

they're moving but I'm on the outside, and they are telling us outsiders very little of the story.

A disciple tells me Adaitya is romantically involved with another disciple. This came as no surprise to me since the the times I'd been at the ashram the last couple years, they were together a lot. And if she was around when Adaitya and I were beginning to talk, she would interrupt, asking him about a practice, and he would be riveted to her, completely losing his attention with me. I thought it was funny and would say nothing, and leave the room. Before she'd come into the picture, he had said he was not interested in sex or romance.

I'm told it has caused an uproar in the community. Some people do not approve at all, expecting Adaitya to be celibate. I said that's repressive. These are human beings. She said it's questioned if this is just lust. I said even if it is, it will be a learning experience and be useful. They're both young, in their twenties. They can practice what Swamiji teaches: If you're in a romantic relationship, see each other as God and Goddess; serve each other, give utmost devotion and respect to one another.

And Maa and Swamiji are human too. Swamiji had told me they were both, all of us are, under the veil of Maya. The good comes through him, he doesn't know what he's going to say and remember. I remember Maa talks in her book about how when people started following her, it scared her, it was scary to have a lot of people around her, looking at her—she would run away and hide.

It seems like part of what Maa does is from the culture and from the patriarchal religion—doing what a mother and a guru would do in India—what she thinks she should do in those roles. But it doesn't mean it has always been that way, way before patriarchy took over. My friend says Hinduism changed when the Ottomans, the Turks came in.

Maybe others will tell Maa they don't want to be in that violent environment. And she will change, stop hitting and verbally abusing people.

It must be strange for Maa and Swamiji to be gurus in these times. They have a calling to be global as well as site-based gurus, and in these times global outreaching gurus are finding new ways to teach. Their teachers in India were in the old tradition. And we the disciples are having to find our individual way and if even possible, our collective way, in this latest huge change of the beautiful rural ashram being closed and the new city-based ashram being established, and Swamiji pulling away much of his involvement in so many ways.

Well, then, we are still teaching ourselves to be human, and we each are preparing in our own way “the way of the Lord.”

\*\*\* 3/15/18

Every county in California had wildfires in 2017.

Sporadic rain throughout southern California this week. Watches for landslides from burned areas.

Reservoirs got replenished in December and January, but still are at risk. The Sierra snowpack is still at 40% of its usual average level.

\*\*\* 3/16/18

Maa and some disciples went to India this month. They went without Swamiji because he is taking care of his mother. And it is a short trip, just for the month, because moving the ashram and continuing to make the transition took precedence over their plans for their usual three month visit.

They went to the Kamakhya temple in Guwahati, where Maa had her illumination experience years ago when she left her family home and went to the temple.

Maa led the huge crowd of devotees in the Kamakhya temple in singing. Afterwards, people came to get her blessings. Even though Maa's disciples tried to keep the devotees from coming in too aggressively, some people would squeeze themselves between the disciples legs to get through to Maa.

\*\*\* 3/22/18

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch of plastic trash has grown and is sixteen times larger than what was previously known. Nearly half of the trash are fishing nets. It is yet unknown how much trash is at the bottom of the sea. All of the plastic is toxic and is getting into the food chain, killing or poisoning living beings.

\*\*\* 3/23/18

According to the latest multi-agency U.S. Drought report, 40% of the state is in "moderate drought," and many areas in California are in severe drought condition, including the Central Valley.

The Department of Water Resources says the overall snowpack is at 57% of its average.

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The administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Scott Pruitt, is taking steps to dismantle the Clean Water Act. But there is ample information from 1200 scientific studies and 400 hearings that protecting water ways is more economically beneficial than if they were not protected. And veteran EPA staff were told to not cite any of this information in an upcoming report. Elizabeth Southerland, Director of Science and Technology in the EPA's Office of Water, resigned in July 2017 because of Pruitt's anti-environmental agenda.

\*\*\* 3/30/18

that age when you look in a public place  
 at those who might be  
 who you know  
 but when you sit down  
 you remember you would not  
 be with those younger faces & bodies  
 where you are is older  
 the ones you know are too  
 are where you are

even your eyes  
 your same eyes  
 you're looking from  
 are not the same

\*

it worked—to look for a teacher—  
 they came & went  
 & came again  
 & when i saw them  
 i circled in to the book  
 of our lives

i mean to some life  
 that is a field  
 to find it

cheekbones painted at times with tears

not knowing in the blue  
 talking later  
 in the edges of blur

stalled in poppies? the other side of home  
 is the handwriting  
 in the full moon's light  
 what i learned  
 i mean i don't mean

from my this body

up on the desert hill  
 a stone labyrinth

having to search  
for its entrance

where i would go in  
& that same place  
where i would go out

either way  
it speaks to me but so often  
it is in our wordless realm

all these years the thrill  
of these two teachers

and still i don't know them

and still i am walking

and though there are more  
dry days than i can remember  
this is the best of my days

wanderings findings  
i didn't make it up

but something does

\*\*\* 3/31/18

Capetown, South Africa was scheduled to have no tap water by April 23. But residents have been required to use only 13 gallons of water a day, and the massive cooperation is averting the predicted disaster. However, many people are digging wells to pull up groundwater, and there is no telling how this will affect the aquifer.

\*\*\* 4/1/18

In the beginning was the universe and then, the *Rudrashtradhayi* says, the veda/the intention for sacrifice was given so we would each serve and be served, to know union, to remember. To come back to our source when we get lost.

\*\*\* 4/6/18

Neuroscientist and nutritionist Lisa Moscont says that nearly half of Americans drink less than four glasses of water a day, and a 3-4% decrease in water consumption causes brain damage.

\*\*\* 4/6/18

An atmospheric storm hit Northern California Friday and Saturday. Because it brought warm rain, it caused snow to melt and flooding. Yosemite Valley was closed due to the Merced River flooding. The Truckee River flooded. San Francisco and other cities had heavy rain. The newly renovated Oroville Dam emergency spillway is at risk of being used. The spillway is only partially rebuilt and the rest is scheduled to be fixed during the summer.

\*\*\* 4/8/18

it's spring  
the creek again dry

walking where other minds talked inside their minds  
had to listen to the latest repeat of  
discord & jubilee  
& insert the ways our people  
bridge differences  
the limit/limitless story  
as i pass the grinding rocks

going further & remembering  
jesus walked out  
to the windbreak of hills  
to stay & pray

going sitting walking  
into this other world  
being  
inside what  
the wise have been saying

\*\*\* 4/14/18

The Agua Caliente Tribe has legally won the water rights for the groundwater in Palm Springs.

And Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians has also been granted their water rights.

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At a Chumash village site, what used to be called Salawa and later Indian Town in Montecito, the Lopez (Chumash) family lost their home that had been in the family for many generations in this year's flood.

\*\*\* 4/14/18

A disciple said it doesn't bother her that Maa hits people. She said we don't know how Maa's mind works. Maybe she's empowering some people to say no like I did.

\*\*\* 4/14/18

all along fascinated  
with the windows of moments  
the tide coming up & going out  
& i don't know  
& then i sometimes, in it, do

circling, circling, winding above  
full circle again in these winds

i can admit at this age  
all the learning comes to  
this caravan of body  
carrying small & simple talents

ok so then not at all  
what was going to happen

just change & forgiveness  
in water & air

sure now i'll be pulled  
into other roles

and you, so little as to be unseen  
& so, so big  
inside & all around me

\*\*\* 4/15/18

when the trail turns  
before i've had the chance  
to know it was coming

aspiration to take the route around  
it could be, it will be  
around the kind of difficulty  
of the mind in the mire

set out again  
someone must, it may as well be  
some of us, choose

living the story, circling,  
 continuing the path of good

what country it happens in  
 every borderless state

& didn't the rishis say  
 the way forward  
 is out of the broken heart  
 believing in the long way

going out to give  
 going in to give  
 can finish in the moment  
 & here comes more & more

i have been in the full circle  
 & i have just begun

well, aren't you ever the delight  
 the unconditional loving one

to be a human is to be maybe even  
 a little more like you

i go into crying but can stop  
 & the trail keeps turning another bend

& what i had to do, so much of it,  
 i no longer have to do

the edge of the poem-story moves in

to be a human  
 is to

circle in to that center

\*\*\* 4/21/18

Swamiji talking to Maa: What is the best way that we can make our contribution the world, Maa?

Maa: First we have to prepare ourselves, discipline, sadhana.

[Swamiji defines sadhana as any spiritual practice that helps us stay focused on divinity. In our practice this includes the practices of puja/prayers along with offerings for chosen deities,

path/recitations of prayers, homa/prayers that include fire ritual, devotional singing, and devotional dancing.]

After that, you can think about what you can do for this world. We have to prepare ourselves first.

Sw: What kind of skills or talents or abilities would we need to make our contribution in the world?

M: First is peace.

Sw: How about education?

M: Education is most important. Without it, we can not go forward. Education will make humility. When we can make humility, after that we can make peace in the world.

Sw: Will that empower us to find an example in our lives that we wish to reflect?

M: I'm sure. If we can follow that.

Sw: So the education makes humility and the humility makes you a disciple?

M: That is true.

Sw: And the disciple follows the example?

M: Yeah.

Sw: Well, how does one become a disciple? What's the difference between a devotee and a disciple?

M: A devotee has to do sadhana, has to surrender to God, have complete faith with God to go forward. That way you can go forward.

Sw: If a devotee will surrender to God with faith, will she be able to follow the example of the guru?

M: Of course.

Sw: When you tell me, Swamiji, you better do puja because it will make your life better. I do it because you told me to?

M: I don't think so. Do puja with faith and love and belief.

Sw: When I sit down to do puja, I put all my gurus in my entire lineage to sit with me. I have so many gurus from such a lineage throughout time, throughout history, to the first supreme guru.



M: We say in Bengali, [Swamiji translates], The birth of faith puts an end to all the debates of philosophical importance. And you just live in your faith. That inspiration you get from guru, real guru.

