

He said, Indra is not responsible for our rain; rain is part of the nature of sky. You know how Indra sometimes tries to interrupt holy rishis' prayers. It would be better for you to give your prayers to what helps you here on earth with your lives as farmers.

The people thought this made sense, and so when the day of their ritual arrived, they gathered into their outdoor park, and they directed their prayers and offerings to their cows and their tulsis.

Indra was furious that he was not even being mentioned in their prayers. He sent down a furious, torrential rain, and the people ran over to the temple for shelter and to finish their ceremony. But the rain was so heavy that within an hour when they looked out of the temple windows, they could see it was flooding their fields and putting their homes at risk.

Krishna said, Don't worry, Indra is not going to be able to destroy this village.

Krishna went out and with one finger lifted the Govardhana Mountain, using it as an umbrella that sheltered the entire Nandagam village.

For two days, Indra would not let up the freshet rain, but finally he could see Krishna would never tire of providing protection. Indra came to earth, bowed down, and apologized to Krishna. And Krishna said, With this terrible storm, you have shown us your greatness as the god of thunder and rain, but with your apology, you have done an even greater deed. Therefore, I will give you a boon, a granting of a wish. What would you like?

Indra said, You have shown such great compassion saving this village. Please, oh divine Krishna, let my son Arjuna, who lives here on earth, be guided by you, and be blessed with your perpetual protection.

And Krishna agreed.

\*\*\* 12/14/15

Walking in the patchy snow, slick-spongy mud trail troughs, going up onto meadow grass when it is level enough. Listening to my friend's stories of travels, the humpback whales who circled and blew air to bring up fish to eat, glaciers that calve, the many blues of frozen water. A world we are trying to know and remember before it goes.

\*\*\* 12/14/15

This year's tab for cleaning up California's wildfires is the largest ever.

\*

he walks by

salutes as he passes  
opens his cardboard:

i fought for you  
who will fight for me

keeps walking

\*\*\* 12/23/15

The extreme cold turned warm. The waves today coming in big.

At the beach a big dog running into the back of my legs, knocking me down.

My friend tells me I'm not pretty in the midst of polished beauties in this town.

And above and all around me is that wide-eyed, that beautiful bright sky. Bringing it all out.

The homeless man at the pier lets me tap the python skin top of his little drum.

We get into the car, and the key won't turn all the way, won't fire the ignition.

Today's Jupiter's day, Guru of the Gods. You may think the usual of Jupiter, that he's blocking, giving the hardest of challenges. But Swamiji tells us it's just not that stringent: you get what's needed to move you forward.

We sing, Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!  
And Maa says, She's here and she's dancing!

\*\*\* 12/31/15

It wasn't long before Kamsa was informed that Krishna and his brother Balarama were living in Gokul. When the boys had grown to be young men, Kamsa invited them to come to Mathura to participate as contestants in a wrestling match. Kamsa devised all sorts of deceptions to ensure that the young men were killed, but Krishna and Balarama were victorious in every case.

When they reached the wrestling arena, an elephant and its rider blocked their way, and they quickly slayed them. The best wrestlers fought them, and these too, every single one, were killed by the young brothers. Kamsa then met his foretold fate when Krishna jumped to his throne, and then threw King Kamsa high up into the air, allowing gravity to bring the King to his death.

Krishna opened the prisons and reunited with his parents, Devaki and Vasudeva, who had all this time been living in their small cell. King Ugrasena, too, had been locked up for many years, and he was now free to return to his royal duties, much to the happiness of the Mathura citizens.

Krishna and Balarama then went to the ashram of Rishi Sannidhapani to receive formal teachings.

\*\*\* 1/2/16

I have come to see the sky as the sky that it is, glittered with distant reflections of the one light, beaming its indifference to our changing natures. That kind of love.

\*

Hanuman makes himself small then big, as he wishes, to do what he sets out to do—find Sita, speak to her, defy being burned, fly over the ocean, rally the troops, get Sita back home to Rama. Because he knows he can.

\*

Snow, for now, adding to itself on the Sierra peaks.

We wish for the best.

\*

In the day's light on this side of the window, small spider spins down and climbs up, lingers up.

Tonight, Swamiji tells us, Less talk, more prayer. Let it all go to the divine.

I in you and you in me. Looking to give instead of get. In this short time, what else is there to do? The spider. The singer. The passing helicopter in the night sky. The beginning of this calendar year. The word om written on paper. The sound of om. Inside, that seed. You in me, me in you.

\*

And they say the forests are dying. It's not just dry years, it's the destruction of clean air.

A woodpecker taps high up in the leafless amber.

I go to bed and sleep deeply, believing another day of sunlight will arise, wishing to do my best to be awake in awareness these days.

\*\*\* 1/2/16

The Pandava brothers, Yudhishtira's wife Draupadi, and their mother Kunti were in their desolate desert kingdom. And they offered a special homa puja/fire ceremony for blessing the land, believing they would be able then to transform their wasteland into thriving farmland.

The God Vishvakarma, the God of Architecture, caused springs to surface, then streams and rivers to flow freely, and created the flourishing of abundant crops, trees, and buildings for many villages and cities. Their stunning palace was in the capital, Indraprastha.

Krishna arrived and told the brothers to visit all the kings of India to ask for their support of Yudhishtira as the true governor king of the united regions, not Duryodhana. All the regional kings readily agreed, since they knew Yudhishtira to be a fair and honest person, and that he was the son of Dharma. A special sacrificial ceremony, the Rajashuya, was performed to formally acknowledge Yudhishtira's sovereignty. The sympathetic family members from Hastinapura, Drarashtra, Bhishma, and Vidura attended, as well as the gurus Dronacharya, and Krpacharya.

\*\*\* 1/6/16

And Jesus gets into the boat with the disciples. He goes to "sleep" (samadhi?), and a fierce storm kicks up. The devotees believe they are going to drown, frantically try to waken Jesus. And when he does, the sea calms, and he asks them, Where is your faith?

\*

In the story in Luke, the fishermen had been out all morning and hadn't caught a thing. Jesus came along and gave a talk on the shore to a curious crowd. The fishermen came in to shore with nothing in their nets. Jesus said, Go on out again. And when they did, their nets overflowed with fish.

Now, that might have been the clincher for being inspired to have more good days of fishing, but instead, they all walked off with Jesus to learn from him.

There was love there like they'd never known.

\*

Rain. This is the third day.

I put fifteen gallon buckets under the spot where the roof's rain gutter spills, and in three minutes they were full.

Worms wiggle on the sidewalk. The yard has shallow ponds.

The black sky lets up for awhile, even parts for sunlight. Closes again quickly.

God be with me, I tell myself, having to get into the car and drive in the low visibility, crazy rain to work. When I get home later, there is a message on my answering machine saying there is a tornado warning, and I must sequester to the interior of interiors.

\*\*\* 1/6/16

Balarama, Krishna's brother, suggested to his parents that his sister, Subhadra, marry Duryodhana, the crown prince at Hastinapura. Subhadra, like all girls in those times, was bound to respect her parents' wishes for her marriage. She was not happy about the arrangement, but

said nothing. The day before her wedding, she went to the temple to pray, asking Goddess Gauri for the possibility of a change of direction.

Krishna told Arjuna that he should marry Subhadra, and that she was about to be wed to Duryodhana. He told him to take his chariot and that he could find her that day at the Gauri Temple, and that when they would leave to have her be the driver holding the reins. When Arjuna arrived, there was Subhadra just as Krishna had said. Although it was the day before her arranged wedding, she was already wearing her wedding gown so that it would be blessed, and she was holding the wedding garland.

She was thrilled to see him. Arjuna said, Let's get married! Will you return with me now to Indraprashta?

Without any hesitation, she put the garland around his neck and started to get into the passenger side of the chariot when Arjuna said, No, please, it's best if you take the reins!

The guards, alarmed at what they realized was happening, were just about to try to persuade her to stop her foolishness, when she jumped up into the chariot, grasped the reins, and the horses set off at a quick gallop.

Balarama was furious when the guards told him what had happened. He was ready to go to war, but Krishna reminded him that a princess has the legal right to choose her own husband, and so there would be no proper justification for a war.

Subhadra and Arjuna's first child was named Kamadeva, God of Love.

\*\*\* 1/7/16

Who would believe the bank behind the house and the canyon could become so parched, as if burned, the wild grasses missing for two years. And even the sporadic rains we've had all fall not sign enough of a change, perhaps just what they were—brief visits.

Who would believe this week's fervent rain. Day and night, sky sending more water than we could use in a day. Ground pooling up. Creek revived, and river, when not held in, running, full and singing, to the sea. Thousands who love living outside houseless coming in wherever they are welcomed. For now, city and county giving more shelter than cold shoulder.

I plant, at long last, into the ground the natives that need heavy water their first days, to begin their long resilient life in the prevalent heat.

\*\*\* 1/7/16

Four El Nino storms arrived this week. At least 300 tons of trash got pulled down by the Los Angeles River.

\*\*\* 1/8/16

The sky once again cloudless—but for the edges. We do best to let the heart be open to what arrives and what is.

After some more rounds of his healing people and talking, Jesus sent out his twelve disciples to talk about the good news to those who would listen and to heal the ailing. And then he also sent out seventy devotees. The good news is simple: Live and breathe unconditional love.

\*\*\* 1/9/16

Now that the Pandava family had transformed their desolate kingdom into a thriving agricultural country, Duryodhana had another reason to feel threatened. So he decided to invite the Pandava brothers to a game of dice. According to custom, kings would never refuse an invitation to games of dice—or to their place in a war. Although Bhim was sure that Duryodhana would not be playing a fair game, Yudhishtira would not listen to that caution because he was bound by the codes of royal duty.

The Pandava brothers and mother Kunti and wife Draupadi went to Hastinapura for the game. Uncle Shakuni was the dice roller and with every roll he cheated. Yudhishtira offered everything of lesser value with each roll, then the Indraprastha kingdom, and then one by one, gave his brothers, then himself, and finally when all was lost, he even gambled away his wife, Draupadi.

Vidura, in keeping with his role as counselor, advised his half-brother, King Drrtarashtra to give due respect to Draupadi, who as Yudhshtira's wife was the queen and therefore also part ruler of Indraprastha.

Do not keep her bound to this demoted position, he urged. It will certainly cause an uproar in Indraprastha and throughout India.

Karna had been a suitor at Draupadi's Svayambara, but she had said she would not marry the son of a charioteer. So now, still harboring a grudge, he said that since she was technically married to all five of the Pandava brothers, she was really no better than a prostitute. He urged Duryodhana to have her brought into the room so that they could see her and do what they wanted with her. Duryodhana heartily agreed and had his brother Dushasana go to get her.

Draupadi, on hearing what had happened said, I am not going. This is absurd! And besides, I am on my period, and you know that I must not go out right now, not even for our elders.

Dushasana was insistent.

Draupadi said, It isn't right or respectful! Do I even need to remind you that I am the queen as well as your older sister!? The Pandava brothers will rain on all of you terrible revenge for this insult!

But in the next instant, he furiously grabbed her by the hair and dragged her to the meeting room. The Pandava brothers were beside themselves with horror, but they could do nothing.

Karna said, Duryodhana, let's see what this prostitute looks like without her clothes!

So Duryodhana, smiling, raised his hand to have Dushasana proceed with the disrobing. Draupadi was wailing and calling to her brothers for help, but they did not move or speak. They could only sit there crying. Dushasana was pulling at her sari, and Draupadi prayed, Lord Krishna, you alone can help me, please!

Draupadi was turning in circles as the sari was being pulled, but she continued to be clothed. She saw Krishna, then, in a balcony, and she saw that as Dushasana pulled, sari fabric was collecting in piles throughout the room. Finally Dushasana could pull no more and collapsed.

Queen Gandhari ran into the room and said, This is outrageous! What on earth is going on here?! You are committing grave insults, and you risk Draupadi cursing us all to live in a kingdom without rain. All our crops could be destroyed in an instant! Drtarashtra, do your duty and protect her!

King Drtarashtra, realizing their folly, said, Draupadi please don't curse us. We have made a grave mistake. Let me grant you three boons for whatever you choose.

Draupadi said, Yes, I will not give you a curse in exchange for the three boons. For my boons, one, I will not be the slave of Duryodhana; two, The Pandava brothers will not be slaves either; three, The Pandava brothers' weapons will be returned to them.

King Drtarashtra said, Yes, I grant you your three wishes! And please, I would like you to have another boon—that Indraprashta is returned to the Pandava rule.

Draupadi said, Thank you. But we will not accept our kingdom as some kind of token in your game. We will win it back through a fair battle with arms.

The next day, Duryodhana said to Drtarashtra, Father, in the dice game, no one spoke up about what was happening. No one was protesting that the winnings were all going to our side. Only when Draupadi's sari was being pulled did the tide change. I will be the rightful heir to our throne. I won Indraprashta and my slaves, and I want my winnings returned!

So Drtarashtra talked with Yudhishtira, saying, It is true that you have won your freedom from Draupadi's boon, but it also true that you lost the dice game, and at the time you were playing the game, you and your brothers never once protested how the game was proceeding. So I am delaying the exercising of your full freedom: I am sending you and your brothers into the forest for twelve years, and to go into hiding in the thirteenth year. If you are not found in that year, you will be allowed to have your kingdom back.

Yudhishtira, ever living according to the codes of honor, agreed. The brothers and wife Draupadi left that very day with heavy hearts for the forest. To spare her health, they asked Mother Kunti to stay in Hastinapura.

\*\*\* 1/10/16

Because of the gift of so many storms—or one big, long storm—in one week, the ground is spongy, the perfect setting for the invasive grasses to be dug up. I see worms. A spider runs and burrows into a small hole. But that place will soon get overturned too. Sky starts in its elusive blue but transforms to blotter grey. Raindrops linger on dudleya and lamb's quarters.

\*\*\* 1/10/16

They say it will rain. Sky has wrung out all the moisture, and you can not foresee weighty clouds coming in.

\*

Jesus tells us not to worry. Not to worry about food and what to wear, not to worry about our health, not to think about what others think about us. To know that we are souls. God gives green grasses flowers, and God gives us what we need. He tells us to believe this.

\*

We keep sprouting beautiful flowers.

\*\*\* 1/13/16

The Pandava brothers spent their time in their exile studying with rishis. Krishna came for a visit and told them their studies would help them in the upcoming war; they would be fighting with divine weapons. He told Arjuna to pray earnestly to Shiva for his support.

One day, a boar came running through the forest and was headed straight for Arujuna, but Arjuna swiftly lifted his bow and sent out just one arrow that made a direct shot that killed the boar. When Arjuna went over to the boar, he saw two arrows. A hunter emerged from a thicket and said, That is my arrow and this is my catch.

Arjuna said, No, no, I made the most direct hit. I assure you, I was blessed with learning my skill from the master archer Dronocharya. There is no question; this boar is mine to claim.

The hunter said, I am sorry to say you are making a mistake! The deciding arrow is my own.

Arjuna thundered, You must be the only one on earth who has not heard of me. I am Arjuna, the greatest living archer.

The hunter said, I am glad I have not heard of such a boastful, proud hunter!

Arjuna lifted his bow and arrow aiming to injure the hunter, but the hunter in an instant let fly his own arrow, shattering Arujuna's bow, and then he set off a volley of arrows that landed on the oak tree, surrounding Arjuna.

Stunned, Arjuna said, I only know three people who could do this! My master teacher, Dronacharya, my brother Bhishma, —and my Lord Shiva. Shiva!!! Oh thank you for coming! I bow to you!

Shiva said, I have enjoyed immensely the prayers you have been so devotedly giving. Please, please, ask from me a boon/wish.

Arjuna said, Thank you! Krishna told me to focus sending all my prayers to you in order to get the divine weapons I'll need to fight the other side of the family.

Ah, I see. Here, then, Shiva said, you may have my divine arrow. And then, go visit Indra, and he will give you more divine weapons.

So Arjuna went to visit Indra, and Indra, too, was pleased with Arjuna. He suggested that Arjuna prepare for the upcoming battle by staying there for awhile to learn more wisdoms.

And so this is what Arjuna did.

\*\*\* 1/14/16



in the house  
 there is the hum  
 of refrigerator cricket  
 dishwasher

but outside  
 the moon is quiet  
 the stars are quiet  
 their black sky field is quiet

\*\*\* 1/14/16

Survey explorer Charles Parry in 1850: ...we take up to the Indian village passed yesterday [in the San Felipe valley area of Anza-Borrego desert], here stopping awhile. I was offered some prepared mescal [Agave deserti] which I found to be better eating than I expected. In taste it resembles molasses candy but not quite so sticky. It is the main dependence for food of the Indians at the eastern base of the mountains, growing abundantly in the dry valleys and hills.

\*

Mark Trotz, Los Angeles County Director of Housing for Health, says that the huge homeless population should be viewed as both a health emergency and a natural disaster.

\*

2015 was the second warmest year (out of 121 years) in the United States.

\*

Oct. 15 [1850] — ...The river course becomes tortuous [*East of the San Luis Rey Mission*] and the road frequently takes to the hills crossing a spur to descend to the same valley. The general aspect is rendered more desolate by the traces of recent fires that have swept over the whole face of the country, burning up every green thing and occasionally encroaching on the river bottom itself.

\*

Black hovering west moved east, sunk down here, and later sunlight took over every part.

The reasons we feel apart is we fall apart. The history of each place is built on ruins. Sometimes if I don't look closer, the true story is covered over in the currency of certain repeated stories. If we don't go on somewhere at sometime saying the true story, it's gone.

And the true story is so often only true for the one person.

Sky has no longing. We cast up hope as if to snag it for living. And all the while, we are in sky's embrace. If I could come clean of every fogged way of seeing...

It still gets dark early, and I still have to live with what is given.

Grasses in the rain softened ground, new and the old making more of the new.

Sky unfolds in early morning light, welcoming us. I'm looking for what's beyond appearances.

