you take what we do or you don’t take. Either you abide or you don’t abide. I cannot be a fraud....The point is I have come to tell you what I am doing. I am delaying perhaps into Hinduism because I have got a kind of work to do and I am doing it.’

Brahma: ‘I wish you could stick a bit more to Hinduism, Swamiji, because in the past you said, “We are a Hindu mostly.” ’

⁸ Hindu divine teachers and sages.

Sw: 'First kirtan we had in 1971, at your place, if you remember now? Somebody asked, "What is your community?" What did we say?'

Devotees: 'Shiva Christ Consciousness.'⁹

Sw: 'Shiva Christ Consciousness! You have said it! I am not drowning you, but I am showing you the other side of Him. Why you accept just light and bliss? Why don't you accept blisters? Are you exempt from all this?'

Brahma: 'We've had an awful lot of doom and gloom lately.'

Sw: 'What is bliss for you can be blister, what is blister now can be bliss. If you follow Hinduism follow it true, don't just do it by words if your deeds are completely – Hinduism has strict laws, it's all laws.'

Satram: 'But that's not necessarily suffering.'

Sw: 'It is! The greatest law is to suffer others, bear. Didn't Jesus say, If they slap your face turn the other cheek, isn't it?... It's for your own sake. All of a sudden you find *bang bang bang*. I have seen 'pebbles' already.¹⁰ I am not wanting to frighten you or anything. Now the Virgin is the Patron who wards these off. And the cross in the moon – you were there [*to a devotee*], you were there in my room [*at Ramakrishna Loka*], you were laughing and all of a sudden I said. "Hush!" I saw a red cross and fire, these horrible fighters and the red cross.'

Raja Ram: 'Swamiji, I'm more scared of your bad moods than the end of the world!'

Sw: Not bad mood, it's the mood of the Mother! I am not upset, but what I am saying – don't think it will affect me. If you belong to - I don't say follow me completely, but I tell you frankly what I am doing, what is happening...I will adhere to what I am doing. You are free to choose. Now you take the best part of it, leave the head and the tail.'

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⁹ Shiva-Christ Consciousness was also the banner displayed at the devotees' celebrated performance with Quintessence band at the Albert Hall, December 1971

¹⁰ 'Pebbles' is Ambikananda's shorthand for 'pebbles and sand', i.e. the condition of the world after some cosmic disaster.