We learn love first from the parent. All the time the parent is giving, giving, giving unconditional love. We are trying to learn that also. Love will come as much as we try to give.

Sw: What sadhana should we do?

M: Whatever you like. It will come to you. I cannot make you do sadhana.

Sw: So the discipline that we perform is something that we choose to do when we see the example of what our guru is reflecting to us. We take the parts of her life and apply it to our lives.

M: Yeah, you should.

Sw: I heard a long time ago that the guru is like a tree.

M: Guru gives all the time.

Sw: Some people want the tree, some the fruit, some people want the flowers, some the leaves, some the shade.

M: Yeah, that's true also.

Sw: So they come and take from the guru what they want?

M: I don't think so. Guru gives instruction. If it's a real guru.

Sw: Does she tell you how to do the puja, the path, the homa?

M: Of course.

Sw: Why do we forget our true nature?

M: Too much attachment with the world.

Sw: Does that make us think about me and mine? Does the ego create selfishness?

M: Of course. Because of selfishness you become attracted to the world.

Sw: How do we give up selfishness?

M: Sadhana.

Sw: With Sadhana, all we can hope to do is make a disciplined life, living our goals. We're defining our lives with goals and values and objectives, pursuing a life that brings auspiciousness, that brings us peace. And that is the reflection of the example given by the guru.

M: This is a difficult time, the universe and the planets, it's difficult—during navaratri we get to pray for Mother to give to our desires—

Sw: I was told that the four navaratri were about the planting time, the height of the crops, at the harvest time, and in the middle of winter in the calm. During navaratri, we go in, we step away from the world, and afterwards we go back out and give. There's a cycle of going in and out, giving when we go in, and giving when we go out. We just go outside and we work, and then we come inside and share the fruits of our labor. And then we go outside and share all the blessings that we get from God, and then we come back inside and say thank you. And then we go outside and cultivate some more, and then we come back inside.

And life becomes a series of rotations, cyclic rotations of going out and coming in, and going out and coming in. Just like in the puja or homa [he puts his hand to his heart and then extends it out, as if making an offering to the altar or the fire, and then he brings his hand to his heart]. We're just taking the best that we have and sharing it with God. We're going in and taking it out. And the pranayama [breath]. We're taking it in and taking it out.

M: When you are going in, that means you have the balance. Outside and inside, in the world.

Sw: The Ishapanishad says, From life in the world we overcome death, and from meditation, we achieve immortality. And that's a proclamation for what are our goals. We go out and we have life in the world, and we overcome death. And we come inside, and we achieve immortality. We take all the power of that inner sharing, and we share it outside. That inner communion we bring outside. So we're allowed to demonstrate pure love in the world.

M: And God gave us 24 hours. If we could balance with eight hours sadhana, eight hours karma work in the world, eight hours different things, our own contribution to the world. If we can do that, we ultimately will be balanced. A human is someone who has complete control over their own mind. People forget that God gave us 24 hours. If you have love and faith, you are strong.

\*\*\* 4/21/18

It took an outbreak of Hepatitis A this past year for the city and county of San Diego to provide some portable toilets and handwashing stations in areas heavily populated by homeless people. Mortality rates for people recovering from Hepatitis A are twice the national average because the homeless here are sent back to the streets. And now that the epidemic is considered over, some of the portable toilets and washing stations have been removed. There were 577 reported cases of Hepatitis A in San Diego.

According to a 2017 report of the Regional Task Force on the Homeless in San Diego, the count of homeless people was 9,116. San Diego has the fourth largest homeless population in the country. The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority says that there are 57,794 homeless in L.A.

In San Diego, there are three tent shelters housing 700 people in the downtown area that were erected with private money and that are in place for two years. Services at the tent are funded by the city, and there is a system being discussed to facilitate providing permanent housing for the tent guests.

\*\*\* 4/21/18

Funding for the two water diversion tunnels in the Sacramento Delta has been approved by the Metropolitan Water District. The vote was divided, however. Although San Diego and Los Angeles will be paying the larger portion of the costs, the delegates from these cities were against the funding. They say the project has too many risks. Both San Diego and L.A. have been creating and utilizing alternative water sources in order to eventually not need MWD water

\*\*\* 4/22/18

*Nature* magazine reports that there were two successive heat waves in 2016 and 2017 that have permanently damaged the ecology of the Great Barrier Reef.

\*\*\* 4/27/18

Swamiji: Most disciples live away from the Devi Mandir. If you want to strengthen your relationship with your guru, then take the example, the teaching, the practice, and become its embodiment. When you pray, if you want to place me there with you, and if you want to place Shree Maa there too, we will be there with you and become the light in your darkness. We will communicate the bhavana, the intensity of our reality and our commitment. That is our offering and you can incorporate that intensity into yours.

First, you plough the field and then you plant the seed. Please remember the sower went out and threw the seeds all over the place. And some of them landed on the rocks, and some of them landed in the thorns, and only some of them landed in the fertile soil—which had already been ploughed, and the amendments added, and there was water, and those grew up and bore fruit.

You can't come and take initiation. You have to become a fertile field. You have to be the disciple, and the guru will come. We have a car, and we will ride to wherever you are. We will come to you when you are ready. You have to want to reflect the attitudes of the guru, and then we will come. Like a matchstick and a matchbox, when they come into contact with each other, there is ignition.

There are six stages of sannyas:

Kutirchak: You practice in your home.

Bahudak: You visit spiritual teachers and choose teachings to practice.

Hamsa: You narrow your choices of practices.

Paramahamsa: You are established in your particular sadhana and inspire others.

Turyatita: You are in peace and harmony and free of the bonds of karma.

Avadhuta: You are centered in oneness, whether sitting in samadhi or acting in the world.

These stages are initiations that occur spontaneously. You start by practicing in your home. You then have to learn from teachers and so you become a bahudak. You know what questions to ask, and then you become a hamsa. You start to discriminate, and then you become paramahamsa. You achieve supreme discrimination and then you become turyatita. You go beyond and then you become avadhuta. Then whether you are sitting in samadhi or working, you are in the same bhavana wherever you go.

\*\*\* 4/28/18

There is discussion in the California Water Commission of how to apply bond money that is for water storage. Dams are not practical now, given that snowmelt is volatile and most rivers and their habitats have been found to be negatively impacted by dams. There is talk of utilizing the two largest volume and flow sources of water, the Santa Ana River and the fluids from the Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant in Los Angeles.

\*\*\* 5/3/18

A 100 mile section of Owens Lake has been reviving since 2001, due to the court-ordered mitigation of the L.A. Department of Water. The LADWP has been diverting the lake's water since 1913. The area has just been designated as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network due to the proliferation of birds that now appear there.

\*\*\* 4/29/18

Inspired by the television series *Twilight Zone* (1959-1964, 1985-1989, 2002-2003), Jordan Peele wrote and directed the movie *Get Out*, in which a black man is pursued by a white family who routinely take the daughter's black boyfriends and implants a white consciousness into the black body, overtaking the host's life.

\*\*\* 4/29/18

The California utility companies Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison, and San Diego Gas and Electric are complaining to the state Legislator that their customers are and will be paying unfair liability fees for wildfire damages. They argue that climate change is giving the companies unfair risk.

In November, 2017 a Public Utilities Commission judge ruled that SDG&E could not pass on to its ratepayers the costs from the 2007 San Diego wildfires.

And the utilities are arguing that the "inverse condemnation" principle is outdated, where a government body's public property is the responsibility of the community, which the utilities say means that the costs of a wildfire would be dispersed within bill rates.

But on May 1, 2018, the Sacramento County Superior Court denied PG&E's request to sidestep the liability it is responsible for in the 2015 Butte Fire. 475 homes were destroyed then. Edison is also making the same argument regarding the Thomas Fire.

Ultimately, many consumer advocates and legal experts agree, the utility companies are going to have to significantly improve their infrastructure to minimize disaster liabilities.

\*\*\* 5/10/18

Excerpted from July 28, 2017, *Democracy Now*, Amy Goodman interview with Ruby Montoya and Jessica Reznicek:

Goodman: We turn now to Iowa, where two Catholic Workers have revealed they secretly carried out multiple acts of sabotage and arson in recent months in order to stop construction of the controversial \$3.8 billion Dakota Access Pipeline. Jessica Reznicek and Ruby Montoya said that on Election Day last year they set fire to five pieces of heavy machinery being used to construct the pipeline. The two then taught themselves how to destroy empty pipeline valves, and moved up and down the pipeline's length, destroying the valves and delaying construction for weeks. They say their actions were inspired by the anti-nuclear Plowshares Movement, which used nonviolent direct action to target nuclear warheads and military installations. On Monday, they spoke outside the Iowa Utilities Board office.

Reznicek: We are speaking publicly to empower others to act boldly, with purity of heart, to dismantle the infrastructures which deny us our rights to water, land, and liberty. We, as civilians, have seen the repeated failures of the government, and it is our duty to act with responsibility and integrity, risking our own liberty for the sovereignty of us all.

Montoya: Some may view these actions as violent, but be not mistaken. We acted from our hearts and never threatened human life nor personal property. What we did do was fight a private corporation that has run rampantly across our country seizing land and polluting our nation's water supply.

... We acted after having exhausted all other avenues of political process and resistance to this petroleum pipeline that, to my knowledge, is the largest in the United States as far as the capacity that it is able to carry oil.

Goodman: Jessica Reznicek, how did you know where this pipeline was?

Reznicek: Well, I knew exactly where this pipeline was because it—it's not more than 15 miles from this studio. It runs right here through the county I was born in, Polk County, Iowa. I definitely took a lot of inspiration from what I saw up at Standing Rock. But Iowa is impacted greatly by this, and my home city's drinking water is to be destroyed when this pipeline breaks. And so it's not a matter of having to find it. It's right—it found me.

... Goodman: Now, Jessica Reznicek, there are many who would say that destroying private property like this is violence. Your response to this?