\*

... Near the base of this sierra [mountains east of the San Luis Rey Mission], the valley suddenly turns to the right, leaving a gently sloping plain towards the mountains. On this is situated the upper Mission establishment called Pala, 15 miles from San Luis Rey, now exclusively occupied by a village of converted Indians. ("Pala" is the indian word for water.) There is a small church structure and large garden with Olives, Figs, & an excellent vineyard. The Indian Willow huts are grouped in the vicinity and their cultivated fields extend along the borders of the stream. Irrigation is easily accomplished by earth trenches. The soil, warm & porous when uncultivated, is thickly spread with Mustard, an indication of rich soil. A wild species of Gourd is also very luxuriant, struggling for the mastery with its cultivated compeer, the Pumpkin & Melon. Naturalized Tomatoes are also seen here and there, mixed up with the Solanaceous weeds. In addition to these, the cultivated articles are Maize, Beans, Wheat, etc. Though the season is by no means far spent, most of the fruits of the season are gone as melons & the rest [are] stored for winter use, so that the fields look bare & weedy, autumn-like.

\*\*\* 1/17/16

Bhim and Draupati were in the forest gathering flowers for their home puja. Draupati found an unusually beautiful lotus and added it to her full basket. She said, Bhim, will you go see if you can find any more of these gorgeous lotuses?

She turned for home and Bhim went further up the mountain.

He came to a clearing and there was an old monkey sitting by the side of the trail under a lone tree. The monkey's tail was lying across the trail. Bhim was getting tired at this point and instead of speaking with respect, he said with irritation, Hey, old monkey, move your tail!

He could have just gone around the tail but he wasn't in the mood to get into a possible confrontation of disrespect.

The monkey replied, Sing the name, Ram! Sing the name Ram! Sing the name Ram! Sorry, I'm old and tired, and my tail doesn't move like it used to.

That just made Bhim more annoyed. He said, Look, I don't have much more daylight left, and I need to get by. With all due respect, and I don't see where singing the name of Ram has to do with it, please, move your tail.

Sing the name of Ram, sing the name of Ram, sing the name of Ram! the monkey sang. Please, if you don't mind, move that old tail of mine. I got up here thinking this would be a nice

place to get a quiet rest without anyone bothering me. But since you showed up here and need to get on your way, please go ahead and get my tail out of your way.

Bhim said, now fully worked up in indignation, Well, I am the son of Wind, from Kunti, and I could move ten elephants, but it just seems like you could reach over and move your own darn tail.

The monkey sang with a smile, Sing the name of Ram! Sing the name of Ram, Ram, Ram!

At this, Bhim took hold of the tail and was going to shove it aside, but to his horror it wouldn't move.

The monkey sang, Sing the name of Ram, Ram, Ram, move the tail, move the tail, sing the name of Ram, Ram, Ram!

Bhim tried pushing then pulling but the tail wouldn't budge. Bhim let go and stood up, and took a long look at the monkey. Ah!, he said. I see that you are not an ordinary monkey! Who are you?!

Sing the name of Ram, Ram, Ram, the monkey laughed. I'm the son of Wind! Your older brother!

And at that, the monkey showed his true form as Hanuman.

Bhim laughed and they hugged and he said, My brother! You must join us! We are preparing to fight for our stolen kingdom! Surely we will be victorious with you with us!

Hanuman sang again, Sing the name of Ram, sing the name of Ram, Ram, Ram! He said, You know I fought already at another age and I must not in this Yuga. But I will be on your flag and bless you as you fight. Sing the name of Ram and you will win!

Bhim was so happy. And he found the special lotuses and went home with the good news.

\*\*\* 1/20/16

Time slowed as I drove back roads following one wrong direction and then another to get to the friend. The creek running and mushrooms in the oak duff, black rain-shined old acorns.

The happiness in me that swells when talking to someone else who really cares about the native plants that have grown here for thousands of years.

There is still a chance for them to thrive. And for the plants to once again be a part of people's everyday lives, to be used for food and healing remedies. That happiness.

\*

Our lives! What plan goes a to b? I get into the boat with everyone and we all get tossed by the storm.

Around the bend big boulders. Up and down through chaparral. Dipping into a creekbed and driving through it. Elder oak survivors here. Lost, but not for long. Sun somewhere behind drizzling gray, still so much light.

Use thoughts to move forward, get going, use mantra, use prayer to go. Going in circles is going. We have to go in to go out. We have to go out to go in. Labyrinthine days. Without notice. Arriving with some plan, frayed remnant, or none at all.

Have to go on. Plan Z to the fifth power. I can do it. Seventh lifetime by the thousands. By the millions of Durgas, unseen guides. By that one Durga, She Who Relieves Difficulties.

Praying, going by directions, seen, unseen.

Native plants are alive out here. Alive in the native field of the universe.

\*\*\* 1/20/16

...Thus toiling from one rounded ascent to the other, about half-way up [Mt. Palomar] the soil assumes a richer character with more consistency, forming gently swelling undulations. In the angles of the steeper cliffs, there are the grain-fields of the Indians, and as we passed, the young shoots of Wheat on the lower slopes and Barley on the upper was just making its appearance, the natural adaptation of climate & soil securing at the same time the protecting influence of the snow of winter and the fertilizing moisture of the fog of dryer seasons. [Charles Parry, 1850]

\*\*\* 1/21/16

Birds fluttered around and sang perched on the jumbled pile of cut-up downed wood.

Inside the sad story of our time is the boundless happy epic.

Today they tell us another planet is glimpsed that circles the sun in something like 100,000 years.

As if to tell us to not pout over the troubles of an earthly season.

This morning's extra dusk, fine dousing fog. Pretending we were in full sunlight, I got out for my walk.

O moon, moon, you're up there above the bright sky on your course, too. Your face looking like it is laughing. Laughing gets us over the bumps.

\*\*\* 1/21/16

Charles Parry: My Indian guide took occasion to remind me of the danger of bears, which are known to abound on this ridge [*Mt. Palomar*]. "Mucho osos," "Muy bravo," he kept repeating. Soon we saw recent tracks, sure enough, and fresh dung. The tracks were as large as an

Irishman's paw and looked capable of giving a monstrous squeeze, but that was all we saw of Mr. Bruin. [This would have been a Grizzly Bear, which are now extinct in Southern California.]

\*\*\* 1/22/16

Arjuna was ready to head back to earth, having mastered his skills with weapons. But Indra said, I request that you stay a little longer because I now want you to become a skilled dancer.

A dancer! Arjuna exclaimed. Why do I need to learn to dance in order to be a great warrior?

And all Indra would say is, Just please study this skill with Chitragupta.

Arjuna bowed down respectfully to Indra, and proceeded to give his full attention to his dance lessons, and became beautifully skilled in the art.

Goddess Urvarshi saw Arjuna dancing one day and was entranced. She asked him to sleep with her, but he told her he couldn't possibly get involved with her because he was intent on leaving soon to go home and prepare for the battle.

Also, he said, you are a goddess mother in my eyes, so I just could not change the way I see you in order to be your lover.

How dare you refuse me! she fumed. She threw water on him, saying, I curse you! From now on, you will be a eunuch, since you are already so inclined!

Arjuna was baffled that Urvarshi would be so spiteful, and Indra insisted that she change the curse in some way to make it less harsh. He suggested she limit the curse to just one year.

Ok, she said, I do have such a quick temper; I am sorry I flew off the handle and made such a rash curse!

Arjuna returned home. It was the end of the brothers' twelve years of exile, and it was now time to go into hiding for a year. King Matsya Raj gave them refuge and they all took on disguises. Arjuna went under the name Priyanela and dressed as a woman.

\*\*\* 1/22/16

I get to the turn of the road that leads to the small high desert town whose signature reason for travellers to pause is its hot spring pool and jacuzzi, its little motel.

But when I get to that turn, what is that just a few hundred feet away? Dark line across the flat sage floor and going part way up the small mountain, stopping abruptly below peak top? The border fence we have heard about over the years, ever parts of it being built? As I parallel it, I see that yes, it is. That absurd expensive fence that is supposed to keep out immigrants.

Was it a wild dog that ran so fast across the road, too small to be a coyote? Or was it really coyote up to its tricks of deception?

\*

The Dalai Lama says this world of five billion people and today's environmental problems show us the need for world co-operation but human consciousness is still lagging behind.

\*

Atmospheric water vapor, also called a sky river, just poured enough rain into Northern California watersheds to bring reservoirs to just the other side of being critically low.

\*\*\* 1/22/16

The year in hiding of the Pandava brothers at King Matsya's palace was nearly over. Draupadi was the queen's primary lady-in-waiting, and when the commander-in-chief of the Cheddi kingdom's army, Kitchat, first laid eyes on her he was instantly smitten with her beauty. Since he was the queen's brother, he told her that he wanted her to send Draupadi that night to deliver his wine. The queen tried arguing against it, knowing Draupadi would be in danger, but Kitchat insisted, saying, Send her, or I will make your life miserable!

Kitchat was already drunk by the time Draupadi arrived, and he tried to grab her, but she ran off. She went and told Bhim, and he told her to tell Kitchat to meet her in the dancing lessons room at midnight. So she stood in the garden outside Kitchat's room to get his attention, and he came out and told her, You are so lovely, and I am so sorry I was so clumsy! Forgive me, dear lady, and let me show you my true skills.

Draupadi replied, At the moment, I still have some duties to attend to for the queen. But since you are so sure that you have another, more gracious side, I will grant you yet one more chance to reveal yourself to me as a gentleman. Meet me at midnight at the dance practice room.

Kitchat eagerly agreed.

Arjuna had been using the dance lessons room to give sessions to Uttara, King Matsya's daughter. Now he hid behind a curtain with his drum. Bhim sat in a chair draped with one of Draupadi's scarves. Kitchat arrived, even more drunk than before, and rushed over to what he thought was Draupadi, put his hand on her shoulder, saying, I could hardly wait for this moment, darling!

Arjuna pounded his drum loudly, and Bhim turned around, knocked Kitchat down, and strangled him to death.

When the news of Kitchat's death reached Duryodhana in Hastinapura, he figured out that there were only three warriors who would have been able to orchestrate the murder. Dronacharya and Bhishma could have done it, but they were both in Hastinapura, and that left Bhim. And this is how Duryodhana discovered where the Pandava brothers had been hiding.

Now that the commander-in-chief of King Cheddi's army was dead, that left the territory vulnerable for attacking the Pandava brothers, and Duryodhana wanted to seize the moment. His advisor Shakuni suggested that he tell Bhishma that they needed to go and protect the territory so that he would not know about the Pandava brothers being there and the true mission of mobilizing the Hastinapura army.

At the southern end of the Cheddi Kingdom, armies from other regions were entering to attack, and so King Matsya set off with his soldiers to defend that area.

Once King Matsya had departed, the news arrived that the Hastinapura army was at the northern border of the kingdom. The prince was eager to head out alone to fight the army, but Yudhishtira insisted that he have Priyanela drive the chariot. The prince couldn't understand why Yudhishtira would want the frail eunuch Priyanela to accompany him on such a dangerous mission, but out of respect for Yudhshtira he agreed.

As soon as they reached the border and saw who was there, the prince wanted to retreat and consider another strategy. He saw there the legendary, brave, and both good and bad relatives of the Pandava brothers. Arjuna drove the chariot to the foot of a tree and told the prince to climb up until he found some sacred weapons. The prince brought down a large, wrapped bundle, and as soon as he opened it, he recognized that these were the divine weapons of the Pandava brothers. Arjuna picked up his bow and told the prince to take over the reins and drive toward their attackers.

Arjuna struck the bow string, making a loud sound, announcing their arrival. Duryodhana instantly recognized the sound as that of Arujuna's bow. Duryodhana reasoned that now that the Pandava brothers had been found, they would have to go into exile again for another twelve years. But Bhishma said that the terms of their exile ended that very day so they were not bound to further years of exile. And it was their honorable duty to now defend the Cheddi kingdom, not attack it.

But Duryodhana said according to his astrological counselors the year was not over, and he was going to disarm Arjuna. But just as he was arguing this, Arjuna sent arrows over to them and one in particular put all of the Hastinapura army to sleep in an instant. He had the prince take the scarves of Duryodhana, Karna, and Dushasana as proof of their conquest. They left the army there asleep and returned to the Cheddi palace. When Duryodhana and his army awoke, they retreated to Hastinapura to consider their next strategy.

Both sides were mobilizing for full-on war. It was then Krishna arrived to counsel the Pandavas.

He said, If you go to battle, you will be fighting Gurus Krpacharya and Dronacharya and Grandfather Bhishma. Let's do what we can to negotiate peace. Allow me to go talk reason to Duryodhana—this would not be an honorable war in any case, because your terms of exile are complete.

But Duryodhana would not give in to reason. Krishna asked that by the exile agreement, the Pandavas were the rightful owners now of the Hastinapura kingdom, and if Duryodhana would not give it back, then at the very least he could give each brother a village. They would agree to peace even if they got this lesser settlement.

Duryodhana said, No, no, and no! They don't deserve any part of this kingdom!

\*\*\* 1/31/16

Not to be stopped by rain, remembering when I lived in the North, people lived with daily rain for months, I went out for my morning walk. It's ok to get soaked because I can get dry and warm after the walk.

But in the afternoon, wind moved in and started tearing up branches and tossing garden buckets. Now it's night, and it has stopped raining. But the wind is ferocious, rare, and this is not an element to go out into it, imagining I'm somewhere else.

\*\*\* 1/31/16

Terrible wind. Limbs and leaves flying, air-trimmed. Shaking, pushing, moving, snapping, howling. Sirens.

Rain, at the start, big and pooling, coming down, down, down. But the big wind threw rain every which way and eventually dominated the stage.

In daylight, some wrens were pecking the ground, coming in and out of the hedge.

And fierce cold came with the wind, like we would have snow. And yes, then the car windshield in the morning had thick ice, another kind of shield.

\*\*\* 2/3/16

Now they have found cave paintings in Indonesia from 35,000 years ago. There's hands, again; how astonishing, they appear on cave walls in other places and centuries.

\*

Sarada Devi, after Ramakrishna died, became forgotten by his disciples. She had no money, and she had very little to eat. But after some years, some disciples supported her.

\*\*\* 2/4/16

As is well-known, when Arjuna returned to the battlefield and saw his family and friends facing him and the Pandava brothers' army, he lost heart. He was ready to concede the kingdom rather than kill any of them. But Krishna explained that it was already the will of God to move forward with the action, the karma, needed for this drama. Krishna said every being was a part of God, and Krishna was God made manifest in a body. He showed his true form which was so bright and dazzling that Arjuna begged him to just appear in his human form. Krishna instructed Arjuna with how to proceed while keeping God in mind in the battle, and those lessons became what we know as the *Bhagavad Gita*.

It was a difficult and prolonged, bloody battle. A turning point came when the opposition had formed concentric circles with the greatest warriors in the center. Arjuna's son Abhimanyu was able to drive through the circles and reach the center. According to the rules of battle, he disarmed one by one each warrior there, rather than unfairly overcoming the whole group at one time.



Duryodhana wanted to ignore the rules, once again, and called for his inner circle warriors to attack, as a group, Abhimanyu. Then Abhimanyu fought back, wounding those he aimed at, but his chariot was disabled and he fell from it. It was then the warriors were able to gang up on him and kill him.

That night, both sides gathered for the funeral rites for Abhimanyu. Losing his son, Arjuna was determined to win the battle. And so it was that Arjuna and the Pandava brothers killed their relatives and friends and restored their ownership of the Hastinapura kingdom.

This age, the Dvapara Yuga, was coming to an end. The elders, Drtarashtra and wife Gandhari, Yudishtira's wife Kunti, and servant Vidura, had no interest in staying at the palace. They went to the Himalayas to live out the rest of their lives in focused prayer. Krishna was killed by a hunter who thought he was a peacock. When Arjuna's grandson, Parikshit, turned thirty-six, he became king of Hastinapura, and then the Pandava brothers also went to live and pray in the Himalayas. While they had done their dharmic duty by fighting in the war, they still had human bodies with feelings, and so they grieved for their deceased loved ones.

\*\*\* 2/5/16

They say vegetables are so expensive now because it was hot then rained hard then shapeshifted to heat again and then flipped into this latest, bitter cold—and all of it too fast and too much. And the wind has been running around taking all the moisture, and taking the aged limbs and new green leaves.

\*

We sing early in the morning in the ancient tongue, Sanskrit sounds that came from the time of revealed goddesses and gods. We can't find the dates that far back, the carbon's missing. What we have is sound and silence as a way in to that being, that living way of being.

\*\*\* 2/5/16

So the Pandavas had no great excitement over having the kingdom at long last, at such a cost. And so they left it behind to go live the rest of their lives in prayer, living simply in the Himalayas. Swamiji says, It was their sorrow over the need to destroy their family in order to preserve the dharma.

I guess we do have feelings and attachments no matter how far we go in our spiritual lives. I think of Sarada Devi watching the devotee leave until they were out of sight; I think of Shree Maa crying when her mother died. And so maybe the businessman and the king in the *Chandi Path*, after getting the blessings of the Goddess, even so, had to deal with feelings that would arise with circumstances. Is this a right understanding? I asked Swamiji.

Yes, he says. If we still have a body, we still have feelings.

The war the Pandava brothers fought happened at the end of the Dvapara Yuga. What was the difference between that time and this Kali Yuga? In that time period, it was common for most

people to live a life centered on devotion to God, not materialism. Now, it is more common to live according to personal desires: What do you want? What do you need? What person, place, or thing will make you happy? Most people, Swamiji says, these days are thinking only about their own selves.

\*\*\* 8/13/16

Stars glitter and this earth shifts. My hair gets grey just a bit. My skin has changed, drying, furrowing. Coyotes all this time surviving in our urban canyon.

Today it nearly turned into a Santa Ana. Wind started from the east but got swallowed by the cold cloudless sky.