Reznicek: I completely disagree. I think that the oil being taken out of the ground and the machinery that does it and the infrastructure which supports it, that this is violent. This is—these tools and these mechanisms that industry and corporate—corporate power and government power have all colluded together to create, this is destructive, this is violent, and it needs to be stopped. And we never at all threatened human life. We never at all—and, actually, we're acting in an effort to save human life, to save our planet, to save our resources. And nothing at any point was ever done by Ruby nor I in anything outside of peaceful, deliberate, and steady hands.

Goodman: Can you explain what Plowshares actions are, for those who don't know? You are both Catholic Workers, Jessica and Ruby, living at the Catholic Worker House in Des Moines, Iowa. Can you explain what the Catholic Worker movement is all about?

Reznicek: We have a rich tradition, started by Dorothy Day in 1933. And we have a rich tradition both in assisting underprivileged people in our communities, via soup kitchens, food pantries, hospitality, shelters for homeless people who we live with in our communities, and we also have—on the flipside of that, we also recognize the resistance that is needed to help bring underprivileged people back up to the same level as the people who are taking the money from them. And so, in essence, Ruby and I focus on the resistance aspect here in the Des Moines Catholic Worker. And we have followed suit, and I believe we are inspired by Phil Berrigan—who the house that we live in is named after. And we do understand the need to dismantle infrastructure when it poses a threat to human life and liberty.

[Used with permission.]

\*\*\* 5/11/18

And the latest news from a disciple is that, in fact, Swamiji has been talking to Maa for years about backing off of her aggressive ways.

When I was at the new temple, why, I asked, did Swamiji say to Maa that night in the presentation about devotion that she never gets mad, she is always in balance, when he knows that is not true?

The disciple said that Swamiji will say things to Maa to remind her and encourage her, even though he knows she doesn't always do what we would like for our ideal loving model.

I said, They are teachers to each other.

Her grandmother, who Maa lived with much of her childhood, was very strict and traditional. Both Maa's mother and her grandmother yelled at her, called her names, and hit her. Maa's nieces say, That's why she does that with us because that's what she grew up with and thinks it is how she should be.

Again, I think those aggressive, abusive ways came in with the patriarchal system and is reinforced within that system.

Swamiji, the disciple says, is about accepting and loving all spiritual paths. In general, Maa is more a traditionalist. Maa was adamantly against Adaitya, who is a monk, becoming romantically involved with another equally devoted, same-age disciple, though Maa is easing up about it as time goes on. And some disciples, like Maa, are not happy about the romantic relationship. They feel the tradition of being literally celibate as a monk is being degraded. It tears at their understanding of fundamental principles of the practice. Swamiji does not see it as a problem.

In our Shiva puja, there is a song regarding the loincloth of renunciation. Swamiji has told us that renunciation, and that particular song, is not to be taken literally. That the renunciation is to give up selfish ways, to stay focused on our love of God in all our activities.

Throughout the process of the Devi Mandir ashram in Napa closing and the Durga Mandir ashram in Yuba City opening, Maa and Swamiji have been viewing the future direction of the community in different ways and have not been able to come to a full agreement.

As stated earlier, since December, Swamiji and a few assistant disciples have been in Palm Springs taking care of his mother. In my outsider view, this happened at a good time because it has given Maa and Swamiji space from each other at a time of huge transition where Swamiji is moving toward more time for sitting in prayer and Maa wants to continue a full schedule of public programs and outreach.

Meanwhile, the public gets an announcement on the website blog asking us to donate money for Maa's projects in the U.S. and in India. It does not specify what exactly they are. And that is because, I'm told, Maa and Swamiji have not yet reached an agreement how they and the community will move forward.

And so this is how it is then. This spiritual community, like others, having the ecstasy and the friction. And I'm glad I'm not living inside the center of the community, going through the intense aches and pains like I did when I was younger with the Catholic Worker.

I asked Swamiji if we ever get to rest in a sustained period of peace. He said, We get to enjoy peace for a time, and then after the break is over, we go back to work.

\*\*\* 5/11/18

Tribal news:

The Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla's groundwater is polluted with perchlorate and arsenic.

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The Toprock Compressor Station next to the Colorado River, south of Needles, still has polluted cooling waters from its operation in the 1950s through the 1960s. It wasn't until 1996 that PG&E

began efforts to investigate and address the problem of the toxins contaminating the area, the river, and groundwater. Tribes of the area have long been protesting the problem.

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A section of the Waterfront Park of Yuma is being cleared and restored with native plants by the Quechan Tribe. Anya Nitz Pak/Sunrise Point Park has educational signs and an elder's village that has a mud house, shade house, and ramada.

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The Klamath and Sacramento Rivers had far below average salmon runs this past year and both Oregon and California had states of emergencies for many commercial fishing areas. Tribes along the rivers noticed that extra water was being allocated to Central Valley agriculture areas that were increasing almond crops.

\*

The Sites Reservoir was opposed by the California Water Commission, to which the Sites Authority responded by saying it would focus solely on reservoirs and irrigation. Noah Oppenheim, Institute for Fisheries Resources director, says, "New diversions and water privatization are not a public benefit. We cannot trust the fox to evaluate, design, and operate the henhouse."

\*\*\* 5/11/18

then it comes around  
to peace and conflict

ram dass saying he doesn't  
wish a stroke for anyone  
but does wish the bliss he's having

the bliss—  
he let go even more

excerpt of any holy written word  
coming through time & time again

i carry you you carry me

& we go inside the secret

wisdom & ignorance  
it's all  
you



overcoming the trembling in hearing  
the latest dire & dearth

o humor in ant & scattered pink petals

buddha invited to the special dinner  
& giving the prayer blessing  
to the beggar outside

\*\*\* 5/11/18

When the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu walked up to greet each other at the airport in Dharamsala, India in April 2015, the Dalai Lama puckered his lips to blow Tutu a kiss. The Archbishop then tweaked the Dalai Lama's chin. And then Tutu kissed the Dalai Lama on the cheek. The Dalai Lama was at first surprised and then laughed, and at that Tutu said, You don't like a kiss?! and kissed his friend's other cheek. And they both laughed. Doug Abrams, the co-writer and editor of *The Book of Joy* that they were going to create that week, says the Dalai Lama probably has rarely been kissed all the years he's lived as a monk.

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The night the Dalai Lama left Tibet to go into exile, a fellow monk, Lupon-la, was rounded up by the Chinese Army along with over a hundred other Tibetans from their town. Lupon-la spent eighteen years in a remote prison camp, and was tortured in the harshest methods of the Chinese, and also the cruelest methods of the Soviets and Japanese. When he was freed, only about twenty of his group had survived. Lupon-la told the Dalai Lama that he had endured many dangers, and he said the greatest danger was that he might lose compassion for his guards.

\*\*\* 5/13/18

In the number sixty is the sacred, you say.

The minutes were flying, and they couldn't get the ill friend into the crowded house where Jesus was teaching. So they climbed onto the roof and opened the vent, put ropes on their friend's hammock, tick, tick, tick, time was going, and lowered him in.

In the poetic meter of the thousand names of Shiva, we feel who we are and who we could be. In the three hundred names of Lalita, the poetry encodes her mantra, unlocks our unknowing.

Tick, tick, tick in the sixties. It's not Pollyana. It's not lost. It's our nature, it's the peddling, round and round, of our untired love.

Blessings in the rough road. Didn't I hear you, coming through the time of ages, saying, How can I help? Come to me if you are thirsty. Come and see how to make a life of giving water.

\*\*\* 5/13/18

Mother's Day, May 13—we get an announcement on the website asking for donations for Maa's projects.

\*

Maa sends us her Mother's Day Message:

If anyone were to ask, "What did you lose in life?" then without fear, without thought, I can say that nothing was lost and nothing was gained, but for the compassion of God.

What a beautiful relation exists between me and God!

I have no other desire, and He gave me no other desire, only to be divine.

\*\*\* 5/13/18

Swamiji: This is the nature of life—every story doesn't have the happy ending. But it has the privilege to celebrate God through our lives. It's not about achieving the happy ending, and we'll all live happily every after. It's about achieving the highest realization that God is acting through me, and I make a contribution to this world because of my having been here. I made this world a better place just as Rama made it a better place, just as Krishna made it a better place. It's not about achieving everlasting happiness. Not in this body.

The everlasting happiness is the eternal love of God. And pure devotion gives us that. I don't know of any other offering. Become one with pure devotion and become the witness. And we won't experience it as an unhappy ending. We will just see that it's aim hreem kleem chamundayai veechay. Nature is changing according to her nature because that's her nature.

\*\*\* 5/17/18

In the song of the "Highest Meaning of the Goddess," the "Atha Shree Devyatharvasheersham," the Goddess tells us that she is both wisdom and the lack of wisdom; forms that are united and ununited; and she is infinite and beyond definition. She is one and she is many, uncountable.

The *Guru Gita* says:

The guru is in many forms, all of life is the guru teaching us. The guru is God animated in all.

And through our devotion to God, and through our daily living, wisdom intrinsically rises.

Consciousness is within our hearts and meditating upon the divine consciousness, we reflect it, we experience unity, oneness.

When we see our union in everything, than anything we focus on is the meditation of the divine. We experience bliss and peace in this wisdom.

We are one with the guru, God, we are the guru, and wherever we are is pure. Our bodies, our loved ones, our lives of action, knowledge, life force, vocations—we are the guru.

All experiences lead us to our realization. The highest respect we offer to our teachers and to life is to find our union with God.

\*

Swamiji: The ocean has all capacities. And it gives what is appropriate for individuals in the circumstances in which they find themselves.

\*

Shiva can't be attained. He is only realized.

Wherever God is, is heaven. And God is everywhere.

\*\*\* 5/15/18

Swamiji: Fate is very much linked with karma. We say that as we sow, so shall we reap. That's our fate. So the law of karma is our fate, and there's also a way to change the fate. Because if we propitiate the gods, we fill ourselves with positive vibrations. We're putting out only positive energy, and now all the negativities fade away, they dissipate, all that negative energy.

So fate is very much linked to where we started our journey and how we continue our journey. And we are continually making our fate. Through our actions we make our fate.

\*\*\* 5/18/18

Jaya and Vijaya were guards at the gates of Vishnu's home. One day the four devotee Kumara brothers came to visit Vishnu. But the guards said that Vishnu was resting and they would not allow the brothers to enter.

The Kumara brothers said, We are devotees! How can you refuse our wish to bow before Vishnu? We curse you! You will have to take births as humans on earth!

And the brothers left in a huff. Jaya and Vijaya were in anguish over the curse, and Vishnu appeared and offered his compassion.

You know I can't remove the curse, but I can offer you two choices for your manifestations on earth. You can have seven human lifetimes on earth as my devotees, or you can have three lifetimes as my enemies.

Although they would be Vishnu's enemies, Jaya and Vijaya chose the three births so that they could return to heaven faster.

In their second human births, they appeared as Ravana and Khumbakarma. Ravana was the Ego. In this role, he would not listen to his wife or brother or soldier spies when they pleaded with him to not go to war with Rama and to not kidnap Sita. He would not listen to them because actually, he was fulfilling his incarnated fate, to be killed by Vishnu who was manifested as Rama. He would then be able to return to heaven.

\*\*\* 5/18/18

Swamiji: The kingdom of the ego is both good and bad. It's really neither.

Remember in the ahamkara/ego there are four specific tattwas/principles.

The inner cause, we call it man, is all subjective thought, all adjectives and adverbs of experience.

Buddhi is objective thought, all the nouns and verbs of experience.

If I say, This is a book, that is buddhi, it's a fact.

If I say, This is a good book (it's true!), that is both objective knowledge and subjective knowledge. The adjective is man, and the noun is buddhi.

Now, both of them together make up chitta, all the recollections of consciousness. And as soon as there's man and buddhi in the chitta, there is ahamkara, the ego. So the ego is comprised of both objective and subjective thought.

Good and bad are both coming through subjective thought because those are determinations of opinion, according to my point of view, where I sit at any point in time. To some people, we are doing a good thing, and to other people we are doing an evil thing. So it is according to their perception, or their opinion, whether it is good or bad.

But the ego becomes more and more divine as it rises and expands. Actually, our objective is not to get rid of the ego. Our objective is to expand the ego and become the greatest egotist—Shivoham and Aham Brahmarshmi, I am Shiva, I am God. I am the Supreme Consciousness.

If we expand the identity of our ego until it becomes the divine ego, then we are no longer encumbered by this little false ego who becomes an egotist. I did a good job. I'm great. I'm good. I'm bad. I am I, I, I.

So the ego is neither good or bad. It is the reflector of what we put in the mind. If the mind is full of pure thoughts, then the ego is a witness of purity. If the mind is filled with selfishness, then the ego becomes the reflector of selfishness.

\*\*\* 5/19/18

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment of the California Environmental Protection Agency has a current report:

Heat is rising faster at nights causing an increase of hot nights; water temperatures have increased more rapidly than in the past; the sea is rising faster and is a great risk for flooding natural and developed habitats; glaciers in the Sierras have been rapidly shrinking. Greenhouse gases continue to be the significant cause of these circumstances.

\*\*\* 5/19/18

a warm winter  
& a tempermental spring  
veering mostly to chilling arid sky  
& late erratic rains

crow darted down to squawk at my friend  
she kept walking  
& crow kept at it landing in front of her  
to shout its caws  
she gave it  
her burrito

may we remember  
the secret of happiness

\*\*\* 5/20/18

A king came to visit a rishi, but the rishi was away from the ashram, meditating in the forest. The rishi's son offered his help.

The king asked, How do I atone for all the sins I committed when I was at war? We completely destroyed villages and murdered countless innocent people. Is there any possible way to be cleared of all the sins?

Yes, it is no problem, the junior rishi said. It is so simple! Just go home and then say the name Rama two times.

That's it?! Oh, thank you. I would never have guessed! And the king hurried home.

When the senior rishi got home that evening, he asked his son how the day went and if there had been any visitors.

The son said, Oh yes, a king came asking if he could atone for all the crimes he committed in war. And I told him that once he returned home, to say the name Rama two times.

And the king said, Ha! God is so good! You should have told him to say it just once!

\*\*\* 5/19/18

My friend Cinnamon works with the Casitas Water District in Ventura. That district is relying, incredibly in these multi-agency water sourced days, solely on local water. Most residents see the reservoir on their commute to and from work, so they have a more personal sense of relationship with their water.

She says people in California these days worry about water because of what we hear about drought and where our water is coming from. But we need to consider if those concerns are informed from data reports or if they are generated from political issues among governmental bodies and businesses. We have been hearing about Day Zero in South Africa, presented as a scientific term for when water is expected to run out. Often times a situation of water scarcity is masked by the research data and the behind-the-scenes power conflicts are not revealed.

The Casitas Water District declared their area to be in drought in 2011, ahead of Governor Brown declaring in 2013 that the state of California was in drought. When Brown announced the drought was over in 2017, he used data from selective areas near the Sierras that had been out of drought conditions for only four months to back up his claim.

Most water districts were eager to find a threshold for saying we are out of the drought. There was a push for approving the Twin Tunnels that will run under the Sacramento Delta.

There has been a long-standing position of Northern California districts saying that Southern California is taking northern water. Often the truth is actually that small districts in the North are pulling water from sources outside their districts, such as the Eel River from Humboldt County being used primarily in Sonoma County.

San Diego was against the proposed tunnels twenty years ago. More recently, they were for the tunnels. They appeased the Northerners by saying that if there is an earthquake in the Bay Area, it would disrupt the current water system, and cause the extinction of endangered species.

The Northern California agencies have been saying that they are suspicious of the Southern California's changed position, questioning if really, since most of Southern California has stayed in continual drought, they simply really want the tunnels for bringing in more water.

The Metropolitan Water District was originally formed to bring water to Southern California cities from the Colorado River Aqueduct and the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta. The MWD has not been serving the entire areas of Southern California, and San Diego's water agencies realized that they were not secure in receiving needed water from the MWD, so they created alternative sources to be free of relying on the MWD.

Fifteen years ago, the MWD proposed the Twin Tunnels, arguing that they were needed, and they presented the earthquake and endangered species views.

When the Twin Tunnels were approved in April of this year, the MWD and Kern County Water Agency, former foes, united to vote yes. The MWD was not formed to serve agriculture needs,

but currently is interested in expanding its scope of areas to develop. Their combined yes votes signal that the real main reason for their yes vote is for water acquisition, not environmental concerns.

From Oxnard to San Diego, any building developer before starting construction has to get approvals from the city/county and in addition, the MWD has to give official assurance that it can supply water to the area for the next twenty years. If you ask any district in Southern California how the MWD calculates their assurance of providing future water in their area, they can not tell you. That is because the MWD isn't required to be politically neutral or scientific in this matter. They do not have to prove that they can provide water.

The residents living in the area of the proposed Newhall Ranch housing development near Valencia have opposed the development on a number of grounds, including that the MWD does not sufficiently explain how it will provide adequate water. Because of the drought, the water table there has dropped significantly.

Southern California districts that have been dependent on MWD have cast yes votes in agreement with MWD in the past even when they wanted to vote no because they felt tied to the MWD, but now that some have secured their independence, when they cast their alliance yes vote with the MWD, it is clearly for larger, political reasons. The MWD needed more yes votes for getting the approval of the Twin Tunnels. We heard in the news that agricultural areas did not want to pay into the project, so the MWD presented more financial incentives to those areas to bring them over to their cause.

She says she believes it is true that if there is a big earthquake in the Bay Area it would drastically affect the aquifer and the infrastructure. And the system now of putting water into the delta and drawing it out at the other end is no longer a sustainable option. Maintaining the right pressure of incoming and outgoing water assists keeping the saltwater in balance so that the aquifer and downriver aquifers in the agricultural areas do not turn saline. When the water is pulled out of the delta, the endangered Smelt also get pulled into the turbines. The tunnels will therefore benefit the Delta Smelt, but they will increase the possibility of the water becoming saline.

If there is an earthquake, those farms and residents that are below sea level and behind levees, if the levees break, will be devastated. And the Delta will be liquefied, thereby destroying the current water delivery system.

Southern California could one day be independent of northern water, but at present it still needs the supplement, so the tunnels are a current solution. Right now, there are too many agencies involved in the complex delivery of water, the politics will not allow the separation, and the DWP's leverage is huge, so the independence probably will be in some future generation's time.

In the Vallecitos Water District, agriculture was getting 14% of the district's water before the drought. The MWD reduced their delivery of water to agriculture by 30%. Farmers were forced to let crops go fallow because they could not sustain them. Residents could have seven times their base water needs and were not required to conserve. Agriculture, because they did have to

pay for the little bit of water they were being allotted, resorted to the no-cost aquifer water, drawing down the water table.

The Casitas Water District has enough water for their clients, despite being in the seventh year of this drought. And they have the least expensive rate for water of any California municipal district. They have planned ahead to be adequately supplied for twenty years, and further, to have enough water for the next ten years even if there would be no rain. And paradoxically, if the trend of global warming continues, it would bring the big intermittent storms that would benefit the Casitas reservoir.

Because Casitas Water District is independent, there has been a big push by outside agencies to convince residents that they are being misinformed by the Casitas agency. Casitas would have to pay for state agency water, but their own water is free. If Casitas brings in outside water, they would have to build and pay for the necessary infrastructure. Some residents have been so convinced by the outsiders' talks that they have formed a nonprofit water advisory group to get people on board to bring in state water. They don't realize that they will lose their autonomy and free, fully adequate water and delivery system.

Before the All American Canal was lined, it was losing 10% of its water to evaporation and another 10% to ground seepage. Once the canal was lined with cement, it no longer had that problem, but farmers who lived across the border no longer benefited from the seeped water that had been reaching their aquifer—water that historically had been feeding that aquifer was now being diverted.