\*\*\* 2/6/16

Kali Yuga was about to enter and overtake the Hastinapura kingdom when King Parikshit, who was out hunting, discovered her. He aimed to kill her but she shouted, Wait! You! I am taking refuge in you, so please don't kill me.

He said, I can not trust that you will be faithful to our ways. You must die or leave!

Wait, wait!, she said. I am not all bad! When your people will live in my Kali Yuga/time, whatever actions they perform, they will experience the consequences, the fruits, of that action right away.

No! the King said. You have to stay out of my kingdom!

But it will soon be my time to enter. Where shall I live, your Royalty, while I wait for the right time for my time?

You can live in lust, deceit, or gambling.

That's all? Please give me one more choice.

Hmm. Alright! You can live in gold.

Thank you, your Highness! I will leave immediately!

And with that, she vanished. She took up her residence in King Parikshit's crown, which he had unfortunately not considered when making the terms.

In this way, Kali was able to turn circumstances to her advantage. The king went further along in his hunting and stopped to ask a rishi for some water to drink. But the rishi was in deep meditation, and was completely oblivious to the king's presence. Parikshit was not at all used to his needs being ignored and so he started yelling at the rishi to wake him out of his meditation. When that proved to be futile, he was about to walk away when he saw a dead snake. So fully

was he under Kali's influence that he reached down, picked up the snake, and wrapped it around the rishi's neck, which was a highly disrespectful and insulting thing to do.

The rishi's son, Shringa, discovered his father in such a state, and was beyond furious. He put some water in his hand, shook it out, cursing whoever did this. And the devotees heard him say that the king of snakes, Taksha, would bite that person, leading to his immediate death.

King Parikshit heard of the curse, and his ministers had a tower built for him to live in with high security. They settled into praying to remove the curse and the king was instructed to listen to Guru Sanat Kumara recite the *Bhagavat Purana*, sacred stories of the dharmic way of life emphasizing the path of the heart, the path of devotion to God/Krishna. Near the end of the seventh day, Guru Kumara finished reciting the Bhagavat, and Parikshit was so inspired that he knew if he did indeed die that day, he was at peace with the will of God.

Taksha just then arrived at the foot of the tower along with his army. They were all disguised as Brahmins. Taksha told the guard, We have been praying for the king, and we have some blessed food from our puja/prayer offerings that we would like to give to the king.

The guard had the messenger bring the basket of fruit up to the king. The sun was now setting. The king did not feel like eating, but he could not refuse prasad, so he said, I will take one apple, have a piece, and divide the rest among the ministers. Go ahead and take the rest of the basket and give it to the guards and attending soldiers.

He cut the apple open and saw a spot. That spot instantly became a worm, and that worm suddenly was a snake, and the snake was Taksha who bit the king, killing Parikshit with his venom.

\*\*\* 2/13/16

You can not know what the sky will do. You can set up your tent and sleep under a shimmering, astonishing sky. Only to find in the dark the wind taking the tent by its sides and squeezing and twisting until it snaps the poles.

Then the freshet rain descends, and if you have stayed up from the floodplain arroyo, you will have soaked feet, and everything above your sleeping-bagged body a pool, but you will live, you will not be taken down in the new shouting river.

\*\*\* 2/13/16

Already, in Jesus' lifetime, the Jews had fractured into different sects, just like Christians today.

Archaeologists in 2009 were digging in Magdala near the Sea of Galilee, and just eighteen inches down, their shovels hit a mass. It was a synagogue.

When the Romans thought the Jews were getting too rebellious, they went through the countryside and slaughtered entire villages. Magdala was no exception. The small synagogue, then, was left to wind-carried earth, over these two thousand years.

What they also found, in the center of the synagogue, was a stone sculpture that depicts the Jerusalem Temple.

The Romans had taken over appointing the high priests of the temple. High Priest Caiphus could not stand it when Jesus came into the temple and told the merchants they were doing wrong to be selling wares in the sanctuary, and then he had the gall to return to give teachings to whoever was there who would listen.

The “Magdala Stone” depicts in symbols, not only the front area of the temple by a seven-branched menorah/candelabra, but also represents the veil that separates the public area from the exclusive high priests’ area in the back.

And it indicates that actual area in the back side of the sculpture with the two rear wheels of God’s chariot encircled in flames. God himself is implied as being above the illustration, with the unseen front of the chariot. In the real temple, the back area was not ever meant to be seen by the congregation.

That the sculpture sits right in the middle of the floor indicates that the reverence for the Jerusalem Second Temple, a place for spiritual learning and worship, was being broadened to include this little synagogue in a fishermen’s town. A coin in a side room dates the time to AD 29, to Jesus’ time.

Rina Talgam, the expert art historian who is analyzing the sculpture, says that the fact that it appears here validates what we know from the historical record: some of the splintering groups of Jews were no longer following the belief that the Jerusalem temple was the only place where one would find God, and that only the high priests would have actual direct encounters with God.

The stone is quartzite, meant to endure, rather than the popular limestone used for sculpture at the time. It is in the center of the synagogue where anyone can see it. God could be encountered here, or other places, and God was also within any person’s own heart.

Jesus was giving teachings and healings all around the Sea of Galilee. And some of his disciples/apostles were from here. We remember Jesus getting into the boat after the fishermen had had a bad day of empty nets. He went back out with them, and their nets overflowed with fish. When they got to shore, he invited them to join him in helping to spread his teachings of unconditional love. And they did—they were his first disciples.

\*\*\* 2/14/16

I looked up and the moon was right above, a bright half and moving in. Gauzy pink capes of clouds.

Over the years of being unsettled and harmed and killed, we forget what we know, entire nations/peoples follow their calling. Maybe hearing correctly, maybe not. Some hear, Go destroy all those people. And do they hear, Go ruin the land?

In the dream, the animals and all the plants and all the adults and children are on the same level of respect. The sky is purified with the harmony. God enjoys this world this way so much that s/he tires of her drama of destruction. The eternal conflicts actually come to an end.

Swamiji says, No, you go to heaven and then you come back. You help wherever you can. You go through a journey again of your own evolverment.

Even after Ramakrishna died, Sarada Devi was going into deeper and deeper levels of meditation. She would have lifted away from her body and not returned but Ramakrishna had told her before he passed that she was going to be helping many, many people.

They say it all falls away, these words, curiosities, descriptions; these trees and blue sky. And still, no matter, you return in some body.

The action must continue! Energy is moving!

Earth changes—lifts up, moves, gets cold and fiery, seas swell and recede. They say those 35,000 handprints are the oldest imprinted human record. We don't really know all the places and times we've lived. But the realized ones do—they see all the way through. Shree Maa says, It's one life!

\*\*\* 2/15/16

Parikshit's wife, Madravati was pregnant with their son Janamejaya at the time of Parikshit's death. Janamejaya grew up not knowing the cause of his father's death, but when he became king, he asked his staff what had happened. When he learned that King Taksha, the King of Snakes, had killed his father as the instrument of Shringa's curse, he ordered a sacred fire to be built and for all snakes throughout the land to be rounded up and to brought in to be burned.

Some snakes escaped capture and they went to the holy woman, Manasa Devi for help. She sent her son, Ashtik Muni, to go talk to the King.

Ashtik said, Your Highness, please consider stopping this slaughter of your subjects. They did not kill your father. You are supposed to protect all life in your kingdom. This sacrifice is not going to bring peace and harmony to you or your people. Instead, it will lead to strife.

Well, said Janamenjaya, I have already taken the vow for this sacrifice and am in the midst of performing it. How do you suggest I stop it in an honorable way?

You will be excused by offering another sacrifice in this one's place. Stop burning the snakes and instead commit to sitting with Rishi Veda Vyasa so that he can tell you the stories of your long lineage and this sacred land. He is calling the collection of stories the *Swami Purana*.

And so this is what Janamenjaya did. He listened to the stories of his people and the way to live peacefully, the Dharmic way, even in the midst of difficulties.

\*\*\* 2/19/16

In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission offered amnesty to the perpetrators of violence during the time of apartheid. If the perpetrators admitted the crimes, they were considered free to move forward fully forgiven, given criminal amnesty. No more charges could be placed on them, and if they were a government official, no more charges could be made against the state. Victims also were able to make their testimonies so that they could go on record and there was the chance for healing.

\*

John Muir's Yosemite was not the people's who had come and stayed there in the months when it wasn't winter—for thousands of years. When Yosemite became a park, the plants that had been tended with controlled burns and harvesting started to go wild and the people got booted out.

And Ansel Adams had to have his beauties in black and white, put the land here and the people way out there, out of the frame.

The mom I met in the store today says she does her best to give her kids healthy food. She tells them cereal box covers are lying to them. When she told some other moms this, they thought she had gone too far! They looked at her like she had done something wrong.

\*

Each person will say who you are.

You are all around and inside. Like different languages.

A friend says she wandered and then she found a direction.

I see if I go or stay, somewhere in me it's all the same.

\*

And the wind stayed away. And the very light rain snuck in, left its mark in the night, was for a moment imprinted to the morning, and moved on.

\*\*\* 2/19/16

Last year the snowpack in Northern California was the lowest in 500 years, only 5%, and now late winter storms have returned it to normal.

\*

That crow across the canyon is shouting out, morning birds are in busy song.

Sarada Devi said God bestows grace to whoever she likes. You could be doing a lot of austere practices or not. There were those in the far past who did many spiritual feats and still, many did not get illuminated. God, she said, is not like fish or vegetables that you can buy for a price.

And ten days ago I was getting sick, I felt it changing my body. Furnace heat, murky breathing, head clouded. It didn't ask me if this was a convenient time. Every bit of annoyance and frustration I had to look at and release so that I could practice in these scenes being with peace here too. Remember me, the suffering whispered. Down in the depths, the murmur, the hum, remember thank you thank you. Remember Sarada Devi saying misery is God's sign of compassion.

So I was saying thank you, so now I say thank you, I'm getting well, hope grows. Just this week, trees in new leaves. We'll see where I'm going next.

\*

And time isn't what it used to be. What was in the past, that seemed so near, is now so long ago but I still think it is near. The tricks of age.

\*

There is happiness in a simple life. Is happiness made by what is experienced? Some want the lemons, some don't.

Pigeon is calling, mockingbird trilling, woodpecker tapping. When the sky had more birds, and even so when it was quiet, it was quieter.

Sometimes I am in awareness, sitting and walking around in the fullness of being.

Once the land was greener, then frozen, then underwater.

\*\*\* 2/21/16

Sky arcs high and blue, allows space for doing. At the edge of the store's parking lot, the homeless man is with his bags and smokes. And the neatly dressed woman is walking quickly up to shoppers, and she points to a grown woman leaning against a house wall in the alley, says, That's my daughter; do you have any... And the shopper gets into their car or hands over some dollars.

Too fast, the day went from cold to warm, and the sun going down again.

\*\*\* 2/22/16

The Pandava family were sent to the outland for their kingdom. Having never been there before, how could they protest what they didn't know. So loved by God that we are in the desert. In a

drought. Land that we don't know, but we remember when we get there the poem-stories of places and times like this. More than once we've been here.

Somewhere butterflies and bees alighting on fragile petals. We learn to pull out water from the dry air and ground. Get enough water to get the voice going to sing. To sing sadness and hope to God. To that one making this labyrinth. Who is watching, listening. I can't see all the way in when I'm going in. Can't see all the way out when I'm going out. It's there, the place where you turn, change direction.

Is it in walking? Or resting? Today it's a full moon, and I have been making preparations all day for a trip I'll take next month. In wisdom teachings they say just hold onto devoted love to your God. You can have that. The rest is on pilgrimage, on the move.

\*\*\* 2/23/16

Praying and meditating, at some point, somewhere, you feel the hum of the universe running through you, even if for a moment; what is there all the time, but most of the time we're not listening, not being open to hearing it.

And some scientists found the sound. They already knew it was real, but they hadn't yet actually heard it.

They say a billion years ago or so, two black holes filled with stars bumped into each other and became one. And those crash and bang sound waves got to here and now. To the listening scientists who had an instrument that let them hear it.

\*\*\* 2/24/16

The little one walks bow-legged, hands out as if to hold air. Just beginning to walk, feet know the way.

Many researchers say now that the people here and in South America were very prosperous but were already disappearing before Columbus. Any visitor could bring smallpox or measles and that would bring down a village, then an entire region.

Swamiji says, Do the best that you can. Don't worry about what you're not doing.

When he was younger and traveling in India, Swamiji went up a mountain to visit a guru. The guru was sitting in samadhi. Swamiji sat there all day with him. The guru was in samadhi all day.

By sunset, Swamiji realized he needed a guru who wasn't in samadhi, sitting in union with God, all the time. He needed a teacher who would show him the path to union. This is how you sit. This is how you breathe. And so on. Shree Maa says that she and Swamiji want to give us the nourishment so that we are the birds that are free, that fly. And they say that we can be happy wherever we are on our journey. Be content, they say, and give everywhere you are. All that's needed is love.



Nettles sting, but they give so many nutrients. I just have to remember to wear gloves when I harvest them. When they're cooked, they're harmless.

\*\*\* 2/28/16

The hawk is swooping down, getting into the innocent nests of the eucalyptus trees. I don't understand its meanness, its terrible calls. This earth is still tender with beauty, and there are people who have hearts of infinite mercy and love. Somehow, let's bring the good to the gathering storms. And that hawk can do nothing but fly away.

\*\*\* 3/1/16

She talked to me like a person talking to a person, the fourteen year-old Bernadette Soubirous said of Holy Mother Mary appearing to her in the hills of Lourdes, France.

\*

There I was en route from one side of the ashram to another side and Shree Maa came in, walked up to me, and looking eye to eye, said, How are you?

And you know this is her being intimate and casual, and you know who she is, and later you wish you'd been able to ask her first.

And what do you do now, since she wants to have this ordinary exchange, should you break it and bow down, kneel on the floor and put your head down in front of her feet? You could, and she would say in this scene, No, no. In this scene she just wants to have a short dialogue with you with no formalities. You must stand there and let go of the feeling like a deer in headlights, answering simply, Fine.

\*

The sky, wet with fog, begins to move apart curtains to the eternal blue. Over on the hillside are shiny silver little moons, little weavings from spiders. They make new ones every day. It's what they do.

\*\*\* 3/2/16

The South Coast Air Quality Board, with a majority of Republicans, fired the chair, Barry Wallerstein, and is expected to move forward with favoring the oil and other polluting industries, or as they say, economics versus regulations. California, meanwhile, continues to fall below federal air pollutions standards.

\*\*\* 3/5/16

The body is the unknown territory; always there will be terra incognita. Mystery resides in blood and bones and the secrets of cells.

All night, we were asking Shiva to come and bless us, and to take away our miseries. And Maa told us this story:

A man went into a forest to hunt. He found two deer, but they asked him not to kill them. They were looking for their children. They said, If you will let us find our children, we promise to come back and let you kill us.

He said, Ok.

He climbed up into a Bilva tree. He sat there, and he was not happy. For want of something to do, he pulled leaves and threw them to the ground. He didn't know there was a Shiva lingam at the base of the tree. Bilva leaves please Shiva.

So after awhile, Shiva appeared, saying, Thank you for your offerings! I will give you a boon!

Just then the deer returned, and they said, Thank you! We found our children! You can kill us now.

The man in the tree said, No, I don't feel like killing you now.

The deer then revealed themselves: they were Vishnu and Lakshmi.

Shree Maa laughed. Swamiji said, You don't know what you will get from Shiva. Vishnu and Lakshmi were playing a game on that man.

\*\*\* 3/7/16

Narad Muni asked Vishnu what Maya is. We know that Maya is many things: the all-pervasive one consciousness, but also the one perceiving its manifestations, and then, too, the many of itself, the multitude of forms.

So Vishnu said, Let's go to earth to understand the answer.

They went to the lake to bathe and when Narad came out of the water, he was a woman and no longer even remembered himself as Narad. A king passing by was smitten by her beauty, and so it was that they married.

She lived happily as the queen, they had a family, and led a peaceful life. But one day another king set his army against their kingdom, causing ruination. Her husband, the king, and all her children were killed.

Overcome with grief, she was sitting with her husband's corpse when a Brahmin told her to get up and prepare for the funeral. She went to the lake, bathed, and when she emerged, she was Narad again. And there was Vishnu, as it had been just a blink of an eye, not a lifetime. Narad immediately remembered his life as Narad. But, he asked, why wasn't I remembering my life as Narad when I was a woman?

Because, Vishnu said, this is all Maya. And you were in Maya as the many of the many.

\*

I ran, I walked, I swam, I sat.

Light just beginning, bird singing, birds nesting and flitting.

Moon not yet going away.

One more day.

Or the day.

Or day of days but only one.

As if I have been always in this one day. Lifting into the deepening, emerging blue.

Mars does or does not have life depending on who you talk to.

No wonder there are places—so many—that have a foreign feel. Or a familiar feel.

\*\*\* 3/24/16

Early morning: a fine white veil made from the breath of grasses and flowers hangs over the meadow. Light comes through spring petals. Earth is good.

The creek is clear. It goes at an easy pace, having been given so little rain, to the river. The river at this canyon catches in the curves, huge mounds of bubbles pile up, they're from some upriver camper.

Sycamore then to observe, in new sculpted leaf, black sage in purple jeweled bloom. If I came into focus with each leaf, where could I possibly wander?

Red ground in this hidden spot where I sit, specially collected minerals that do not let the wild oats and insistent deadly Sahara mustard—at least yet—to grow up here. I sit with sages and sumac, poppy, and storksbill.

\*

The two seekers asked their teacher, Who is the self, really?

She said, Go look at yourself in the creek's pool.

One of the seekers came back and said, It's me. All this that I feel and think, all my hopes and successes, and even my questions and mistakes.

She answered, Yes!

And so that seeker went on to teach her students, friends, and family what she'd discovered.