As far as the issue of raising dams, in some places it is not harmful to the environment. In the Casitas reservoir, raising the dam would only affect some riparian trees, willows and cottonwoods, and would not put at risk native plants and wildlife.

\*\*\* 5/25/18

Swamiji and Adaitya went up from Palm Desert to the Bay Area for the Mother's Day puja Maa had scheduled to do in a devotee's home. The temple would be closed for a few months while some reconstruction of the dorm/dharmasala building is being done. Maa and Swamiji talked and they decided to close the Yuba City temple. They would travel and do programs and worship in people's home.

After the weekend, Swamiji and Adaitya returned to Palm Desert. Maa took her murtis/statues from her personal altar at the temple and brought them to her and Swamiji's home in Fairfield.

But then she changed her mind a number of times about the Yuba City temple—to keep it going or to close it.

The latest news is that the original owners, Anant and Aneka, who had given the property to Devi Mandir, would retain the ownership and manage the property. The reconstruction will proceed.



Maa decided to do one more kirtan/singing program and puja/worship ceremony for the public this weekend before the ashram closes.

\*

The Dalai Lama talks about the difficulties from how the Chinese government views him and deals with him. He sees every challenge from the eighth century Buddhist monk Shantideva's perspective: If he can change what seems to be possible, he does what he can. And if it can not be changed, he accepts it and does not torment himself about it.

I was talking with Adaitya about this, and I said that in our chants God and Goddess say they are perfection and imperfection, wisdom and ignorance. God moves us in everything we do. So how bad can we be? The thief and the murderer ended up writing sacred Sanskrit texts.

He said yes, the three gunas, the ways we can see clearly and the ways we become veiled, occur all the time. The candle burns bright whether it is in a stand where the light is in full view, or it is in a container so dense we can not see it.

And I think of the classic metaphor of the sun and clouds. The sun is always there.

He said he'd been thinking about this, too, and about forgiveness. The Lord's prayer says, Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. He says that is saying we get forgiveness from God and we extend a friendly hand, we're willing to talk, offer forgiveness. But it is not saying that others will necessarily forgive us.

He, of course, was probably thinking of his situation with being in a relationship now and the difficulty Maa and some people have had accepting it.

He said the *Bhagavad Gita* tells us to remain the same with either praise or blame.

Right, I thought. Many poems, stories, plays, songs, and scriptures have been telling us that throughout time.

Praise or blame alike mean nothing. No, delightful as the pastime of measuring may be, it is the most futile of all occupations, and to submit to the decrees of the measurers the most servile of attitudes. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

\*\*\* 5/26/18

Governor Brown's Forest Carbon Plan is proposing that half a million acres of forest a year be logged and to scratch some environmental protections as a way to reduce wildfires. But experts say that the plan is not a worthwhile solution. Burning wood for electric energy creates more carbon emissions than coal; deadfall/snags among live trees are part of the vital ecology of a forest so should not be wholesale removed; only half of a logged tree is usable, the rest is burned, again contributing to the carbon footprint; logging creates clearcut areas that are much hotter

than the surrounding forest, causing die-offs and leaves behind a mass of slash debris that is highly combustible.

What the experts are calling for is houses being built or renovated to be better protected from fires, and for the property surrounding the home to be converted into a fire-safe defensible space. Plants cleared past 100 feet of a home do not guarantee any safety, so the logging of nearby forests will not help save a home. The fires in October in Northern California and the Thomas and Creek fires in Southern California were primarily in chaparral and oak woodland surrounding residential areas. What burns in a forest only emits about 10% carbon because the bulk of what burns is needles and twigs. And after about five years from a fire, forest regrowth absorbs more carbon than it releases.

\*\*\* 5/25/18

Not unlike Owens Lake, the Salton Sea continues to dry up, sending toxic dust into the atmosphere creating health problems for wildlife and people. The high salinity has killed off all fish but pupfish and tilapia. The saline saturated lake has been mired in law and multiple agency conflicts. Even though the state has allotted \$80 million to address the environmental problems of the area, most of the money has yet to be used. The Imperial Irrigation District is using the same method that has been used at Owens Lake of furrowing salt flats to keep down the dust.

\*\*\* 5/27/18

Last night at the end of kirtan, they announced that the Yuba City temple would continue to be our ashram, and that it would be managed by Anant and Aneka. Maa thanked them.

The question remains: Where will Swamiji be? Adaitya says they are going to India in August and will be gone for three months, and he did not say Maa was going with them. Swamiji's mother has improved a lot, and her other sons will take care of her when he is in India. So we disciples on the outside wonder, where will Swamiji be when he returns?

\*\*\* 5/27/18

The proposed Temperance Flat dam that would be put up on the San Joaquin River was allotted some money recently by the California Water Commission. But the project received only a very reduced partial funding, so this means that the growers and politicians who want it will still need to raise the bulk of the funding. The dam didn't receive full support because it could not be shown, according to the requirements for proposals, to significantly benefit the public and the environment. Spawning areas for the Chinook salmon are already severely impacted from numerous river diversions. Recreation areas and hydroelectric stations would go under water. Alternative solutions, opponents say, need to be pursued, such as reclamation. Many water rights throughout the state were formulated over a hundred years ago, and because of that, on average those rights are allowing five times the amount of water to be used from California rivers than the waterways can actually provide.

\*\*\* 5/28/18

And water eludes. Sky is beyond any words. I have circled and maybe briefly, ever so lightly landed on one small bit, then off again.

Now ant going along its track, flowers that need so little rain, even no rain, to be here, again, in their usual season. This time. But we must not expect a certain time of return.

\*\*\* 5/28/18

pompeii then kilauea now has not erased the cause  
the ache to escape the heart's sorrow

who can know, point into sky, through endless air

into one line, the few words  
where love stays—here or there

surpass suffering

fold fingers

golden encelia  
or warm cloak

giving to who is in need

this tone humming all through the body

past cranky  
past the sheltering hat

saying, even without words  
so much more  
after sorry

\*\*\* 5/28/18

I remember Swamiji saying that when we take a body, there is a veil of ignorance pulled over all the wisdom that we know. When we are in a body, we experience the three gunas/the qualities of nature, sattwa, rajas, tamas; activity, desire, and rest.

And it's even impossible for Hanuman, the incarnation of Rudra/Shiva, who always meditates on Rama/Vishnu, to recognize Rama when he comes into his presence, when Rama appears first in the forest seeking Sita. Because that's the lila/the drama of our lives.

If we did everything that we were supposed to do in life, we would go in a straight path. And we would not waste time going off in so many tangents—unless they are really fun. We wouldn't waste time in unproductive tangents.

So because we have this veil of ignorance, the Hanuman within us can not recognize the Rama outside.

\*\*\* 5/31/18

Ramakrishna said that we all as human beings experience pleasure and pain and live out karma from past lives. He said a sincere devotee, Kulavir, even though he was living a pure life, spent time in prison with a heavy stone on his chest. Krishna's mother Devaki saw Vishnu in a meditation, but she also spent time in prison. The Pandava brothers and wives also suffered many troubles, but Ramakrishna says that they never lost their faith and love for God.

Swamiji says that although the karma that started in the past plays out in the present, if we are busy with devotional practices, that karma will come knocking, but "no one is home" to answer it. Those challenges don't have a chance to further play out or they get minimized. Sarada Devi gives the example of stubbing your toe—due to your devotional practices, you might have that experience instead of something far more painful or violent.

\*\*\* 6/1/18

I wonder if Shabari, after she realized, after so many years of carefully, with devotion, keeping to her guru's instruction—to be prepared to wait for when Rama would come through the forest, to where she lived, and she would tell him where Sita was, and she would tell him where Sugreev, the king of the monkeys was, who would help Rama fight Ravana's army, and Rama would instruct her about devotion—

I wonder if after Rama gave her the instruction of the nine steps of devotion, and she gave him the information he needed—

I wonder if she realized that all those years she had actually been living what Rama outlined. That long ago she had believed what her teacher had told her. All those years since, and he was not with her, and Rama did not appear, she believed what her teacher told her was real.

But her teacher was not there to show her day-to-day how to live as if any day, the very present day, Rama, the manifestation of God, would appear. She had whatever foundation she had learned from her teacher. And then she applied it to her own way, to her days.

\*

When Rama and Lakshman appeared in the area of the forest where Hanuman was, Hanuman disguised himself as a Brahmin. Hanuman asked them why they were there, and they answered that they were looking for the King of Monkeys, Sugreev.

And Hanuman asked, Why are you looking for him?

Lakshman got mad, and said, Why do you need to know? If you can help us, please do! Otherwise, we will be on our way.

Hanuman said, Oh, I'm sorry. I am Sugreev's Brahmin. I can certainly show you the way!

Rama said, Well, I really appreciate that we are talking together in Sanskrit, so I will tell you more. An elderly wise woman, Shabari, gave us specific information to find Sugreev up on this mountain, and we are looking for a path to go up.

Hanuman said, Ah, I see. What are your names?

I am Rama and this is my brother Lakshman.

At this, Hanuman suddenly broke into tears. Hanuman's guru, The Sun/Surya, had given him the blessing to help Surya's disciple, Sugreev. By this duty, Hanuman could then be on the lookout for his beloved Rama and be able to assist him in his mission. And here Rama was, and he had not recognized him!

Hanuman said, I can certainly help you!

At that, he revealed his true form.

\*\*\* 6/1/18

Swamiji: Vashishta taught Rama and his brothers, Lakshman, Bharat, and Shatrughna. He taught them how to run a kingdom, and how to at the same time be free from attachment, how to achieve spiritual liberation, to be one with God.

At the end of their studies, Vashishta said for the daksha/gift that you will give me, I would like for you to be free from being bound to the teachings I have given you. I would like you to be empowered to use your own discrimination in taking the right teachings and leaving the rest. If you saw any bad qualities within me or any bad characteristics, please don't take that as a teaching. You yourself discriminate, let your soul illuminate your life.