The other seeker came back and said, That is an image of me in the water, and somewhere in this body called me is one who sees, one who sees even my thoughts and desires and everything that I do, the so-called good and bad and everything between.

The teacher said, Yes! Keep looking at that one; there is the union of your self.

\*\*\* 4/2/16

Ramkripalaju, Maa and Swamiji's friend, had told us disciples that we're lucky. Because when he found his guru, his guru immediately told him he had to get rid of everything and then do very challenging, austere acts to demonstrate his renunciation of the worldly life. He said Shree Maa and Swamiji give us love, and encourage us to pray and sing and do our work in the world.

\*\*\* 4/4/16

What place do you like best? I asked my twelve-year-old friend. The mountains, the desert, or the beach?

I can't say I like one best. 'Cause I like them all, he said.

\*\*\* 4/13/16

Heat drenched sky in every direction. Over a million people living here are cautioned to watch how much water they let come from their faucets. Still, every morning, a man down the street hand waters his lawn and roses.

My friend says in Phoenix, where she lives, there's over a million people, and they are not told to hold back their water.

That phoenix still rises from the fiery heat of the desert there. Maybe the whole city is an illusion. Where do we look, blink, and see the place that isn't fixed by the imagination?

Pema Chodron says:

basic  
nature  
is  
never  
changed  
by  
confusion  
and  
pain

skylike  
mind  
deepens  
knowing

Sun persists.

This place becomes undone by years of sun. We don't really know it as it is.

\*\*\* 4/4/16

The news is not full of drought, as if tired of it, though the drought continues.

In the yard, the overgrown grass, life out of control.

The child said she fell out of her bed, and then she knew what a night without light is like.

\*\*\* 4/23/16

Much of East Porterville is still without water due to dry wells, and they do not have municipal water. Although nine government agencies have been working to solve the dilemma, they are entangled in cross-purpose disagreements.

\*\*\* 5/6/16

The headline is that Governor Brown announced the lifting of statewide water conservation rules.

Well, the north got late winter rain. But in the southland, we still hope for more rain.

\*\*\* 5/10/16

In Northern California, in this near-dream, the husks of lakes, the water a scant fingerprint, and then after a week's rain, now brimming bodies, Lakes Oroville and Shasta. But here in the South, the lakes are bird baths of dust, wind pools.

\*\*\* 5/19/16

The border clouds gone today. Love in all sizes and shapes. Craft what I can with the minutes, build into the days the good tomorrows. Every little is the good bread. It's enough without measure.

\*

Going on what is this view. It could be right, it could be wrong. It could be that it is. Guessing, using my imagination. Listening to seekers and saints, finding my way inside their ways.

\*\*\* 5/22/16

I asked Adaitya if there were women rishis—we don't hear so much about them. He said yes there are, and he told me about Anasuya, wife of Muni Atri. She lived a very pious life, so pure that Kali, Lakshmi, and Saraswati, the wives of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma, were jealous. They asked their husbands to bring Anasuya down a notch with some kind of temptation so that she would not be quite so lofty. So the males paid her a visit and said, We are hearing great things about you, and we present to you a challenge: Please serve us our lunch—but please, we would like you to do that in the nude.

Ah, she said, I would be happy to meet your challenge! And let me first bless you with this holy river water!

And with that she quickly dipped her fingers into a bowl of holy water, and sprinkled water over their heads. Instantly, each of them suddenly became a child.

When the husbands had not returned by the end of the day, the wives suspected some magic trickery had happened and set out to Atri and Anasuya's ashram. Seeing that their husbands had been made into children, they asked Anasuya for mercy, and Anasuya agreed on the condition that for awhile they would be born as her sons.

They lived in harmony there for some time. And when the exiled Rama and Sita paid a visit, Anasuya taught Sita some wisdoms.

Among the teachings, she told Sita that there had been a severe drought in that land for ten years. She told her about her tapasya, her intense focus of prayers and acts she had performed to restore the earth to harmony. In answer to her prayers, many springs formed in the hills and they sent down streams, and the streams gathered in the valley to form the great Mandakini River.

I also learned about Arundhati, the chaste wife of the rishi Vashishta. She gave teachings to the seven male rishis and during a twelve-year drought when they had none of their vegetables and fruits, her earnest prayers to Shiva restored the natural cycles of rain.

\*

Sarada Devi said she did certain Hindu practices because it was expected of her in her circumstances, but it wasn't necessary in terms of providing blessings for the situation or people. She was already giving that.

\*\*\* 5/16/16

A plus from the drought is that Southern California beaches are cleaner because much less runoff carrying urban pollutants is happening.

\*\*\* 5/27/16

Backwards is forwards. The casual is the formal. We are not concerned with appearances, making impressions of the external sort. It rains. There's puddles. It clears and warms. Sun moves; it comes through windows, glorious. Squirrel, rabbit, neighbor cat come and go.

Every time I go into the garden, crow is up to calling and surveying, chasing, and being chased. The smaller birds sing in the canyon chaparral. I, too, go on singing and praying. This is how the body lightens up, being present in and transcending time and circumstance.

\*\*\* 5/29/16

A few weeks of somber skies, tricks of dropped clouds. Typical for May and June but still not familiar, more feeling like Northwest than Southwest. And the pulldown of moods—people getting fussy.

Then a little sleight of sky's hand: light and brief rain. Getting hopes up is foolish since what sky has given has not changed our on-going arid state. And then in the afternoon, high heat took every particle of the grey, restored the beautiful blue and our brilliant light. We're still in it.

\*\*\* 6/5/16

Mamma and I have just gone through the boxes that she and my grandmother had saved of family papers, scrapbooks, and photos. We selected what to save and what to toss out.

I see the story of our female bodies and our choices of what to do. My grandmother, my great-aunt, my mother, and myself, how it shifted in the generations:

You went to college, dropped out, you had a baby, you raised the children.

You had a baby, it was decided you would quit working a job, do volunteer work.

You had a baby, you moved forward with a teaching career, the professors said teach high school, teach college, but you wanted to teach kindergarten, so that's what you did.

You didn't have children, you did volunteer work and career work.

The story of the female body and her soul: We talked to God. We made mistakes, we wanted to hide, to go away, to die. But we stayed, we kept on talking to God.

There are the rosaries, the prayer cards, the letters of encouragements, the commitments. Work—in the home and out—always, there's been work to do. Love to give to family, friends, God.

\*\*\* 6/12/16

Overgrown areas of the Santa Ynez Mountains near Santa Barbara are burning in the Sherpa Fire. It is prime fire ground because it hasn't been cleared by the Forest Service, and it was last burned out of control by nature in 1955's Refugio Fire that ranged over 77,000 acres.

\*\*\* 6/17/16

The beginning of summer and already temperatures over 100.

The U.S. Forest Service says 26 million trees died in California in the last 8 months.

150 homes burned in the Erskine Fire in Kern County.

Lakes Oroville, Shasta, and Folsom are full again because of the late winter and early spring rains in Northern California. Water districts throughout the state are now being allowed to propose their own conservation standards based on a projection of another three years of drought. Their plans will be reviewed by the State Water Resources Control Board.

Yorba Linda residents are suing their Water District provider for being charged an extra fee the District added to compensate for the state-wide mandated restriction.

\*

The body is one thing, the spirit another.

I watch this body trip through its courses, fettered and free. Should I ever forget the best I have, I look to the stumblers who have it worse.

Yesterday the sky twisted into hot tropical cloud contortions of light and dark, even sending a few drops to earth. Mercies of wind appearing now and then. Sirens from all directions rushing to fiery city pockets.

The hills in Santa Barbara starting to be saved then overcome with insistent flames.

Today's urban sky ironed into cloudless flattened heat, the mountain pulling in thunderclouds that will withhold rain. May as well stay put. Sunday's gardening on hold.

I will come undone, it's true, through the collection of days to days. But I intend to go on sowing hope and faith and love. Because I learned to so long ago I don't remember when, and their harvests, no matter what else in life comes, are what I know I can live on.

\*\*\* 6/19/16

And I was bad thousands of times this lifetime. And millions of times in lifetimes before. And Ramakrisna says to Kali: Why are you doing this? This is all your doing!

\*\*\* 6/19/16

The ancient yogic sages wrote down divinely inspired poems intended to give the generations to come instructions of how to navigate their lives in increasingly difficult times. They say the goddesses and gods walked on earth and people recognized them; it was an ordinary part of the fabric of living.

\*

A Tibetan Buddhist student of the eleventh century, Geshe Ben, aimed to catch his actions when they were going astray. One day he was waiting in the meal line with the other disciples at a



special meal their patrons had prepared, and he became more and more worried that the other monks would get all the best yogurt before he got his turn. Realizing his folly, when he reached the head of the line he put his hand over his bowl and pronounced loudly, “No yogurt for this greedy addict. I’ve already had too much in this life!”

He also caught himself when he was visiting some friends one day. When they went out of the room, he saw a big bag of flour and that reminded him that he was out of flour at home. So he reached into the bag and was about to put some in a sack to take home when he started shouting, “Thief! Thief! I’ve got a thief!” Of course, his friends found no one there but Geshe.

\*

Sarada Devi had said when your legs get painful, you can come out of the asana/the sitting pose. Because she had rheumatism, when she was older, she couldn’t sit cross-legged. And Shree Maa also has that, so she sits in a chair. She could ignore it, but she chooses in this case to demonstrate honoring the body’s needs.



\*\*\* 6/26/16

Fires tear through the hills and canyons again. Some say this is the fifth year, some say the sixth.

The ones who said we had enough rain, no need to save water, the drought is over, weren’t looking at this parched ground, this persistent sky.

\*\*\* 7/2/16

635 miles of fencing has been placed on the border between the Southwest U.S. and Mexico. The fencing has been allowed to bypass 37 environmental protection laws. Environmentalists sued but lost the case to keep the fencing from Smuggler’s Cove north of Tijuana; because of the construction of the fence, the natural water diversions were eliminated and now the Tijuana River runs faster through the area, eliminating much of the ground’s filtering of pollutants.

\*

The National Weather Service has records of downtown Los Angeles weather going back 140 years. They say the past five years have been the driest. There was El Nino rain this year, but it stayed in Northern California.

\*

Water is in the little lake, must be coming up from the spring.

Ducklings are with their mamma; what happiness it is to see them do their usual in the restored small lake. Another season.

I walk across the dry golden meadow, go down into forest, up into more woods. At the top, stand in the clearing of sky. Some places make gratitude arise. I go out of my head here.

\*\*\* 7/4/16

Arctic ice is melting away. Recently, over just thirty years, a huge chunk twice the size of Texas dissolved. In the global temperature records, this June had been the hottest of all Junes.

\*\*\* 7/8/16

I am walking, leaves are in motion, birds in motion.

Live or die: we thought Ray, Mamma's husband, was dying. They said his kidneys were going. But he's back up and moving in rehab at their senior complex.

Spider makes her web over the back door every day. And every day I break it coming out. You can't see it, and she won't move. Live or die.

Water is still coming out of these faucets.

Two black men shot in two different cities.  
Five white cops shot.

Happy. Independence Day, Week.

Blurred: Ray in the hospital. Every day they told us a different story. In a room. In another room.

Secrets of the body: feelings and the spirit. History inside unravels, rewrites, becomes, is born.

I am you.

Mamma says when she passes she is going into the nothing and won't return as a human body. Maybe a flower or a bird.

Shiva was a fish. Became a land dweller, part fish. A monkey. A human. Shiva, Swamiji says, is our story.

Very, very dry and record June heat. The new of the old. The arctic going.

Inside of me, in the midst of it all, I feel the river of peace and happiness. Ha!

Goddess Annapurna this morning in my praying, saying, I am not yet, even through all this time, depleted.

\*\*\* 7/9/16

Now I read of St. John of the Cross being put in prison, a cupboard-like enclosure, by the Provincial of the established Carmelites. The Provincial didn't agree with Teresa's reform movement. But the nuns had voted to have her once again have a round at being Prioress. The Provincial burned their ballots, inserted his own appointed Prioress, and John, who was their priest, imprisoned.

John stayed six months, sick with lice and the measly, old food. Yet while there he had ecstatic experiences, we'd call it samadhi, and four poems came out of those times.

While there, he dreamed that Goddess was saying, Go ahead and escape. And she had him recall falling into a pond as a boy, and she had been standing on the bank telling him to grab hold, and then she vanished and a boy was pulling him out.

\*

After St. John of the Cross got out from his monastery prison room, by removing the door and exiting through a window in the next room, he was on a wall. He had to go down into its courtyard, then he had to climb up another wall. It was too tall. But he says the Goddess helped him up and over.

He went off then and lived in the backcountry and wrote poems. This he remembered as his happiest time. Later, he was asked to go teach and counsel and those were not his favorite years.

\*\*\* 7/10 & 15/16

Robin just now getting seeds from the flower pots.

Bird toothless.  
Human beakless.

Blessings here abound.

Now we hear Ray may come back from the rehab and live at the apartment again. We are staying with each day. Letting tears rest for now.

Two mockingbirds squabble in the air and the seed-eating robin flies off.  
The robin returns.

Must live in this world with all its contradictions. It's not to be or not to be. Crows go onto the roof to crack macadamia nuts. Answers loom, dim images. *The* answer is no answer.

\*\*\* 7/16/16

Swamiji tells us that enlightenment comes to humans but it also goes. We all live in a world of maya, of illusions. He says we may often have experiences of illumination, but not of enlightenment.

On a full moon night, Shiva sang for all the heavenly beings and Krishna and Radha united with the music's nectar, produced a liquid being, Ganga.

When Ganga was a young woman, one day she flirted with Krishna, and Radha was furious. Radha told Krishna that he had better not get involved with Radha because, even though he was married to Radha, he had been involved with other Goddesses, and they each had suffered as a result: Shanti/Peace left her body and her body was divided into pieces, given to the forest, Infinite Consciousness, the Divine Mother, sadhus, and dharma; Kshama/Patience and Forgiveness left her body and her body was divided into pieces, given to all people living in dharma, Gods, and rishis; Prabha/Luster left her body and her body was divided into pieces, given to fire, Gods, Sun, lions, and some people. Sobha/Radiance was divided into pieces, given to the moon, jewels, gold, gems, kings, and some women. Viraja/Passion and Attachment became a River and when Krishna united with her again, she became Sagar/Ocean. Because Radha was so angry, Ganga collected her waters and hid at Krishna's feet. Brahma coaxed her back out and had her marry Narayana.

At that time, Narayana was married to Lakshmi, Saraswati, and Gangaa. Ganga got in trouble again because she was flirting with Narayana and Saraswati got mad, saying this behavior was a show of pride and selfishness. She took hold of Ganga's hair and began to pull but Lakshmi separated the two. Saraswati cursed Lakshmi, If you're going to be like a silent tree and not stand up for me, and you are going to be fickle like a river with what you view as right and wrong, then I curse you to go to earth and become tree and river.

Lakshmi kept her cool and said nothing in return, but Ganga, all charged up, said, Saraswati, you don't get to be the big boss here! You go learn about humility yourself; you too go be a river on earth and be more forgiving; go wash away people's sins.

Saraswati, so hot-headed at this point, fired back, If I'm going, you're going! You come on down and see how you like being a river. If I'm going to be washing away sins then so are you, miss high-and-mighty!

Narayana walked into the end of this cursing scene and learned with horror what had happened. He said in order to restore peace, Ganga would need to go be Shiva's wife and Saraswati would be Brahma's wife, and Lakshmi would stay with him.

Swamiji says that Jesus, Buddha, Ramakrishna, and Sarada Devi had their times of illumination and their times of discouragement. And there are many stories of the gods and goddesses, who are considered past even enlightenment, acting under the influence of illusion.

Enlightenment, he says, is not something one reaches and is done seeking once they reach it. It is infinite and we are ever on a journey of self-realization. Each person is on their particular journey, and we have moments of illumination when we embody wisdom, love, and devotion. Even without being in a state of samadhi/enlightenment, we can experience illumination. We are

on a path/sadhana and we share with fellow seekers our stories. As we evolve, as we change, we look to keep moving forward, integrating what we have learned, getting less and less attached to the world of desires. We seek to help this earth as humbly and simply as we can. Everything we do is by God/dess's grace, and we are God's children.

Adaitya says: We devotees are not Tantra or Vedanta or Nyaya, Yoga, Samkhya, etc. We see that each one has its place in an individual's journey and we accept and use one as is appropriate. A little baby only knows his senses, which is charvak, and a child who is older begins to use logic, which is nyaya. As our understanding progresses, we realize the world is made up of one substance, which is energy or atoms. Our understanding goes on evolving through these systems. So we are universal; we accept them all.

\*\*\* 7/22/16

Everything a stove top: clothes in the closet, kitchen counters, the side of the refrigerator. Oven house.

\*

Carmen, my elder friend at the park where I walk, said when the earth is over, there is no religion. She said God is love.

\*

Today the coast nearly lost in a mild-mannered fog.

\*\*\* 7/23/16

The big foot of heat lifted yesterday. Now the blue has ribbons of feathery clouds.

River comes down from up high, funneling in mountainside, smoothing and being slowed by boulder. Added to by the little ones singing. River going in, going out, going around, going. In places slowing but still going. Touched and giving, soaking in but rising again. Getting to its becoming one with sea, where it will rise again and be one with sky.

I am sitting and praying, in my praying thanking rivers, naming them, those ancient ones. I call those names of those rivers, and they could be any river, and they are inside me, my very own rivers.

Ganges, Jamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri

And when I am up again and moving, I will make more mistakes, just as I stumbled through Sanskrit words, the breath, the rhythm, the word placement shifts.

Living the real life that dreams are made of.

\*\*\* 7/24/16

All morning in cool, droopy haze.

Afternoon, the ice cream truck comes around playing year-round holiday songs and musicals, “Silent Night” and “Fiddler on the Roof.”

Where have you come from, the Gospel of Thomas tells us the doubters asked.

And we said, We are from the light. That is the mother, that is the father in me.

And they asked, But you can’t see, we can’t see, that light. How do you know these parents in you?

And we said, The light is our motion, our rest.

\*\*\* 7/25/16

In Oaxaca, thousands of small farmers cultivate the old kinds of maize/corn, landrace types, getting small yields from their ten acre plots. And they want to go on as they have, family to newborn family, with the seasons and the ways that they know.

Unlike other grains, maize doesn’t drop its seed and repropagate. It’s highly debated how wild maize first appeared and then began to be cultivated. But we do know that 6,000 years ago maize was being cultivated in Mexico in many varieties and colors, and today there are about fifty different types. Hybrid cultivars proliferate because the plant crosses easily from open [wind] pollination. Family and community farms that haven’t succumbed to the high yield agribusiness type of corn plant the maize as they always have, intercropping with other plants such as beans, melons, chilies, and amaranth. These fields are so healthy from this practice that they don’t get diseases and there is no need to rotate or fertilize. And we now know that beans and maize in a diet complement each other’s missing amino acids, and so the two together make a complete protein.

\*\*\* 7/26/16

Swamiji and Adaitya are in Gangotri in India, at the headwaters of the Ganges River. They have been seeing many pilgrims there who have come from all over India, having walked this annual trek while the weather is mild. They come to give prayers and to bring back home some of the river’s holy water.



Along the popular routes, for even the people who stay where they are and don't walk, it becomes a community pilgrimage. Whether the person is walking or driving or staying put there is a common focus on the intention to offer prayers to the Goddess. There are outdoor rest areas along the way and offers of free meals and refreshments. Even if you drive by the free vendors, you will hear welcoming shouts. Everyone is intent on directing all their actions to their devotion to the Goddess. Swamiji says that in ancient times a sadhu, Kali Kamiliwala, offered tea to the pilgrims going along the trail to Gangotri, and later people living in the area took up his practice adding offerings of food, and soon there were people in communities all along the various routes giving support to the pilgrims. One person's example of love and generosity, Swamiji says, while it may seem a small act at the time, can impact several lives well into the future. When the offering is pure, the benefit of that offering is compounded through time.

\*\*\* 7/29/16

Sage and seed going into rest, canyon full of busy birds. Butterfly coming through. If and when are worlds akin to now but not now. Snake is hidden in shade. For all the hours, this hour. For all the stories, this story.

Maize making it up as it goes through thousands of years.

Stars fall as they will.

\*\*\* 8/5/16

Scant winter rains brought up grasses that quickly dried in the on-going drought, so we are seeing yet more voracious fires this year, again starting in spring and raging on into this summer. The fires move extremely quickly through the dry tinder of grasses, shrubs, and trees.

There have been many days this summer where the marine layer has stayed on through a good part of the day, and that has acted as an insulation for feeding the fires.

Some current ravaging fires: The Sobranes Fire has taken 51,000 acres in the Big Sur area and the Cold Fire in Yolo County near Lake Berryessa has taken over 5,000 acres.

Erskine Fire in Kern County burned 48,000 acres. The Sand Fire in Santa Clarita south of L.A. burned over 41,000 acres.

Here in San Diego, there was the Border Fire that took nearly 8,000 acres in June and the Feather Fire in July.

\*\*\* 8/5/16

Ral Christman (Kumeyaay) says that in the Indian communities here, if you were very bad in one clan, you were required to leave. And you would go to another community. And if you were bad

again—say the charge was murder—you would have to leave again. He doesn't know what would happen to a person who wasn't acceptable to anyone.

\*

Goddess made a bright cloud on top of the hill Tepayac, and Juan Diego, on his way to the Saturday evening Mass for the Mother of God, saw it. He climbed up the hill, and the shiny cloud broke into streams of color, and a beautiful woman appeared.

Goddess told him who she was, and to go tell the bishop that she wanted a church built there for Juan's people, the Aztec Indians.

But of course there was doubt, the bishop didn't believe him.

Juan went back and saw her again; she sent him back to the bishop to deliver the same message. The bishop said, Go back and have her give you a sign to give to me.

Juan talked to Goddess again, and she said to return the next day and she would give the sign.

When Juan returned home, he discovered his uncle was on the brink of death. So early the next day, he set out to the Church of Santiago to ask the priest to come give the Last Rites. He decided he would have to visit Goddess after he had dispatched the priest, and he went around the other side of the Tepayac Hill in order to avoid her. But there she was, right on his path! He was deeply embarrassed, but she told him she loved him, and reminded him, I am Goddess. Don't worry about your uncle, I will cure him. Now, go up to the top of the hill and gather roses. Take them in your cloak to the bishop. And do not show them to anyone until you speak with the bishop.

When Juan got to the top of the hill, he found non-native, Castilian roses growing everywhere—and it was winter.

Knowing then for certain his uncle would be fine, he set out directly to see the Bishop again. When he was allowed his turn to visit the bishop, he said, I have the sign you asked for in my cloak!

And when Juan opened his cloak and put the roses on the floor, the bishop and his attendants all gasped and knelt down. On the cloak was the image of Goddess. The bishop then believed and said he would indeed build a church where the Goddess had appeared on the hill.

When Juan returned home, his uncle was fine, and said that he, too, had seen Goddess. She told him that she wanted a church built where Juan had seen her at the hill and that her picture would be put there, and to call it Our Lady Mary of Guadalupe. Juan and his uncle went to the bishop and told him all of this.

Juan became the caretaker of the new church and lived there until his passing.

\*\*\* 8/6/16



We've had a lot of low-hanging marine-layer skies coupled with massive wildfires that have helped make the ozone this summer in Southern California the worst it's been since 2009, and because of this more people are showing up in clinics with their respiratory problems. Southern California has the highest air pollution in the nation and has not met federal control standards since 1979.

\*

Step shuffle step step  
Step step shuffle slide step

But there's no known dance. You have to find it, go with it. It could be awhile for any of us. It could be tonight. The readiness is all.

\*\*\* 8/14/16

Adaitya says Swamiji has told him that when he was much younger and living in India, he was so immersed in his devotional practice that he could easily go up, step by familiar step, to the realm of samadhi. But then later, being the director of our Devi Mandir ashram in the U.S., and being the teacher of many people throughout the world, it became a challenge to go back up step by simple step.

Swamiji: I don't think you hear me use the word "enlightenment" very often. It is not part of my spiritual lexicon. I talk more about illumination because enlightenment implies a permanent illumination, and I don't believe that exists, except in the hopes and dreams of devotees.

Thinking further, if there were a permanent state of enlightenment, then how can we explain the existence of creation? It is my view that enlightenment is a state that devotees ascribe to their gurus in the hope that they, too, can become liberated from all that they don't like.

Whether the guru is actually permanently in that state of liberation or not, and whether it is sometimes or all of the time, are mere aspirations and projections from the devotees.

So let's leave all the talk about enlightenment for people in the kitchen, and we will talk about sadhana [spiritual practice].

\*\*\* 8/17/16

Lake County is devastated by the Clayton Fire. Most residents of this area are low income, had no home insurance, and 1300 homes were burned. Someone from their own community is suspected of starting the fire.

\*\*\* 8/19/16

Southern California farms have lost crops to the drought: In the Bakersfield area, 25% of the cherry crops have failed. They got some rain but it was only a week before the harvest, which was too late. Northern California rain and snow did bring the Kaweha and San Joaquin Rivers up

partially, but not enough to help the farmers. In stores, consumers are finding higher prices and a shortage of some produce.

\*\*\* 8/20/16

It could be the spiritual is in cooking what's on hand, seeing flowers, and now seeing the many browns of the faded. It could be this long drought of not getting what I think should be is getting what is, and that is it. Dreams and the true not so far apart. It could be a kind of hidden rain. You just get to know what you're looking at. You're here. You've been here all along. The panics, little flashes. Because here wins out over regret, nostalgia, desire. Water, plenty of it, in certain undergrounds.

\*

80,000 residents were asked to evacuate because of the invading Blue Cut Fire in the San Bernardino area. 105 homes destroyed, and over 200 other buildings. 36, 274 acres burned.

\*\*\* 8/23/16

August at its end not like its former self. We got the dire, body-wringing heat at the beginning, but now the sky droops cool and gray half the day. Sometime in the afternoon that sky is swept aside by light-filled winds. Inland, heat condenses in canyons and against mountainsides.

Hurricanes besiege the Southeast of this continent, and folks of Louisiana are moved out from flood. Sky there calls for a remake of life as its known.

Stand here in the calm that even in that has many guises. Stand, sit, move within the day's sky appearances. Now the cool tin roof, now the see-through blue, now the glittered velvet black. In the times I get absorbed in it outside, it is also inside me. Fear has no life, no power. Being with inside-out, outside-in. The every-giving tree. Big Love.

Then it can be fiery sky or merciless rain. And still these flowers not yet extinguished.

\*\*\* 8/27/16

After three years, a part of East Porterville recently started receiving municipal piped water from Porterville. More homes will be receiving the service within the next year.

\*\*\* 8/20/16

Starting January 1, 2017 water agencies will be required to have a scale of charges for customers' water use or they can create a way to publicize the names of heavy users.

\*\*\* 9/10/16

Five-year-old tells me it pretty much doesn't rain here in Southern California, but one time she watched it with her mom.

Friend who's sick, could be near-death-ill, says he thinks he's supposed to still be here, but he's not sure what work he will be doing.

He's in I don't know. I'm in I don't know too.

Wind is many parts, alike and not alike. Some black oak are about to drop acorns, some have none this year.

Ducklings in the murky pond. Cows given a water tank in the meadow now that the lake has disappeared. Children who still know what sounds wild animals make. Wind in pine and oak singing.

Where woodpecker has made holes in bark, jay has put acorns.

Maybe, my friend says, this is how the next years will be. Maybe California will never have rains like it used to.

Needles come down, brittle branches snap, trunks are felled by beetles who love the dried wood.

No clouds today.

Every sorrow alleviated by lifting up from the dream to see another dream.

You are me.

This difficulty the ripples, the dream. Who is there to call enemy, stranger? Where is the poverty? The bad weather?

Twelve centuries ago, Shantideva gave his talk that we now know as *The Way of the Bodhisattva* and the next day he was gone.

Jesus would go sleep on the hill, go off to another side of the lake to no one knew where.

And dust lifting from trail bikers is from those people who came here thousands of times to grind acorn, to hunt and preserve deer.

We get on with the days. There's days and days to live.

\*\*\* 9/10/16

Moon comes again as circle of light. Days begin sheeted in clinging grey. There is one sky, one ground in all these days. You of you, and you and you. Every prayer turns in on itself. New leaves and so many falling.

Someone is sobbing, someone is giddy with hope. I watch her, this body, renew the going nowhere while the schedule has me going all over everywhere.

Bruised foot, zucchini cooking, finches alighting on twigs.

Three year-old says, This screwy paper.  
Says, I don't use language, in response to, We don't use that language.

To be in the page, in the letters, in the imagining, to be in what is alive.

So they put together pieces of cardboard with glue, painted parts gold, and we called it art.

That night the professor showed a movie about an upper class woman wanting a baby, wanting to buy a baby from a poor young woman. Repetition of old scenes in different languages.

Back in ancient days, people were smaller. We became bigger. Every bit of nutrition maybe getting you where you want to be. Maybe, but no guarantee.

Crows arrived calling and the boy said, I know that language, caw caw caw. And I know dolphinese, hawkese, whale-ese.

I sat out an hour of traffic and then, it turned out, I joined more.

September still mild-weathered, turning inside out predictions.

Look, the moon still out.

\*\*\* 9/17/16

First, I was praying in the wee hours.

Coyotes began calling. In a different way. Not like when they have a hunted catch. And not the echo to a siren.

Then the train wailed.

And just trailing its first call, the quick bright light.

\*

Mamma cries because Ray's memory is going, going. He still knows us, but some days remembers better than other days the experiences of the present or past.

She cries because the Chinese restaurant on Universtiy Avenue that she used to go to with her family before The War (WWII) is now, in 2016, closing. The grandfather wants to close it, and

he doesn't care what the rest of the family wants. She says that's how it is; he gets the say. And she just took Ray there the week before.

\*

The night cave-sky black as ever.

Then what seemed to be car light beams.

Then too wide for that, black tearing apart to huge jagged swaths of light.

Maybe we have been dry-skied for so long, maybe it was the strange visitation of warm humid-saturated sky, whatever, something rattled the above, making a giant's thunder. People jumped out of bed. And then, and then, and then: thunder stomping, thumping. A kind of drum roll for the great event: rain let loose from our heaven, came down free and generous. Let up early morning but returned the next night and all the next day, confusing the drought adapted and reviving the ones still able to take this sky's turnings.

\*

On the freeway, two horses have their heads out of the side of the trailer, chomping on their hay.

We are rolling through strange weather, crackling dry and visitations of tropical sky-stompings.

An ant carries a big stick.

It seems pointless to follow the trail of ordinary desires. Isn't sky showing us a way to be with the changes of nature? Isn't all life around us unveiling what we so often don't turn to see?

Shantideva:

All the happiness the world contains  
Has come through wishing happiness for others  
All the misery the world contains  
Has come through wanting pleasure for yourself.

Ramakrishna:

If you say the name Kali, Kali, Kali [God] without count, what need is there of ceremony? You never find a time that is not the time of prayer.

Birds sing in the sky clearings.

Two days after the rains, September makes an appearance like its known for, sizzling blue and staccato Santa Ana winds that pull out waters from every corner.

\*\*\* 9/24/16

Scripps Institute of Oceanography has found the effects of not getting the rains of this past winter and spring (2015-2016) El Nino here:

Subtropical fish appeared.

Double erosion of beach sand resulted in estuaries being blocked from the renewing waters of tides.

Intense, short rainfalls caused damaging flash floodings.

\*

Because of the increasing risks of suburban wildfires, insurers are raising the fire insurance premium by 40% or flat-out cutting it from the policies of many homeowners who have been paying for it for years.

\*

All the time any time year round, fallen leaves roam and gather.

What do we do with entrusted stories? And what do we do with the parts that are revealed now that were left out twenty years ago?

Wind starts shaking loose acorns.

History for Kumeyaay people here has been learned and known from experiences that happen through the seasons, not dwelling in name-and-time-mind.

\*

If your teacher says, Jump off the cliff, Swamiji says, Say, You go first.

He says, The cycles of creation are happening here in my body. Breathing in the world, which is also God, it moves within me, and breathing out the peace made from the movements within.

He says, I have read so many words that describe the experience of what is beyond so many words.

\*

Kumeyaay people were living along the San Diego River on the Capitan Grand reservation that had been formed in 1875. Part of the reservation included the land of the Los Conejos Band of Kumeyaay that had been continuously inhabited for thousands of years. But the city in 1898 started plans to dam the river. In 1934, the Kumeyaay were taken off the land in what they called the River of Tears forced march. Some of the people went to the Barona Reservation and some went to the Baron Long Ranch, which was renamed Viejas Reservation.

\*\*\* 10/8/16

The Soberanes Fire in Monterey County has been burning since July 22. It has been difficult to fight because the coastal mountains are steep and many places have no access roads or trails. The fire is one of the largest and longest fires on record. Now that we are officially in Santa Ana winds season, it will be even more of a challenge to stop the fire.

\*\*\* 10/16/16

It can be cold or hot now, and we accept it because that fits the season of Fall. Moon stays through the day, moon of falling leaves, berries, and seeds.

The cows have left the lakebed for good; there's no mud to lie down in. Meadow still showing enduring green grasses.

One jay calls, calling me back in time: How when I was very little we would hike under unshaded sky, my cheeks going bright red. Then I am here in the sweetness of now, these kind wild places I return to each season.

Ray is dying. That's it. This time no rebounding after years of surprising the predictors; he could come back more than any cat. Rehearsals of tears. It wasn't easy for us, but still we were given more time. This time won't be added, won't bend and yield. He's not in pain and that is a comfort for our suffering.

The calf, now a month old, wanders among the mothers, doesn't nibble grass, seems to be looking about.

Comfort in a Buddhist teaching: The only thing you take with you is your peace of mind.

Where have I been? Where have I been going? What has my time made?

So much, the unseen.

Comfort in Shree Maa's teaching: It doesn't matter what we become. It doesn't matter what we attain. It doesn't matter what we possess. All of that is temporary. Visit the place of peace within and celebrate the gift of life.

Carmen, the elder friend at the park who is also there, like me, for her morning walk: She talks about cooking for the family, cleaning the house. She tells me her recipes, tells me the names she has for the natives, tells me how she cooks them and uses them for medicine. She loves to pray too. She loves Mother Mary; wears her rosary around her neck.

They say the sky was full of moving particles, and they got so exuberant that their friction made the sun. And the sun was so boisterous that it flung out pieces—one hurling matter spinning itself into our earth, another the moon.

Carmen says, roll the tunas [cactus fruit] on the ground. Cut it four ways on one side. Peel it between the cuts. Eat the fruit inside.

Ramakrishna: What is best to desire is to attain Divine Bliss. When Narendra comes to visit, I forget everything else—his history, his house, his parents, how many brothers he has. I forget to ask. When I look at Narendra, I sink into the Nectar of God. So as far as God's creation, His imperishable qualities, all that's said about His infinite power, why should I care about all that? I have a desire to see you. If I don't see pure souls, who would I talk with?

And the clouds are not here today. Black Oak leaves are golden.

Ray walked to the dining room, ate lunch. He is still here.

What is beyond ground and sky? What is in motion like water?

I was watching the basketball game with Ray. And then the post game interview with Magic Johnson. I said to something Johnson said, "Yeah, you can't buy happiness." After awhile, Ray said, "But you can change your idea of happiness."

\*\*\* 10/15/16

People from Mamma's group of Partners of Loved Ones with Dementia came by to say hi to Ray—they'd heard he is on his way out.