\*\*\* 6/1/18

here is the body dancing its motions

already  
promised

in the wild grasses  
on the trail  
swimming the sea

the cure of all cures

all the heavy weight  
a world of its own

lifted

o you wisdom  
giving life from death

\*\*\* 6/1/18

A devotee asks Swamiji, What does Ramakrishna mean when he says to Vijay, When you love God for purely God's sake, your karma fades away. Does this mean all karma goes away? If one has no karma, what is there left to do?

Swamiji: Love! All you need is love. That's all that's left to do—is love.

\*\*\* 6/1/18

after most days for weeks blotted in grey  
morning blue & bright  
birds jumping & lighting & singing

dreams sleep with sleep

the mountain shines—again

books don't say  
how this turning

seems slow, looking out  
looking in, seems ever was & is

the younger self the older self  
seeds flower

border that never was

all this honey

\*\*\* 6/1/18

another true blue morning sky  
after the dark

being still & still made of faults

out with sage & pine  
in the room of soul  
i hear the song

being human  
appears disappears  
in one home then another

i look at elders & the young

find full circle  
in broken phrases

i am seed  
greening  
dormant  
returning

\*\*\*6/2/18

# act two



i think it's a new day  
another beginning

the drumbeat of time  
sings that it's always & ever

deepest hunger  
keeping vigil

this is how to run walk stand  
in the middle of all this

in the fallen petals shy angel dove

cooing

how do we keep on  
in strong kindness  
in the weak mean streets

off in forest  
hawk song

knowing its place its search

i don't have to look far

everywhere  
forgiving for forgetting

\*\*\* 6/3/18

it's only a cage  
by thought

by the shed, the shovel

evidence of free peace  
& lasting happiness  
in wild poppy's return

poem-song  
lights fires

\*\*\* 6/3/18

the earlier life having delivered to now  
the nothing to show

spirit in body

sap in trunk

all i was doing  
was walking sitting  
cooking

all the words finding words

cool in spaces

happiness of you is what is  
happy what is  
sad

the day you see this  
so far past now

fear washing out foot sore & walking still

water shaped smoothed tumbled  
lifting from the mire

\*\*\* 6/8/18

where & what  
echo in question  
& answer

i am not becoming that  
i am

and i will tell or not  
dance & sing

where i live

flowers first & ever & last  
true beauty

water going & gone

all i can not touch

what will dry what will rain or arise

earth

ever with

\*\*\* 6/8/18

going around to where there is and was going around & becoming but not  
because ever was

there is ground telling its big poem  
and who can hear

then the teacher says, all that time getting & cooking & eating food & you could stop for a day &  
pray

& sky is all its ways

i am i am i am

dissolves returns

now birdsong

aching foot and the work

all going to earth  
& sky going here & here

flag coconut flower

i know you us

the body aging

the guises of shape-shifting

the all in all

\*\*\* 6/8/18

the beginning is around here somewhere  
& death clangs the bones

walking through the weeds  
by way of trail

i wish i had never gone astray

he sees my forehead  
sees what i don't see

centuries of goodness  
i could read in my palm

listen in to forever  
through the smoke of days

i might count on  
the tragic parts  
as shed snake skin

living ever in love

\*\*\* 6/9/18

anyone could get here  
if they knew the way

a spider bite might  
be a detour

i don't understand, really,  
the day's weather

sarada cooked & cleaned  
ramakrishna sat on a cot  
& sometimes talked  
sometimes sang

the world has shown me  
& the life inside  
waves & waves

this coming through  
light brighter than sun

no need  
to ask for more or less

\*\*\* 3/9/18

we can pray in the ways we're taught  
& make it our own of those ways

it's in the books kind of sort of

but beyond far beyond

lands in the poem as a  
sparrow track

all the while flying

\*\*\* 6/10/18

every moment in thought  
moving off from here  
gambles away being free

happy enough & forgetting  
never, you say, offending

heavy day made light  
in your light

o grin & bear this lightness

embraced with earth & sky

those you of yours

no need  
to wait for you

stretch to a voice

our voice  
singing inside

what talents what skills  
i ask night  
to bring now?

it's all mornings all beginnings

under the skin of these years

all deaths and leafings

bee lighting & leaving

maybe i know

maybe i don't

maybe this life as i've known it  
is already

going

\*\*\* 6/10/18

after all the pages tell  
the path to here

mystic dance

& dove calling

yet & still more

will keep vigil

i leave the rooms & return

i go nowhere

& everywhere

your prayer-song the trail  
i'm on

labyrinth

circle

undying spring in the world's drought

behind the folds of pain  
& efforts

the all & empty

seeing you

\*\*\* 6/10/18

having gone down one long trail  
there are others

can walk now in moonlight  
or dark

who speaks, whispers  
who sings, sings inside me

essential always & never  
rises drops

sky moving staying

& you watch over

this going these hungers

& so i shelter the hungry

there the path bend  
ancient turns  
& switchback returns

bird pecking

no doubt  
this heading to one end  
& others

that big river

\*\*\* 6/15/18

maybe the beloved sky & earth  
is giving  
another day  
of comfort

i say yes i say thank you

bee to flower & to home

if from love  
then breath in & out

& tree & leaf giving

& i go in to the colors of giving

your patience  
ever teaching

& i say yes i say thank you

doing in the hot & cold

& being warm & cool

in the currents

\*\*\* 6/15/18

if we talk of blackberry  
& we've never tasted it  
then words stay flat

what lives outside  
goes inside

sings & shimmers

hands holding fennel elderberry

heart & soul thriving  
beyond the dry creek  
& clinging dust

this bottomless peace

stacked books undone

all these days & nights

made simple & true



\*\*\* 6/17/18

walk & walk  
along oak & willow

wind dancing with sails  
out at sea

creek goes under  
ground gets pulled  
into pipe

sending hugs & love  
in the time apart

hawk calls  
calls to keep sheltered  
who's in the nest

she says this is like then  
in serbia  
the horrible absurd  
in power

here bricks stacked along the garden fence

some of us  
not going with  
all or nothing

coming through the time

of beatings

jail

signs for & against

talk talking

still sun  
& wild grape

leaves  
& flowers

\*\*\* 6/17/18

It was announced on the temple website that Swamiji would come up from Palm Springs for a Father's Day puja. But then the webcam was dark, nothing. Later, when talking with a disciple, I learned that Swamiji's back had gone out. What I wonder, again and again, is why there is no email or website update information.

A few weeks later, it was announced Swami Ramkripaluji would be visiting, and there would be a singing program and a puja with him. But again, the webcam was dark on the appointed days and times. And I learned again, much later in a distance conversation, that he and his attendant were staying with Shree Maa at her house in Fairfield and his attendant fell and broke her shoulder.

One can't help wonder what all this change and dissolution and drama that's been going on with the Devi Mandir the last two years means?

For sure, it underscores the yogic perspective that creation, sustenance, and change is ever happening.

We can be sure there will always be change, change, change.

\*\*\* 6/29/18

United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston monitors extreme poverty throughout the world. On June 22, he presented his recent report to delegates of the U.N.'s Human Rights Council. The U.S. has been "neglectful at best" of the poor and the Trump administration has "deliberately designed" policies to remove what is in place that assists the needy. U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley announced that the U.S. is pulling out of the Council because she claims it is politically biased and the U.S. job rate is improving. Alston asserts that the growth is in jobs that have no benefits and are low wage, and the rich are the ones benefitting, they keep getting richer.

Los Angeles, he reports, does not meet for its homeless the minimum sanitation standards the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has established for refugee camps in Syria. Warrants issued for infractions committed by homeless in cities criminalizes rather than helps the homeless who need jobs, health care, and homes.

\*\*\* 6/29/18

The latest: The reconstruction is on hold. Maa's home is also now a place for devotees to come, when invited, to worship.

The Yuba City temple, currently called Durga Lalita, is being owned and managed by the original owners. But Maa will offer public pujas there. Some of the disciples are living there.

\*\*\* 7/7/18

Oprah:

The greatest lesson I've learned throughout my career came from Maya Angelou, actually. When I was first meeting her, and after I'd known her for awhile. And she said, "Baby, when people show you who they are, you believe them the first time. And your problem is, it takes you 29 times to see the same lesson coming in a different skirt or a different pair of pants."

So I think that has been one of my greatest wisdom teachings—is to assess from people's behavior their actions, not just towards me but towards other people, who they are and how they behave, because people talk about other people, they talk about you. So I think in business and in personal relationships, that's also been my greatest lesson.

Also, staying grounded, you know, has been really great for me.

—From her 2018 Golden Globe Cecil B. DeMille Recipient press room speech.

\*\*\*

There are so many ways to make the box and stay inside.

There are so many more ways to be free of the box.

Truth wins out—whether told or lived now or later.

\*\*\* 7/28/18

Ramakrishna said God listens to every person regardless of whether they call to God in a form or as a formless God. We make mistakes but the moon belongs to all of us.

\*\*\* 7/28/18

it is slow  
& takes no time at all

to see tree leaves  
to hear dove song

we have all lost  
what we thought

& come to where  
home never left

crazy as you

the house of    the nest of

the waves & waves & waves of

so bright    so sweet

\*\*\* 7/28/18

The dry and barren receded areas of Mono Lake are now the largest source of powdered-fine air pollution in the country. The pollution can also reach around the globe via wind currents. The lake needs to be allowed to rise, and the current regulations are outdated for how much water the L.A. Department of Water and Power can divert. The factors of drought and climate change needs to be considered.

\*\*\* 7/5/18

Each time Maya Angelou's editor asked her to write her autobiography, she said, I will not, I will not.

She told Oprah that "Jimmy" Baldwin was at a party and Maya's editor moaned that he could not get Maya to agree to write her story.

Jimmy said, Tell her you won't bother her any more about it. Tell her you know it is difficult; it would be too hard.

And that got her to do it, to write *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

Breaking the silence about her childhood, when she was raped, the murder of the rapist, her years after that of not speaking.

Why write? Why write when you have fallen so deeply in love with God? Why write when illusions of one way or another fall away?