It's Mamma's birthday and everyone was wishing her happy birthday and the staff sang to her. And he thought all the people were there to celebrate, a kind of drop in and out birthday party.

The Great Goddess, they say, is time, is change.

The little purple asters in the meadow, we accept them coming and going.

Hawk diving down for a four-legged runner, then lifting up to head back to the nest.

We thought we had time when we were younger. We wandered in seek and find, seek and find. We still want more, we want this not that. One day we get to the bend in the trail and see there's no going back. Time has us and she's fast. She tricks us with circling seasons. What we know of sky and tree and ground, who we love day by day. Then a bend, then a crack in the way. All along, but we don't see, what's falling through her hands of time.

In meditations, we are slowed, we go into no-time, see the scenes we've seen before.

See the sky.

\*

No one knows how much longer.

\*



Sky strange with soft-edged grey clouds, warm air whispering and mumbling about rain, but cool winds come through.

And nothing happens in the realm of rain.

Nothing happens but it is all happening and is going on while I am doing office work in front of the bright window, doing dishes, cooking, cleaning. Sun keeps moving, light keeps changing. I remember the little forest asters.

The patchy sky dims out then comes alive in full moon night.

Memories drift in, but I go on returning to what's to be done now.

\*\*\* 10/16/16

First the slurry of cloud and blue and grey then the fill-in, mid-morning veiled in dusk. A little, small cadeau of rain, just that much to turn out the sweet incense of the canyon.

Now Ray has blood in his bag. Hardly says words, nods, puts fingers into signing ok, drinks water, chocolate Glucerna. Sleeps. Looks into what we say is this space.

In many cultures, they say at the end of October the veil between the worlds is thin. This is why there are the celebrations of the spirits and the dead. But it seems to me the real of this real is always here. Artists of all sorts often know it, anyone can, it's a matter of looking.

\*

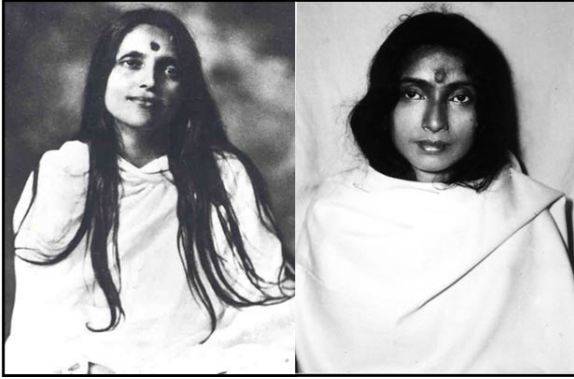
Last early winter, the creek at the bottom of our street's hill was cleared by a city funded tractor, all of the invasive arundo and palms and whatnot pulled out and carted away. Because they worried that the predicted heavy El Nino rains would get trapped and cause flooding in the neighborhood.

The rains did not come. And now the creek, just a year later, is overgrown again.

\*\*\* 10/23/16

Shree Maa, Swamiji, Adaitya, and some other devotees are in India on their annual fall visit.

In Utarkashi, there are many temples, and Maa and Swamiji like to chant in the smaller, quieter temples where they can do longer worship. They prayed at the Annandamayai Maa Kali Mandir, and afterwards Swamiji told the devotees that when she was alive, he had spent some time with Annandamayai. Swamiji said that when he met Shree Maa, she had that same "radiance" that Annandamayai had. And Maa still has it.



Next, they went to bless a new home of a devotee, Uttam Pandit. They installed an altar with Durga and Ganesh and offered prayers. Swamiji says that in a home we offer God a closet and we live in the main room, but in a temple home, we offer God the main room and we live in the closet.



Maa and Swamiji encourage us all to make our homes temples and to also find the temple in our hearts. We can do this by focusing with great sincerity on our own ideal of divinity, and seeing ourselves as our own pujari/priest/ess.

\*

Ray has been going along with the dying without complaint but yesterday was cranky: People coming in and out, in and out, and they don't remember, *don't* pull on my bag tube!

And another day of cementing a no-face to the request that he take a shower.

\*\*\* 11/5/16

When the Kumeyaay had to move from the El Capitan area near the San Diego River, some went to Barona and some went to the Baron Long Ranch, what they called Viejas. Neither reservation had enough water from streams. They took up farming, just as they had before, but lost crops and livestock because of insufficient water. They were promised legal access to the the use of San Diego River water, but that wasn't honored by the city.

As time went on, the people at Viejas and Barona were able to find plenty of water in the underground aquifers.

At Viejas, in 2004 they started a Water Task Force to support their existing on-site water system and to investigate outside supplemental sources to draw on if it would be needed in the future.

\*

Los Angeles Department of Water will have to refund \$67 to customers who were overbilled by a computer program.

\*\*\* 11/5/16

Up to one hundred degrees inland, and the waves at the shore rising over the pier.

Looking for water.

Ray still here, one day sleeps more, hardly touches food, the next awake and talking and has a taste for his butter pecan ice cream.

We who are not yet in the last days of dying are tired, we who are attending the long going.

Underground, the aquifer, the courses of springs.

Doesn't the wind pull away the toxins?

The Indian kids I'm monitoring at the reservation playground go over to the drinking fountain; I'm told it's recycled water so some kids won't drink from it. "Ooo!" they say.

The aquifer:  
breathe in   breathe out   peace.

\*\*\* 11/9/16

Clinton lost by electoral votes not the popular vote.

We're told she was ahead by 380,000 popular votes.

Al Gore was ahead by 539,000 popular votes in 2000. A U.S. Supreme Court stopped the recount in Florida, and that allowed Bush to get the needed electoral votes.

\*\*\* 11/10/16

Tidbits of gossip and complaint, twigs building the fire. Nowhere is here, everywhere here and there. A sky I do not know, yet know.

Another day that Ray is awake when just yesterday he slept most of the hours. How is it we are dying from the minute we are born?

Water running into and through its courses. Sea to sky to spring and back again.

Little critiques add to the minus tides of furies. The sky is so much bigger than how I see it.

Up and lying back down again, Ray keeps us guessing. Has for years defied the predictions of his immanent death. Tiring for us when we expect what is not ours to expect.

Now the sky blares and reflects it like summer. Now the wind arrives, runs around cool in the mountains, comes down hot to the city. Until it mellows.

\*\*\* 11/12/16

After they had to move from their homeland, Capitan Grande, many of the Viejas Indians had to live in various places throughout San Diego until their houses were built at Baron Long Ranch. Those who had moved directly to the ranch lived in the barns. They moved there in the winter of 1934-1935, during the Depression. The Federal Works Progress Administration and Emergency Conservation were going to finance the housing work, but it didn't happen right away because of various agencies' individual red tape coupled with the agencies coordinating their efforts.

The Indians living at the ranch were still in the barns when an extremely harsh winter descended in the winter of 1936-1937. Many people died then, and it wasn't until 1938 that the houses were built.

Barona, Viejas, and the splinter group Indians who settled into private properties, all collectively still own Capitan Grande and the rights to the river, though no one lives there now.

\*\*\* 11/12/16

Since May 2016, the forest trees have been dying from drought at faster rate than ever before. In sum, about 102 million trees in California have died during the drought, an ecological disaster. The question remains open—what to do with the huge amount of timber, and where to get the resources to finance the project.

\*

11.3 million undocumented immigrants worry about what will happen when the new president puts in place his threats of deportation.

\*\*\* 11/19/16

The aliens told the Buddha that they got enlightened when they smelled something sweet.

Oh, no, that can't happen here, he said. Humans get attached to every this and that. They have to suffer uncountable sorrows before they give over all they're holding onto.

We put up walls as if to say you can't come up, in, or around. Us! We who have kind hearts!

Sarada Devi kept her deranged, crazy, aggressive niece with her wherever she lived, wherever she traveled.

Swamiji was in the Himalayas for so long with his teacher learning the ancient practices. Until one day the teacher said, Ok, let's go.

They went to the city and got to the train station. And the teacher said, Ok, we're going to sit on this loading dock and chant.

Chant! Swamiji was shocked.

Passengers came and went, yelling at them, spitting on them. Swamiji's guru wanted him to be able to be focused in his chanting wherever he was.

\*

When the sun stormed 150 years ago, telegraph paper in offices went up in flames from the static electricity. When and if it happens again, it could destroy entire cities' power grids.

And we can't stop it from happening.

\*

The Colorado River, source of water for the Southwest states, has only 15% of its full capacity. If Lake Meade doesn't get regular rainfalls this winter and spring, it will be at a critical level, depleted from providing the Southwest's quota of water.

They say states will have to share.

\*

Kumeyaay history is told by cycles of events; they knew it before and again. Who was alien became family or came and went.

In a woman's dream, she learned how to cook acorn. And that was how her people began cooking and eating acorn, and storing it to use in other seasons.

\*

And we have been told:  
Ray will probably pass in a week.

Then: he probably has six weeks.  
 Then: it's soon, probably a week.  
 Then we're surprised, surprised:  
 it could be six months.

Three days ago, he got up and walked across the hall—not too weak—and the staff found him there in the dining room when they came in to set up for breakfast—a stranger in their land—they hadn't heard his bed alarm, they didn't think he could walk by himself.

\*\*\* 11/20/16

One day of rain, nights down to freezing, days again hot.

Ray going to and from the bed and the chair; his body is slowly becoming what it has not been.

Mamma so worn down from the watch. But the good days keep happening—he walks a bit, he talks, he keeps eating. This is the sixth week, so she is going to go out again and take classes. It took other people telling her she wasn't looking very lively and that her necklace crystal that she's been wearing looked dull for her to know how she is.

\*

Turkeys cheaper than they've been in many years. But other numbers not so cheerful. How many immigrants will be denied, sent away, separated from loved ones? Nights are full of the restless.

Who could plan? Who could know?

The veteran in the wheelchair holding his cardboard sign at the supermarket driveway didn't know he'd be denied SSI three times. Didn't know his sleeping bag tied to the back of his chair would be stolen as he was sitting right there.

Fall leaves now gathering into winter. Maybe more rain this year? So far, still drought.

\*\*\* 11/25/16

Ray's favorite season? Fall, because of the different colors and the weather changes.

\*\*\* 12/3/16

Because houses bulid up and come down; because rivers flood and recede; because trees shelter and go on giving and are the carriers of book wisdoms; because rocks stand watch in their long lives; because of going far past what was.

\*\*\* 12/13/16

Rain has brought Northern California's reservoirs up to 90% normal, but the Southland continues to be parched.

\*\*\* 12/15/16

One could say it's tears, this long awaited rain, getting today what is giving. Green sprouts come up from the long silence. Storm warm when we were being so cold. Nothing happens but sky. It breaks into morning like night. Another small clearing shows another sky, a bright one, but sky wants more of its veil. Is this the sign of more to come?

Klamath river did not give enough salmon this year for the Yurok annual gathering.

Desert holds its secrets of years into now, the records of old surface, a woman finds the facts: yes, Paiute always were guiding and diverting lake and stream for their Owen Valley crops and homes.

Sprouts are rising from the six-year drought ground. This living could be one day and only one. They may die before their full time. Go but one day return.

\*\*\* 12/22/16

The Central Valley produces 25% of U.S. food. Fresno: 1 out of 3 people qualify as at the government-defined poverty level. Many have lost farm work due to the drought.

\*

The *Chandi Path* is very old, appearing in writing at least 10,000 years ago, and before that in oral tradition. It says that Goddess will appear in various forms in future times of distress. She will appear as Raktadika, She Who Devours Perplexity; as Shakamari, when there is no rain or vegetation, who will come as rain; and as Bhramari, a swarm of bees who defeats the asuras/evil doers.

\*\*\* 12/29/16

Friday 12/30/16 at the ashram

On Thursday, after I finished my morning prayers, when I was putting my bag of asana/sitting props away next to an artificial tree, it had barely touched a big easel, and the easel came crashing down. The glass when it shattered—much to my surprise it was framed in glass—almost sliced my foot. I told the disciples that I was glad it had happened to me because there were a lot of people coming for the weekend and someone might have gotten hurt if it had fallen then. Now it could be made safe.

I got instructions and details from every disciple about what Maa wanted for it to be fixed. And help in how to protect it for the transport since it was so large and fragile. And directions for how to get to the store.

After the Friday evening program, Maa said the picture needed to be fixed by the next morning. She said, Tell them.

I said, They said it would be done tomorrow or the next day; you tell them. (I meant that she can make anything happen.)

She said, You tell them it has to be done tomorrow!

She was mad and called me stupid. She said I walked right into it, and nobody else would just be reckless like that and walk into it, knock it over.

Which was not true, but I didn't argue. This was reminding me of that first time I'd visited some years ago that she'd yelled at me in the temple when my bag and jackets were on the temple floor. It took me a long time to get over that pain. I had heard that Maa will do that, be really harsh with a disciple. And then the next day or later that day be pleasant. They say it's one of the ways she is clearing out old karma for the disciple.

So here we were again, in another drama, Maa harshly chastising me for a mistake. Then she was yelling at the disciple who had first given me Maa's instructions. We both got called stupid. The other few disciples stood there listening.

All this time, Swamiji was sitting in a chair, watching the drama. Maa turned to him and said sharply, Let's go!

Swamiji saluted and said, Yes, ma'am!

And my dear Swamiji, in that gesture, told me that he's been doing this with Maa all these many years, and *he* doesn't—at least it seems—take it too seriously.

I had to go over to the kitchen briefly afterwards, and there was talk there of what had happened. They weren't talking to me. There were interpretations of what had happened and how best to respond, some blaming me.

That night in my room I thought of how to frame—frame!—this with what I'd learned before. And I laughed, thinking of Tomi DePaola's Big Anthony who helps Strega Nona, but always makes mistakes (in a series of children's books). I kept saying St. Francis' prayer. I kept doing the tonglen practice: breathe in the difficult feeling/circumstance, breathe out peace for myself and all who are having that same feeling/circumstance.

And I wondered if this might be the least favorite part of Maa's job—to be harsh with her disciples, her children. If it made her sad at all. I felt some empathy for her playing that role. But she could play the role differently, drop the harshness.

I heard some more talk the next day. It seemed to me each person was referring to their own story within this story. Yes, this drama was playing out differently for each person. And yet what we all have in common is a love for God! And we are each interested in changing for the better, to be good. And we need to know in ourselves, regardless of what a teacher says, that we are already good and humans are imperfect.



Saturday 12/31/16

And sure enough, proving again it's true she doesn't stay mad, early in the morning I was sitting praying, Maa came into the temple, and as she put flower petals around the little lingam near me, she turned her head and with a big smile said, Good Morning!

Later, the disciple who assists Maa handed me a new white rayon skirt, and said, Here, Maa wants you to wear this new temple skirt. She made it for you this morning. I was happy because this skirt is bigger than the first one she made for me. I always had to hitch up the skirt, revealing my stretch pants, in order to sit on the floor.

But I learned later, Maa had another intention. When I was in the darshan/blessing line that evening, I thanked Maa and she said, Your other skirt is dirty.

Well, that is true in a way. It is not really dirty, per se, but it is permanently tainted because the roads there are dirt—and I don't use bleach. And I don't feel bad about that because up until recently when Adaitya got deemed a Swami, he'd been wearing the customary white also, and it too, was scruffy from the dust. And even now, although he's wearing socks instead of bare feet, you don't want to see the bottoms of those socked feet.

Swamiji has said we like to keep a little of our dirty laundry even when the teacher is helping us. I suppose we can't help but do that.

We'd been chanting all morning. When we were done, Swamiji was talking with a Adaitya and a disciple about the evening's special homa/fire ceremony, where he would sit, where Maa would sit, who would help turn pages, etc. He was happy and joking. And Maa got mad at him.

She told him to stop talking that way and, Let's go!

As they were leaving, he was saying, humbly, What do you want? You can have my seat...

And the picture got fixed in time. I was glad that it got not only fixed, but made safer with plexiglass. And later still, Gautam secured both the easel and the frame with hooks and rope to the wall, so that for sure it could not be knocked down. Before the evening program, he said quietly to me, in a friendly way, Look, now the picture is secured.

Sunday 1/1/17

We were singing the *Sundar Kanda*. I looked up from the text, and looked at that newly framed picture on the now-secured easel. Have I said that it is a picture of Durga and she is standing on top of a man/the ego? A disciple had it blown up into a big poster and then she and Maa decorated it with gems. The framer said it was really too heavy for an easel and that the gems over time would scratch the plexiglass. And she added, she hadn't noticed the extent of the damage to the frame when I gave her the picture. She recommended that at some point we give it a new frame.

But I wasn't thinking of all that. I wasn't thinking, I was singing of Hanuman who loves God so much that he just jumps across the ocean of attachment. He is so happy! And I was so happy to be singing to God, and so happy to be sitting right behind Swamiji singing with him and Maa and everyone. And it came to me, words Swamiji had said to me some years ago, that first time Maa had gotten mad at me. He and I and just a couple other disciples had been chanting at the fire. Everyone had left and I was sitting there talking just a little with him. He was sad because

Bhuvananda had just died a few days before. I was asking him if he was sad, and how that could be since he also knows unattachment. He said the guru still has a body that feels. After he left, I had gone to help Cathy and then Maa had come in and yelled at me.

But I wasn't thinking of all that. What came to me now were the words he said back then just before he went out of the temple:

I am with you in a forest  
in the corner of a room  
and in your heart

\*

The epic Sundar Kanda, is the section of the Ramayana that tells of Sita's imprisonment by King Ravana/Ego, and her rescue by Hanuman/Pure Devotion and her husband Rama/Consciousness. When Hanuman is sent by Rama to go find Sita, he does not need a bridge to cross the ocean of attachment; instead, he chants the name Rama and flies across the ocean.

\*\*\* 1/5/17

The morning I drove into San Diego, returning from my visit up north at the ashram, I called Mamma and she didn't answer. I called the care center, and they said that Ray had been in pain that morning, and hospice had given him some morphine to help him. I went over there and sat with him. Mamma and my sister-in-law had stepped out to go eat. They returned, and then my sister-in-law went to do a couple of errands. Mamma sat and held Ray's hand, he was sedated so his eyes were closed. At a certain point he turned his hand out of Mamma's hand. She came and sat next to me for awhile. She said she was going to go up to their apartment and take a short nap. I kept on praying, and about 4:00 pm Ray stopped breathing and went peacefully.

\*

for ray ("of sunshine"), my stepfather, who passed 1/3/17

rain here & there these last few weeks

maybe this will go on  
into spring

we can not know

breath, rest assured, stays  
in motion, in & out

upholds the days

light knows light

this little light of my body

making up the dark

getting there?  
after awhile  
i'm here  
again  
don't really go  
anywhere

little cascade because of rain  
under sycamore & oak

where the trees tangle  
& hold their own  
with roots

\*

when he still had the energy  
we would go down to the gym  
and ride the stationary bikes

the olympic women cyclists  
were racing through the brazilian rainforest

you best not look back  
the commentator said

she was far ahead of the others

they came to level ground  
& she looked back she lost the race

\*

my stepfather  
seven months out of home  
& mostly in bed

getting sweeter  
keeping humor

first: northern dim light in one room

then: southwest light in motion  
through another room

what clothes do you need?  
what things  
now?

football players knock each other down  
flick of hand signals

they so often only get so far

& what does it mean, where they are,  
i have to ask

he knows, he can tell me

ice water replaces the dull

some days more sleep than others

we don't know how long how far

we're here for now

\*

cold all the way up the coast

our mountains suddenly in snow  
christmas day

praying each early cold morning  
alone in the temple  
later with other devotees

have to go into town three times in the week  
i'm there

on the drive up, my car handle broke  
and so had to be fixed  
at the temple, a big picture falls off an easel  
and needs to be reframed

what i think will happen always  
changes to what is

\*

a six-year old, who he's known since the child  
was in the womb, comes up & hugs swamiji  
while he's chanting  
he bows to the child

\*

i am like tomie depaola's big anthony

stregna nona said her special prayers when the moon was full  
& then she planted the seeds

anthony's rows were crooked

later, he took the extra seeds  
& under the moonlight, said the prayer  
& added an extra for good measure

the seeds became  
an exuberant, wild garden

in the middle of the night  
he brought harvests silently  
to stregna's doorstep

\*

we didn't know  
what day would be the day

ray wasn't counting  
wasn't complaining

\*

there were the inevitable challenges  
that go with the territory  
of visiting the ashram

i had been so happy  
& it could still be

ok, so this is my breath  
 this is me the child of god  
 no less than the stars, the trees, the universe

this is me, the instrument of peace

big anthony

i had realized on the drive up to the ashram  
 the anxiety i used to have  
 about getting my prayers right—  
 enough or which ones or how they're done—  
 were gone

out in the night ocean  
 oil rigs glittered with christmas lights—  
 someone's faith shining out there

i have this practice of prayers, i'm deep into it,  
 and it evolves

and everyone i encounter  
 is to me a light of the light

coming back home,  
 the cascade was  
 because it had rained

friend tree, singing creek  
 i hiked among my familiars

in the rhythm of their lights

then walked out at the ocean  
 the quiet wild harbor  
 seals shorebirds sea urchins  
 colored water-glazed serpentine stones

light here at rest

in motion

\*

in, out

he's on some oxygen

faster breaths now, they said

\*

you have faith, swamiji said to mr. confused  
 you don't believe the hanuman story?  
 that he jumped across the ocean of attachment?

but look, you have come home  
 each day believing that your wife will be there  
 you work  
 & believe you will get paid

and now, here we are, the light  
 in each of us in each  
 of our hearts

we jump across the ocean of attachment  
 we find it here  
 in everything  
 in everyone

we can be happy

sharing it here  
 sharing it everywhere

\*

& it had rained the night before

clouds moved around  
 light moved around

in, out, he breathed

mamma & i prayed

it wasn't dusk quite yet  
 but clouds moved  
 so it looked that way

he took a big breath  
his body's last

clouds moved again  
and there was light  
more light

\*\*\* 1/7-8/17

Winter storms and the latest delivered from an atmospheric river, have brought Northern California out of the drought, but Central and Southern California remain in “extreme” drought. Many residents in Tulare County continue to use bottled water because they have no water from their wells. The United Way there has fielded to date 10, 958 calls for help.

The good news is the mid-January storms put snow into the Sierra mountains, but the hope is that warm storms won't drop rains or slushy snow that will undo the snowpack. The snow is vital for delivering a gradual snowmelt to the water ways that funnel to communities. Also, the mountains' winter-spring season has been warmer for the past fifty years because of more warm storms and weather. Northern California reservoirs are up to their usual storage capacity and are releasing water to keep the level where they can still receive floodwater. There is discussion of short-term rain forecasts that would allow retaining more reservoir water to help the probability of longer periods of dry weather.

Tahoe: 7<sup>th</sup> wettest January in 114 years.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration says 2016 was the hottest year of the Earth since records started over 100 years ago in 1880. And it's the third year in a row of record heat. 16 out of 17 record heat years have happened since 2001. The NASA scientists attribute the heat to human causes, such as the generation of large amounts of carbon dioxide. Great amounts of evaporated water from warmer seas cause fierce storms and flooding.

Folsom Lake: It was at 14% capacity two years ago. Because it was so low, a town from the Goldrush days reappeared.

20 communities have declared states of emergency because they don't have enough water.

\*\*\* 1/15/17

In 1906, Natalie Curtis visited the Yuman/Cochan Indians as part of her research for collecting Native songs and stories. At that time they were still freely planting their crops of beans, squash, wheat, corn, and melons along the Colorado River. However, in 1905 they were told that they would be removed to one-fifth of their reservation to allow the rest to be used for U.S. irrigation, land, and housing developments. Chiparopai, a Yuman elder woman, spoke three languages, her Native language as well as Spanish and English, so she was both a leader and translator for her people. She told Curtis that her people had gotten sick and weak because of the white people.



And many had died. Her people used to wear waist aprons as their only clothing and bathed daily in the river.

\*\*\* 1/16/17

Swamiji: If you get to be with someone who is dying and you are praying for them, that is good karma. In our yogic practice we are encouraged to respect elders as we envision being respected when we are older, and to teach younger people to act in ways that help this planet the way we have, to become a better place for our having been here.

When the soul migrates, it takes time for it to become imperceptible. It doesn't go anywhere. Heaven and hell are states of mind not places. In our tradition, we pray the Mritunjaya and Gayatri mantras for the departed, at least one mala each, in the morning and at night.

The Mrityunjaya Mantra:

tryambakam yajamahey  
sugandhim pushtivarddhanam  
urvvarukamiva bandhanan  
mrtyormukshiyamamritat

We worship the Father of the three worlds,  
of excellent fame, Grantor of Increase.

As a cucumber is released from its bondage to the stem,  
so may we be freed from death  
to dwell in immortality.

The Gayatri mantra:

om bhur bhuvah swaha  
tat savitur varenyam  
bhargo devasya dhimahi  
dhiyo yo naha  
prochodayat

Om, the infinite Beyond Conception, the gross body, the subtle body, and the causal/spirit body; we meditate upon that Light of Wisdom which is the Supreme Wealth of the Gods. May it grant to us increase in our meditations.

The prayers we are offering make us better people because we are honoring the departed soul. And the passing soul's merit is increased because they inspired us.

There are three categories of types of people:

Kshatriyas/administrators, instructors, and soldiers/defenders.

Vaishyas/merchants and business people.

Shudras/laborers and artisans.

It used to be you would say special prayers for a certain number of days depending on the type of person who had passed. But we typically pray for fifteen days regardless of the type of person.

It's not known how long a particular individual will need for their transmigration.

The transmigration is this: Each soul carries with it samskaras/tendencies to behave in a certain manner, according to their karma during manifestation. Generally, they will continue to manifest and perform their karma in a similar form and way to what they have been doing from lifetime to lifetime. Occasionally, they break free from the old patterns and take on a new identity with new goals and a new occupation. For example, you could be a Kshatriyas/administrator and become a Brahmin priest or you could be a Vaishyas/business person and become a sadhu/one who acts in the world while staying focused on their devotion to divinity. You can also get to a level where you act in more than one role. Swamiji is both an administrator and a sadhu.

Even when the soul is not in a physical body, it is still bound by prarabhdha karma, the actions begun in the past that come to fruition in the future. The soul eventually goes into stages of samadhi/oneness. The first is dhyanam, the second savikalpa, and the third is nirvikalpa. Our progression is due to the supreme divinity; we say that in the real reality, all is the one who is manifesting and creating in many ways. As individuals, we are helped by our teacher who has reached the nirvikalpa stage, and is the ultimate manifested form of the one. Our spiritual teacher inspires, teaches, and models for us how to proceed.

If we are set free and the spirit is celebrated and empowered to make the journey, then it unites with the paramatma/supreme spirit very quickly. It stays in that unity for as much time as is appropriate until it comes back to manifestation. There is not a particular amount of time that an individual soul is disembodied before s/he takes form again. If you put two weights of equal measures onto a scale, they will balance for a time. After some time, one side will become heavier, and the scale will tip. We don't know how much time that is, but we do know that after some time, one side will be heavier. Beings who are in the spiritual realms for longer periods of time have purified much of their karma and they are giving blessings. Beings that stay for shorter periods of time still have a lot to work out in the earthly realms, and so they have to reincarnate again.

We may or may not return in a human form. When we reach the level where we are a god or goddess, we may appear as a human body or we may have a human body with ten or eighteen arms and multiple heads.

\*

In 1885 Shree Ramakrishna started to feel pain in his throat and after treating it as a cold, it was discovered that he had cancer. In 1880 Ramakrishna had said that when a lot of people started to view him as a manifestation of the supreme divinity, he would soon thereafter leave his body. His wife, Sarada Devi, heard that some devotees went to Dakshineswar to visit Ramakrishna, but when they discovered that he wasn't there, they made offerings and bowed to his picture. This made Sarada sad, knowing then that the time was near for his passing. But Ramakrishna told her to see the bright side, that many people would soon have his picture and pray to him in their homes. Sarada was caring for Ramakrishna and preparing his meals. She prayed that he would get well, and grieved that he was in pain. But she was getting dreams that were telling her that this was part of God's will. And Ramakrishna told her, I have taken upon myself the suffering of the world.

At six minutes after midnight on August 17, 1887, Ramakrishna said Kali's name three times, went into a samadhi, and left his body. After Ramakrishna's body was cremated, according to custom, Sarada was taking off her bracelets to discard them. Ramakrishna appeared to her and told her, Why are you acting like a widow? I have just moved from one room to another.

Sarada then continued to wear white saris with red borders, not taking on the solid white garments of widows. Because Sarada was in such enormous grief, Balaram, Ramakrishna's assistant, encouraged Sarada to take a pilgrimage. She went to Vrindavan, the home of Krishna when he was young, where he and his beloved Radha sang and danced with Radha's girlfriend gopis/cowherds. As she was crying one day, Ramakrishna again appeared and reminded her that he was still there, he hadn't gone anywhere, he had just moved to another room.

While there, Sarada was having many periods of samadhi, and her devotees found her, when she came out of her meditations, to be moving, behaving, and speaking just like Ramakrishna. It is known that back in Krishna's time the gopis there in Vrindavan, in blissful devotional states, would also become like Krishna. Disciples of Ramakrishna then could see that Sarada was merged with the "Master." Ramakrishna, when he was alive, had told the disciples that he was no different than Sarada, but the disciples didn't know her that way until now.

Another time Ramakrishna appeared to her and told her to give a specific mantra to his disciple Yogananda as initiation for a life as a yogic monk. She protested, since she was always shy around the men and did not socialize with them. But Ramakrishna persisted, appearing again and again for a few more days until she agreed. This was the first initiation she conducted of the many she was eventually going to be giving to seekers.

\*

Swamiji: It is best to let go of as many attachments and desires as possible while alive in a body so that you are free even before you die. Then you can be focused just on God when you are dying. Also, if we are praying all the time to God, then we will be doing the same thing when we are dying. From the moment we're born, we are transitioning to our death. Mirabai is an example of how to look death in the face; as an offering to Krishna, she cheerfully drank the poison.

\*

The 16<sup>th</sup>-century poet Mirabai married the king's son, but all she wanted was Krishna. She sang her songs to Krishna, and at night, she would secretly go outside the palace grounds to visit wise sadhus. Soon, people were gathering around her to hear her devotional singing. After her husband, father, and father-in-law were killed in battles, the new king tried everything he could to keep her within the confines of the palace. He built her a temple and allowed some devotees to visit, but when she was still not satisfied, she would wander off again. And she refused to be immolated in the ritual suttee, as was the custom for widows, because she considered herself married to Krishna. Because of this and other disobediences, her relatives tried to kill her in various ways, and then the king sentenced her to death by poison. But they couldn't overcome her devotion to Krishna/Ghiridhara; when she drank the poison, she offered herself to Krishna and by this sacrificial act, she survived. She finally left her family then and spent the rest of her

life singing and praying to Krishna at a temple first at Vrindavan and then at Dwarka. It is said of her passing that Krishna appeared to her and she disappeared from human sight.

\*

Swamiji: We go to other planets if we do good karma. We keep coming into forms in order to help others until everyone has finished all their karma—it could be on earth or some other location, it has no geographical limitation. It's like a big collective working together, and all of creation is our birthplace, and we can manifest in any form. As we become more purified, we reincarnate where we can be of most use and where we can evolve the most towards our ultimate goal.

Don't assume that because we are doing our practice, and we don't quite reach our goal that we have to start over again in our next manifested life. Our highest attainment in this lifetime is our starting place for the next.

We do not strive to have immortal bodies, but rather to have immortal wisdom; we return in bodies so that we can continue to inspire family, friends, and everyone to be on the path to their ideal of perfection. We see this in the life of Ramakrishna. He was a man and a rishi. He inspired numerous souls throughout his life. And even today, more than a hundred years after he left, there are temples and images of him. He is a god, and we are singing songs and taking his refuge. He is a friend of Shiva. This is the immortality that we seek, not the immortality of the body.

\*

Shree Maa: After self-realization, you see that everything is a part of you.

\*

After being in Vrindavan for a year, Sarada went and lived at the Ramakrishna house in Kamarpukur, where Ramakrishna had wanted her to be. There, she lived in near poverty because the disciples did not yet know about her situation. There was gossip in the town because she did not dress like a widow; she wore her white sari with the red border and her bracelets. To quell the talk, she took off her bracelets. She thought about the holy Ganges River and wanted to go visit it to offer prayers, but one day she had a vision of Ramakrishna walking down her dirt road. A river was coming out from his feet and devotees were following behind him. Realizing she need not go anywhere, she offered flowers to his river. Ramakrishna told her, You don't need to hide your bracelets. Gauri-Ma [a woman disciple] will come and explain why. Gauri-Ma arrived that very day and talked with Sarada about the ancient scripture that does not condemn the widow—instead, it says that a woman can be married to God.

She was sad about not having any children. But Ramakrishna told her she would soon have many children in the devotees and disciples who would call her Mother. Eventually, she settled into her hometown of Jayrambati, and would visit occasionally the disciples in Kamarpukur and Calcutta, and make short pilgrimages to other places. One night she was sitting next to the Ganges River, and she saw Ramakrishna walk into the river and his body dissolve into the water. Then she saw

Vivekananda walk up to the river, reach down, and take handfuls of water that he then sprinkled over a crowd. He exclaimed, Victory to Ramakrishna! She recalled that Ramakrishna had told her, You can not die now. You are alive to awaken people's spirituality. How few I have helped! There will be many that will come to you, and you will take responsibility for them.

\*

Vishnu said: This is what I did with you because I need to go to earth to purify it. You are just the instrument to make that happen.

\*

Swamiji: When you have an out-of-body experience, there is the experience of something, a phenomenon, something you can report when you come back. There is a perceiver and an object of perception. In death, it is different. There is only the perceiver; we move beyond duality and beyond experience.

The body is from the earth and is returned to the earth. When we die, we are one with nature. Ashes can be given to water, earth, or wind. This helps put the soul into the greatest harmony.

It is possible to make your plan for your next incarnation while you are in the astral realm, but you need a physical body to produce the karmic actions. You might want to go back in such a way as to not waste your time and immediately contact a realized teacher so that you find your path to spiritual freedom all the more rapidly and efficiently.

A great soul such as Jesus or Ramakrishna leaves behind a legacy and becomes one with the supreme soul. When that great soul sends blessings, other people come into contact with that legacy and they become manifestations of that same bhavana/loving vibration. The blessing is propagated from great soul to great soul; from Ramakrishna to the next incarnation as Shree Maa. She is the manifestation of the bhavana and clarity of that soul. Without a doubt!

Ramakrishna and Jesus did suffer for us. I believe Shree Maa is suffering for us. All of these people came down and exited their body in a tortured state. Ramakrishna was perplexed by cancer. Jesus was actually physically abused on the cross, and his suffering was just because of his love for us. I believe that Shree Maa is doing a similar thing, being perplexed with various diseases, and still she comes to sit with us in satsang, and to be the source of inspiration and nourishment for our community.

\*

When Vivekananda was making plans to go to the United States in 1893 to talk about Ramakrishna, he suffered doubt about the purity of his intentions—was it for God or for his ego? He wrote to Sarada a letter and she reassured him to go.

When he returned, he told the disciples that his success in bringing the teachings of Ramakrishna to America were due to the blessings he received from Sarada, whom he now called Mother.

He then wanted to start a formal Ramakrishna organization, and Sarada assured him that that was indeed his life's purpose.