Muriel Rukeyser: What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.

\*\*\* 8/4/18

A disciple asks Swamiji: Why is it important to seek God?

Swamiji: Because if you don't seek God, you won't find her. And if you don't find her, you will have wasted your time. It's so difficult to get a human birth. It's so much more difficult to get a human birth into a family of Brahmins, knowers of God. It's even more difficult to get a human birth in a family of knowers and lovers of God, and yourself be infused with the love of God and the desire to find and live with that divinity. So please don't waste the opportunity. Take every opportunity that you can and fill your life and your environment with godliness more and more.

\*

Swamiji: Ramakrishna said, The guru is sat-chit-ananada/truth-consciousness-bliss.  
All these smaller gurus point you to that.

\*\*\* 8/4/18

Swamiji is off to India with three disciples. It's announced on the website, also saying he's succeeded in caring for his mother (who is 99) the past seven months, and invites others to join him in India. If you want to do long sittings.

The reconstruction at the Durga Lalita temple is going ahead and being funded by our Devi Mandir community.

Though it has been on the market, the Napa property has not yet been sold.

Some devotees are now saying they are followers of Maa and not any more of Swamiji because of what's happened with Adaitya and also because they don't feel Swamiji has lived up to their ideal.

\*\*\* 8/11/18

If there is anywhere on earth a lover of God who is always kept safe, I know nothing of it, for it was not shown to me. But this was shown: that in falling and rising again we are always kept in that same precious love.

Julian of Norwich

\*\*\* 8/12/18

A disciple said Maa in the past has agreed to stop her aggressive ways when Swamiji has talked with her. But she has not actually ever ceased.

\*\*\* 8/12/18

A disciple asks: How does one learn to not feel any resentment towards anyone for any wrong that they do to us?

Swamiji: Please contemplate how many times you returned the favor, how many wrongs have you committed yourself, and wouldn't you want to be forgiven? And so forgive others as you will want to be forgiven. And every time you feel resentment because they have wronged you, think of how many times you may have wronged another. And then have a little compassion for them. Because if you understand, and you know fully well that it is wrong to commit wrong to others, and still you did it, then you can forgive others for having committed wrong to you.

\*\*\* 8/12/18

In the Sierras:

Dog on trail in pause with woman nudges head under my hand. Up the trail again, rock to be walked on, over, around, clutched for balance. Big green rock at a spot to bring attention from the rest.

Mind going backwards & forwards & reined to be here. Sarada would stay with Ramakrishna in his room to say mantras to bring him back from staying too long in the other-world samadhi.

Rose hips bunched & unpecked to whoever might like them.

I meditate on & on in sitting, in walking. I keep going.

On trail I meet the man who went all the way up to the high lake. He had to make his own way in the halt of the steep zag of switchback where snows had pulled it apart.

Now sun's on its way far past these mountains. Light here remnant & faded.

This is the time when wind crashes about.

Maya Angelou remembers when she was a girl being afraid of stories of ghosts.

I go deeper. With sky & earth. Praying day & night.

And I believe what I do not yet know, I need not fear.

\*\*\* 8/23/18

It may have been the second time Maa and Swamiji came to San Diego on tour that I met a disciple who was touring with them who told me that they were pure. There wasn't any questionable behavior.

A number of disciples are upset with how Swamiji has handled the revelation of the Adaitya's romantic relationship. It sounds like Swamiji got stuck in a conundrum of at first keeping the relationship secret and it eventually came out, and then there have been troubles with how he's been unwilling to discuss it. It sounds like he was human within a context that had Hindu spiritual parameters. And there's been a breakdown and breakup of devotees' ideals and illusions.

I have tried to get people over the years to tell me *both* the good and bad. Because it *has* to be there. That no one ever told me that Maa hits people, has hit them, is astonishing. That it took me speaking about my own incident for finally devotees to tell me and to also admit that they don't like her yelling at them.

Maa and Swamiji are in their leadership positions. I have seen how people have been so reverent of them that they don't speak their own truths to them. Which isolates Maa and Swamiji from the reality.

\*\*\* 8/24/18

She is walking with two poles, leading the other adults of the family. She is ancient. I stand aside to give them enough trail room. The woman behind her says, She's 96!

I ask how far they went.

They didn't get to go far because the talus landslide is too difficult to cross. I know! It's a maze every time for me!

Shortly after they pass, another elder comes. He's emerging from the landslide. His family, too, with him. He is ever so carefully stepping his way. The younger man behind him is grasping a handful of the back of his shirt.

I get through the landslide, get further up the trail. And a black dog comes racing down, angrily barking and charges me. I freeze and pull my hands up. The owners, making their way down the rocky trail, call him but he persists for awhile. I had been praying; I notice I don't feel scared.

One woman puts the dog back on his leash. The other, walking behind her, slips and falls. She's not ancient, but she's older. She lies there, not sure at first if she broke a bone. Her friend stands over her. The fallen decides she's ok, slowly eases to one knee to do the three-step getting up. When they pass, I see she has a long verticle surgical scar over one knee.

\*

I'm sitting at the creek. It's singing its mantra song, moving me further in. And a dog comes, bell ringing, stepping on me, over me, on my fanny pack, on the exquisite mushrooms, knocks a head off. Tramples back to hiker above. When she sees me, she asks, Did he come down?

I say yes and tell her of the black dog.

She says as she moves on, Oh, not him. He's a lover.

\*

Ant takes a little bit of some morsel and walks, I follow, up the long, long campsite drive to the ant hill.

All this time to be here.

Days could be the same.

I pray. I walk.  
I eat. I send out love.

Awake and awakening. Sleeping, dreaming.

The days could be all the same.

But they're not.

\*\*\* 8/25/18

Ramakrishna did not like to be called a guru or master. He saw himself as a child of God and God's tool. He would say, Just as you make me speak, so I speak, just as you make me do, so you do. He cautioned spiritual teachers to have this attitude because they risked taking their followers' respect too seriously and then falling into thinking of themselves as wise. He said the only true teacher and wise one was God/Goddes who is the all-pervading Satchidananda, truth, consciousness, and bliss.

\*\*\* 8/25/18

goddess—  
she unites words with poetry  
she unites worlds with poetry

\*\*\* 8/27/18

Again, the human: After Ramakrishna passed, after being a year in Vrindivan, having ecstasies, Sarada went to Kamarpakur, Ramakrishna's hometown. And there she had just a little bit of income from some disciples, and so could afford very little food. The people there did not recognize who she really was.

She asked God to take away her judging of others, and God did.

\*

Jesus was walking in his hometown, Capernaum, and he saw the tax collector, Matthew, in his office. He called to him, Come follow me.

Jesus had been teaching and healing people there and throughout the region.

The next day, Jesus, Matthew, and the other disciples were having dinner at Matthew's house, and some tax collectors and "outcasts" came over and joined them.

Some Pharisees saw the various visitors going into Matthew's house, and they were appalled that Jesus was mingling with tax collectors and outcasts. Later when they told Jesus this, he said, The old scripture says, I don't want animal sacrifices, I want kindness.



Well, now I am here. And I am here to give kindness to the outcasts.

\*

Often, aspects of the self are denied in a spiritual path. In those denied areas, when they sooner or later surface—and they do—“the body, or relationships, or future planning, or money, or sexuality, or family, or community, or politics”—we realize there’s been confusion, fear, and judgment in that part of our lives.

When the betrayal arises in the spiritual community, the falling off of an ideal, the recognition of a need we had that clouded our seeing clearly, eventually, Jack Kornfield says, we can move through to not blaming. We can embrace the “shadow,” the imperfections in both ourselves and the spiritual leader; past the ideal is our whole being. Whatever the betrayal or disappointment, we can come to see it as a kind of initiation into a deeper understanding of our common humanity. We are being ushered into spiritual maturity. By this rite of passage, and I have, we all have, had experiences of this before, we can expand our hearts.

\*\*\* 8/29/18

Ramakrishna saw that two leaders of two different spiritual paths were sitting in the boat with him and other disciples, but they were not getting along with each other. He told them about Ramanuj who after a while took a different path than his guru. Ramanuj believed in duality, God in the many, and his guru believed in non-duality, the one God. Ramakrishna said God is playing all the parts in the dramas of people’s different views. There really is no conflict, beliefs rise and fade, and still all beings are loved by God.

\*\*\* 9/23/18

buddha visited by mara  
many times  
after the bodhi tree day

and his body  
aging, ill, tired  
back aching

loved ones dying  
disciples bickering  
& factioning

the pocket of peace  
inside

not going  
anywhere

\*\*\* 9/23/18

I hear of Accounts of Maa and Swamiji's anger and of devotees in disagreement.

I believe because I believe, Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day said.

Seeing this earthly world and the sky as all-God, how could I wholly discard the bitter and bad parts?

Dorothy Day, as time went on, would go away from the stresses of the New York community house where there were inevitable on-going conflicts. There were times when she didn't think she could go back. She evolved into taking time periodically away.

Sarada Devi didn't do all that Ramakrishna wanted. When it came to "spiritual matters" she did, but she said she used her own judgments in other matters. She'd fib about what he was eating when he'd ask, in order to get more nutrients into his ailing body. She'd boil a quart of milk down to a cup and then encourage him to drink his milk.

And when seekers came to her, even if she knew they were not doing any spiritual practices, or even were criminals, she would bless them and feed them. She saw God in every part of the world, and she also knew everyone was her child.

\*

A disciple who was leaving was being pressured to stay.

Well, we can ever be grateful for all that we learn from the teacher, the direct teachings, but also from the indirect, the subtle that also help us grow, going forward our own way.

Living, Ram Dass says, is sandpaper for the soul.

Is it:

Do as I say, not as I do--

Or

Do as I do, not as I say—

Is it possible to just choose one of these?

This body, if the soul-heart won't be listened to, will eventually insist on more attention, integrity, peace.

Christina Ford in the Senate Judiciary's hearing on Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court: Is this helping?