\*

Swamiji: Even though there are so many men or women in a person's life, you marry the one that you recognize as a kindred soul. You don't marry every other person, although you may have looked. You feel a connection, a karma that you want to fulfill together. In the same way, when you meet a pure soul, you can recognize the qualities of the guru.

Remember the mantra that says, Gu is the quality of darkness and ru is the light in the darkness. When I see the light in the darkness, I know that is the example I need to follow. It is not like, Well, I am making an intellectual decision that I will go follow that example. It is more like, I am the piece of iron being pulled by this magnet. When I met Shree Maa, my feet found the way back to her. I couldn't tell you intellectually where she was from, what language she spoke, or where she lived. But the magnetized Swami was pulled by the magnet. My feet found the way.

Even if one person in the West gets illuminated with bhava, gets ignited with the fire of devotion, with true sincerity and determination, then Jesus' quest for sharing this knowledge from the East will have been fulfilled. All wisdom is coming from the same place, the inner experience. This is the unfinished karma of all humanity. Jesus is the embodiment of all-pervading love in the world. My body came back to help fulfill that unfinished aspiration of all humanity. So did everybody else's. Some of us wake up to this calling sooner, some of us wake up to it later. We're all here to manifest the Christ as the embodiment of universal love, to tear down the barriers and experience the unity of all existence. If you're here to serve others, then come on, let's go to work. God wants you!

When we take a body, we have three debts of karma. The first debt is to gods and goddesses. We discharge that debt by making this world a better place because of our having been here. The second debt is to our ancestors. We discharge that debt by taking care of the elderly the way we will want to be taken care of when we are old, and by nurturing the young the way we want this creation to become. The third debt is to our gurus/teachers, and we discharge that by living in accordance with their wisdom.

Shree Maa has paid all her debts to the world, to the gods and goddesses, to ancestors, and to the gurus. Her job, her function, is to say mantras and give blessings, and to feed us the right answers so we know how to conduct ourselves in our daily affairs. She can stay eternally because she doesn't have to go anywhere. She may change forms, but she doesn't have to leave. She is not bound, and therefore, she is not longing for liberation. She is here now! Wherever she goes, she will be here now. So then, between here and now, don't you think we will run into each other once in awhile? You will know her. Can you be with her again? Yes! Again and again and again.

Now, in the course of a lifetime, you can't physically take up every single cause in order to heal the earth, but you could participate in one or two. We have chosen the cause of expounding the

yogic scriptures and describing the highest ideals of perfection as defined through the scriptures. So that's our cause, our contribution, and for the rest of our lives we will be putting flowers on the altar, masala into the fire, singing and chanting and dancing for God.

As much as you can, you will respect this Goddess Earth and everyone else who is trying to heal the earth in their own way. The goal is not to lose yourself in other people's projects. The goal is to lose yourself in God.

We don't want to cultivate the attachment to God just 24/7, but really 25/7. We want to do 25 hours of work in every 24 hour day. We have to go beyond time and make that love affair the reality of our lives so that she could take us at any time, and we never have to worry about what we are thinking or saying or speaking or doing. We will be doing the right thing. We will be cultivating the right attitude and doing the best that we possibly can. We will be acting in accordance with the Sanatana Dharma, the eternal ideals of perfection.

It is possible to leave the body consciously, and it can be completed when you are ready. You will have an asana/yogic sitting and a rhythm of pranayama/breath, and you can, through the control of your breath, make that rhythm of pranayama longer and longer, and the kumbaka, the space between the breaths and the space between the thoughts, becomes so long that you leave your body while sitting in the asana. We have read the stories of Sati Devi leaving her body in the fire of yoga. I believe this is a little poetic. She had controlled her bodily functions through the process of pranayama and slowed her metabolism down until it stopped. This may be desirable for a yogi. People who leave their body through the processes of yoga are desiring to evolve to the highest good, rather than to escape from a terrible existence. It is not like suicide. I personally want to go out sitting by the hawan kund fire while singing the *Chandi*.

\*\*\* January-February 2017

Sky now summer-warm. Who can know what to predict?

Dandelion flowering.

This is a dream, isn't it?

Ramakrishna said go off to a quiet place and pray for a few days, a week, a month, a year. The mind becomes like butter; it won't be mixing with the world.

Give up the little things, and it grows from there.

Ray wasn't much for holding onto stuff. He'd buy something on his travels, the little Chinese terracotta boy that peed when you put water in it, a guatemalen tapestry to hang on the wall. He'd talk about it when he got home, then the interest faded out.

More rain! Snails and worms come out and lizards go away.

S/he who is easily attained: there between the pages; there in the early morning dark; after the loved one has died; in the going to work; in the short or long sleep; the miracle of two weeks of long-missed rain; in the breathing in and out, still breathing; the hum of thoughts; the seeking for meaning; the seeking of the poem the poem the poem; of day to day living; the not getting and the getting; in I thought it was this and it reveals that; in being human, a body enlivened by spirit, the animated soul, such as it is to be clown for the all-one one; in the forest and desert and ocean, all the wild living with each other, from each other, becoming another being; in the free-flying wind and the visitations of clouds and their fallings; in one way or another peace; in outside inside, in that wild.

\*\*\* 1/8 & 13/17

More and more rain, nights' rhythms. The sumptuous blue sky again today and even more warm.

Mamma has Ray's ashes at home now. She says he's happy being there. She's in no hurry to send him to sea.

Oak Creek that was dust reformed as rivulet. Runoff creeks of the mountains, long dormant now running, stored water coming down from inside. Black sage leaves plumping up.

Little boy with new haircut dancing.

Wet hiking shoes. Coyote in the yard, glowing in early light.

What will the clouds do today? Birdsong tunes into sun clearings.

Live oak goes on watching, holding out its strong arms.

I don't have to go back in time. I don't have to know what's ahead.

I'm about to plant a new mesquite seedling where I planted one last year. We didn't get enough rain to get that one going. But now, as I move the dirt, a little bit holds fast, and I see it is last year's mesquite that has taken root, it has a tiny trunk and miniscule leaves; the new seedling will have to go in another spot. If the sky goes on giving, these trees will grow. If the sky stays dry another year, maybe this new rooted tree will stay underground, alive, ready for what is yet to come.

\*\*\* 1/14/17

It was a kind of gift—rain beginning before the winter holiday and carrying through to now, late January. Yesterday it became fierce, The One Who Takes, flooding and wind crashing. May you have some warmth and shelter wherever you are in the world when water tears through your land.

One day back when Ray and I were going to the gym, we watched a program about wild water phenomena from a PBS *Forces of Nature* show : a surfer, Serginho Laus rides a huge tidal wave



for six miles on Brazil's Pororca River bore tide; a tsunami destroys an island's village, and a fisherman who is overtaken by the water, lives to tell the tale.

Today, little rainy descents and clouds rambling about. Treasures overflowing buckets, shiny pop-up ponds, lakes becoming lakes again. If clouds have such strength and humility to become and to disperse into the reflective sky, maybe, maybe so can we.

Any part of the story that I would like to keep as mine is not really mine to have. When you spend all that time with the one who is dying, and then you are still here after the death, you see you have nothing. Nothing but a theater to fill with how you see the story, the poem. What is renounced isn't; it is not in my possession, never was. What is, ever lives.

\*\*\* 1/21/17

Reservoirs and Lake Shasta in Northern California are full again. Lake Cachuma in Santa Barbara is only at 9% capacity. None of San Diego's reservoirs have returned to normal. Most of the municipal water for San Diego is from other places, primarily the Sierra mountains, because rainfall is typically far too little to contribute significantly to the need.

Half of California is still officially in drought.

\*\*\* 1/27/17

And in the midst of the traveling and praying and the death and the post-death, the kind of semi-here-other-here state of being close to another state,

in the midst of all that was prolific, generous, fierce rain going into all the dry, running down into long parched creek ravines, becoming rivulets

turning toward our rivers,

greeting the sea with its old self.

There at the meeting, the fullness again,  
the great merging.

\*

Rain that would stop, seem to stop, could be continuing its refrain, but in a day, at most two, three days, here again, certain in its strong falling, covering & moving & reaching, adding to & taking out

clearing, purifying, breaking.

\*\*\* 1/29/17

We could say the days were full, and then there was a space, an emptying.

How could air, sky have an absence?

How could we?

Just three months ago the lake down to nothing but ground.

We expected him to die. He was in that room, in that bed for that. But we didn't know when.

And it had gone on even before now, for years, long enough to fill in the days with presence that seemed immortal.

Today, I walked in snow, put my feet in others' tracks. The sunken foot print of one, of many who had been here.

Places where the snow did not move was dense ice. And a danger for walking.

Coming around to the little lake—that had been dust and preserved mud—a runoff creek singing from a now brimming, ice coated lake.

Warm sky already moving the new worlds made of these waters. Up in the old village site, rippled ground where snow had been. Crow, jay, finch still calling. The people lived here in summer.

He was in that room just a month ago.

When I came back to the upper meadow, already some snow footsteps were gone to mud.

Where does the water go? To sky?

To ground?

To river and sea?

How many lives does it have?

Does it go anywhere?

Yes.

And no.

\*\*\* 2/4/17

There is a thirty foot hole caused by recent storm runoffs in the spillway of Lake Oroville, California's second largest reservoir and a primary water source for the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California.

Although Northern California reservoirs are full again, the State Water Resources Control Board is keeping the emergency drought regulations in place.

Groundwater pumping and irrigation in the San Joaquin Valley has pulled out so much water from the aquifers that the ground level continues to drop and put at risk the irrigation systems. Agriculture in the valley has been using water without state controlled restrictions from a four hundred mile long aquifer, and no one knows how long it would take to replenish it since it was formed over thousands of years.

\*\*\*2/9/17

2,300 scientists and researchers from University of California and State University schools signed a letter to send to President Trump, stating that they agree that climate change made by humans' greenhouse gases is a fact and that the negative results need to be recognized as an urgent global issue.

\*\*\* 2/10/17

What is to give? It is all given.  
What is the fall? It is all fallen.

The fruit in the bowl already on its way to being earth again.

\*\*\* 2/11/17

Storms subsided at just the point where the emergency, unpaved spillway at Lake Oroville was about to be put to use. That spillway is for water that reaches nearly to the top of the reservoir, and although the spillway has been in place for the forty-eight years of the reservoir's existence, it has never been used. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection are clearing the area of vegetation and utility workers using helicopters are taking out powerlines around the spillway in case it does go into operation. Water continues to be released at the damaged main spillway.

\*\*\* Friday 2/10/17

Water started flowing out of Lake Oroville's emergency spillway at 8 AM on Saturday; The lake rose to 901 feet and started spilling over the 1,700 foot emergency spillway. Officials said it was a manageable amount and did not pose a threat to downstream residents. But the Feather River that flows into the reservoir receives water from the Sierras, and the mountains already have 150% of their usual snowpack and could go higher with more storms, so the outcome of meltwater in the upcoming months remains to be seen. In order to not further damage the main spillway, the emergency spillway will continue to be utilized as needed.

\*\*\*Saturday 2/11/17

Evacuations downriver of the Oroville Lake were ordered Sunday afternoon. Pieces of concrete the size of football fields were appearing coming down the main spillway on Tuesday, the 7th. In 2005, the Sierra Club along with the Friends of the River and the South Yuba Citizens League

filed a motion to the federal government to have the emergency spillway refurbished because they said it was not up to current regulatory codes. But the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission did not deem the work necessary.

A rushed operation is underway of delivering boulders and concrete, 120,000 tons an hour, to add to the eroded unpaved area below the emergency spillway.

And although there is erosion at the main spillway, water is being allowed to continue to be released there to keep the lake level manageable.

\*\*\* Tuesday 2/14/17

The evacuation was lifted on Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup>, when it was certain that the emergency spillway was holding and the lake level had gone down, but more storms are on their way; over 190,000 people had been evacuated.

Last week Oroville Mayor Linda Dahlmeir was in Atlanta at a conference and the state Department of Water Resources assured her the dam was safe. When she heard on Saturday, the 11<sup>th</sup>, that water was coming over the emergency spillway, she flew home. At the time she boarded the plane, she was told the emergency spillway was working well. But by the time she landed, and checked her phone, she learned that the spillway had developed a crater in the area where the water first landed and there was a high risk of the entire wall breaking up.

Fearing the entire emergency spillway wall would break and to keep the lake level down, massive amounts of water was being released down the main spillway, although that one was damaged also.

\*\*\* 2/15/17

We will have wetter years instead of snow cycled alternately with more droughts, experts say. Water storage will be crucial. At the main spillway of the Oroville Dam, it is speculated that drought had made the spillway too dry underneath it and that is why it was broken up. Who will pay for the repairs of both spillways is under debate: should the entire state be responsible or the primary users of the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California? The dam was made with the intention of serving 16 million people, not the current 40 million residents. Many argue that the types of crops, such as nut trees, being grown in the valleys should be more sustainable, less water-thirsty.

Reservoirs throughout Northern California are nearly full. When they reach capacity, water is released to a river. Levees along the way can help with flood control, but they are not strong enough to withstand heavy flooding.

The water released via Oroville Dam's main spillway is being decreased and work is underway to dredge the crater. The damage at the emergency spillway caused the closure of the underground hydroelectric plant.

It's Thursday, the 16<sup>th</sup>. Another atmospheric storm is about to deliver another big round of rain.

\*\*\* 2/16/17

Friday, Feb. 17, Southern California was hit hard by the atmospheric storm, closing freeways, causing flash floods, downing trees with tremendous winds. L.A. Fire department responded to 150 downed wire reports; a 300 yard-wide mudslide occurred in San Bernardino County; 100,000 residents had utility power outages; many areas that had been burned this last year were evacuated for risk of mudslides and flood.

\*\*\* 2/18/17

Then I go on living as if and in the presence, more close to the way of being without, that is, with. With sun and moon, light and dark.

Rain again. And Again. Opening what had gone to dust. Wildflowers that can wait through the long heats.

In the Kumeyaay exhibit, seeing the stone used for tanning hides, the amulet stone that has a forgotten purpose, and the grinding stone.

Mai Ha: the Creator: Means water cycling from heaven to earth, earth to heaven, giving life, supporting life; teaching us gratitude.

Last Friday, the moon was eclipsed by earth's shadow.

\*\*\* 2/18/17

At Lake Oroville Reservoir, experts now say the state almost had its worst dam disaster. Fortunately, the rain let up just in time. Both the main and emergency spillway, it's now known, were not built to withstand the kind of water release that occurred. The last time the reservoir was going to be relicensed, there was no analysis made of the underlying bedrock that is now revealed to be weak. Also, the placement of the power lines running across both spillways was not reevaluated. Over the years, the Department of Water Resources passed over recommendations made by local environmental groups.

\*\*\* 2/19/17

Just south of San Jose, Anderson Reservoir started releasing water on January 9<sup>th</sup> because it was getting too full from the series of the atmospheric river winter storms. On Monday, the 20<sup>th</sup>, residents were told that water was going out of the reservoir's spillway into Coyote Creek, which runs into San Jose. Some residents were told to evacuate. But by Tuesday, the creek had overflowed far past the original designated evacuation zone. 14,000 residents ended up needing to be evacuated from the center of San Jose, and Highway 101 was flooded when a levee broke. Plans to upgrade the Anderson Reservoir and Coyote Creek have long been mired in negotiations, and developments have continued to be built along the creek. A Coyote Creek

gauge indicated that the water level had risen to 18 feet, five feet higher than a record flood that occurred in 1922. Some are blaming debris buildup from the years of drought to contributing to the flooding.

\*\*\* 2/23/17

The Sierras have a snowpack of 185% of its average. Most of the winter storms have been from the atmospheric rivers coming from the Pacific, so there is danger that this spring there will be more of the same, which could cause the snow to melt too fast. The San Joaquin River levees broke, causing flooding to residents and closing freeways. Shasta Lake reservoir has been releasing water. Residents along the Russian and Sacramento Rivers have been flooded.

\*\*\*3/2/17

I watched the videoclip of Buddhist teacher Ruth Denison saying she had moved into her last stage, that impermanence was more hers now, and it was not sad, she said it was happy, but not really that, that word wasn't it.

Mamma sad about being without Ray, not sure she can be the one who can care about just herself. But we meditated, she went into the place of peace inside, and she remembered she could, she could care about herself.

The week starts with a day of tremendous, vociferous rain, of me having to be in it, going here and there for work, all land transformed into wetland and flood; clearing & taking, going high to low, filling & spilling over; nowhere to go but up & out & around. Good fortune in any sound roof.

Cold turned warm the next day. Summer-like heat the rest of the week. Are these answered prayers? So much to understand, and it comes down to this—becoming.

\*

Appearances of weeds that can be eaten. Birds out in the light, flying & singing.

So we go—in and out—. And it doesn't feel there is ever enough getting there. God is there and not. And I am always the seeker. This is the life of how it is, the life of earth and sun and moon, us.

\*\*\* 3/4/17

There were two very small earthquakes after Lake Oroville filled recently. It's said that sudden pressure from a quickly filled reservoir or if water seeps into the earth at an accelerated rate, in either case, can put too much stress on a fault and cause an earthquake. Although the Lake Meade area had never had quakes, after Hoover Dam was built, the region began to have quakes.

\*\*\* 3/5/17

Sky presses down its grey cover, and even in the wild hills, it's diesel-fumed air. Banksides, not having for so long their understory, fall, chunk out.

It's turned cold again. Looks like rain could come once more.

We have to find why we are here. We have to give. Listen to the inner honest voice inside.

It could be me but instead it's you: The man took his child to school, and he turned the car away, and within a block, the immigration police pulled him aside. Told him they were deporting him.

Sunlight in some places just right, not too hot.

Mountain that came to be in its lively, fiery rising, draws in the rain clouds, releases springs and streams.

Comes undone, it seems to us, slowly.

\*\*\* 3/5/17

Morning: The heavy lidded sky breaks open, beginnings of cloud shapes. But no, they become one, bring us rain.