So like a female, to help, to try to please, to be open.

\*

There were no written rules at the ashram. But plenty of unexpressed rules and expectations. You would discover this by way of the teacher's way of looking—or not looking—at you, or speaking to you. Or a disciple's way. It could escalate, as I've narrated before, into Maa yelling at you.

A friend said it sounded like there are unspoken rules but no boundaries. And he remembered from *Hamlet* the line about rules being “more honour'd in the breach than the observance”—the rules get broken, but not deliberately, and then become known when someone breaks them.

\*

Jack Kornfield: Tolerance does not mean acceptance of what is harmful.

\*

Spiritual materialism—when you expect your practice and faith to take care of all your worldly desires.

\*\*\* 9/28/18

Vishvamitra told Rama and his brothers when they were graduating from their studies with him that if there was anything he'd said or done in the practice that they didn't agree with for themselves, that they were free to follow their own heart. He said, Let your soul illuminate your life.

\*\*\* 10/2018

what is there to see  
in oak butterfly  
in buddhas

how i have seen & not seen

being both guardian & child

escaping coming to home  
flying walking

(daedalus & son)

i don't know the one mind  
that i have heard of

but i know this heart  
that goes on  
giving love

\*\*\* 10/7/18

I realized: Well, I have had this connection with Swamiji on the subtle plane for the most part, so that can be what it is, how it will be.

\*\*\* 10/20/18

Ramakrishna was talking to some devotees that a person's special gift, such as public speaking or music, is from God.

Hearing this a devotee said to another, You should listen to this!

And Ramakrishna told him that he should not believe so quickly what he was saying because you would be better off seeing if it is true in your own experience. Otherwise, you would be falling under the influence of dishonest people.

\*\*\* 10/20/18

Some of the disciples went to India this month to celebrate Navaratri with Maa and Swamiji. Jack Kornfield says devotees can get confused when they see the worship of a spiritual leader as being more important than the teachings. The leader needs to be accountable for their personal faults and be openly involved with the devotees in the concerns that arise within the organization.

Some devotees in our congregation will acknowledge there are some problems, but then they will say that it is the lila/play of divinity, so there's no need to address the concerns directly to Maa and Swamiji. Because of what they have been taught, they believe that the gurus are helping devotees lose their ego, purifying them and helping them be less selfish. Both Maa and Swamiji can be harsh in their communications and will say various things to influence devotees' behaviors and choices. It's very disturbing that devotees do not acknowledge there is verbal, physical, and emotional abuse occurring and excuse it as part of their spiritual practice. It is like the dysfunctional family, the need to gloss over with silence and certain language, and we have been taught that we don't gossip and we don't find fault in others.

It always bothered me that each time I visited the ashram, there were conflicts going on within the community. And yet Maa or Swamiji would say in public programs that there, at the ashram, it was a happy, good place to be. There is ever the drama of devotees not getting along with each other. And there is favoring of some devotees, a kind of inner circle, depending on how much volunteer work you give. If you have personal needs that you honor over volunteering, you are further out of that center, and you will know it by what is said or how you are treated by the others and the teachers. The giving the devotees are taught is generally about what the ashram is looking to get.

Because they are viewed as saints, even if a devotee of the inside circle tells a newcomer about a few of the troubles with the ashram environment, many newcomers will still get involved.

Our teachers might have acknowledged that things changed in ways they had not expected with the move, and their difficulties all along with their discussions with each other and their understanding of their plans, and also admitted their conflicts with communications about Adaitya's relationship; they could have even apologized. But they have not done this.

I thought I was done, at last, with the first draft of this book in June. But my own evolving insight called for more pages. The story I'd started with, the Maa and Swamiji as divine beings offering the clear water of true peace and love and satisfaction to the drought thirsty seeker, turned into a fuller story, the one that includes their own imperfections, their own embodied reflections of the wasteland of these Kali Yuga times. They drink the poison, like all of us, and show us both purity and impurity.

Like me, some devotees have left the community because of these concerns. The far majority of my practice has been away from the ashram and led by my inner journey. I am grateful for the wisdoms I've learned from these teachers and the practices that I've chosen of their offerings that have helped me go deeper. I move forward seeing more clearly. The way forward, Alice Walker has said, is with a broken heart. I say an open partly broken heart that heals. I know, as Ram Dass says, I am loving awareness. Maa and Swamiji are with me on the subtle, soul plane. Where could any of us go but here?

\*\*\* 10/21, 26/18

the no name plant  
that seemed to be done flowering a few weeks ago  
is once again in sweet lace of new petals

over on the mountain the steep road  
is still dirt

if i cry i will go into the cliché river  
so i will stand

from the old deep wide well they  
even pulled up a car

it's how you look at what is  
that you can see in  
to what is

i received a gift

one white butterfly  
among the sproutings & seedlings

could see the days  
as  
sky dropped  
or a doorway

all this time

on this day on any day

lost or home

there's a wizard voice  
speaking so loud  
and a man behind the curtain

in first light  
hawk high up circling

if i look  
i see it

peeling house paint torn screen

seeking

how  
to really give

how  
to really receive

even the body  
travels the desert  
seeming to not say  
what it knows

what i listened & listened to

& one day knew

bees were already there  
in the carob tree

i reach down & fall out of the chair—  
i never know when i'll fall

garden thyme once again like last year  
 nibbled overnight  
 to almost nothing

it took my body & mind & heart  
 days & days into years

to come to what i can say now

\*\*\* 10/28/18

what is said  
 might need uncovering

in the mystery of the real  
 no future no past and present  
 slipping out from being held

knees aging becoming  
 what they were not

tree & dog  
 rabbit & bird

sky not ever telling  
 all

all yes

earth miracle  
 love

in-residence  
 heart  
 of no-path path  
 alone  
 going & going  
 not ever alone

land in  
 long bouts of no-rain heat

giving

fig & pomegranate

this body  
breathing

\*\*\* 11/3/18

all in the big ocean  
beauty & beast

& walking on sand  
footprint soon gone

going into  
grove of sweet trees  
bringing secrets  
old shame

to what might be heaven  
here on earth

to see through  
to be free  
to stay

burning bright

\*\*\* 11/3/18

moments so startling acid

& yet some gauzy clouds  
cool sky

i might have been called crazy  
all this time

being

& by being  
breaking taboo

poems coming when i haven't  
known words—wasn't being spoken  
by the following crow—

brambles of my own flaws & beauties



the center the same

in the bittersweet world

hawk today circling above this canyon

here with ground & sky  
what sacrifice needs to be made?

water still appears

is the labyrinth inside or outside of me?

\*\*\* 11/4/18

through her days  
maya angelou stumbled  
& got back up

believing  
she was on her good way

what else can we do?

each fall  
raising her

to who she was

\*

Once  
she went to see Porgy & Bess when it came to San Francisco. When she saw Elizabeth Foster  
dance exuberantly away from the critical Christian elder woman who forbade dancing &  
drinking & laughing

Maya herself almost jumped out of her seat to dance

She was dancing at a night club, The Purple Onion, doing her Calypso routine

The days turned until  
one day she was dancing and singing in the touring Porgy & Bess

\*

& i read again  
that daedalus had been imprisoned in the labyrinth—

but i had forgotten  
that he had designed the labyrinth  
for the king  
to imprison others

\*\*\* 11/10/18

sky paled by smoke

again

this time  
north of l.a.  
& this time  
again  
out to the sea

&  
again  
another inland place—  
paradise!—  
in northern california

more than  
6,000 homes  
there gone

i wasn't going to write  
any more about  
fires

but here they are  
and have been ever  
since

i think of my friend  
who has been in  
all the ventura county fires  
& the flood in santa barbara  
& this fire, another ventura blaze

& her body  
already pained  
from too much desk work

& her struggle to make do  
with the crazy costs of living

& how these sufferings  
could burn her down

& know she will come around  
again  
to smiling  
& giving

\*\*\* 11/11/18

when the bottom falls out  
there can be another  
bottom & another  
top

going around  
in different circles

it could be  
as they say  
a kind of happiness

in any realm

all morning warm blue  
& now, again, sky dropped  
down in grey

visitor bird calling  
two days now on my early morning walk  
sitting atop leafless bush

the idea was in the eye of the beholder

& once again  
the props of the house

have come out

ram dass said  
 to his teacher neem karoli baba maharajji  
 o no i couldn't possibly  
 go to the states  
 & be a teacher  
 i'm so imperfect

& his teacher  
 got up from sitting  
 walked slowly around ram dass  
 & came back  
 to sitting said  
 i don't see  
 any imperfection

\*

a friend says  
 the day she left the ashram  
 the fires from up north  
 were so awful  
 smoke so much where she was  
 she could not see the horizon  
 she drove on out

& now  
 yes like a poem  
 come to life

she can breathe

\*\*\* 12/9/18

in this heat  
 the grass lives & dies  
 quickly

in early morning  
 long shadows  
 of pebbles

it's as if i am always beginning

everywhere  
 in the world

of pulling & pushing withering & negation

i would  
fall  
into the return

unexpected around the bend  
deep red columbine

crow searching ever searching

still i walk this way

make  
these marks

why  
why  
why

where do we begin  
or stop

to go without  
or go with

to become

better  
at being good

\*\*\* 12/15/18

In his introduction to the magazine *Lion's Roar* issue about peace and conflict in May 2018, Melvin McLeod says that Buddhist teachings regarding a peaceful mind and not blaming others does not mean we would ignore abusive circumstances. We would need to not support in any way abuse and take protective measures. Also, he reminds us that there are difficult situations we experience that are not to be seen as a result of any action we have set in motion.

\*\*\* 2/8/19

It's more than what I can say. God in all, God reflected in vast array of words, these pages and pages, these songs and talk. God being less and more. Mystical and mystery, this big love has me going on.

\*\*\* 2/8/19

see how the sun moves  
its half circle  
& seems to disappear

don't go  
devotees cried  
when maharajji was dying

where  
could i go?  
he said

the weeds now  
in every  
open space

let the mind  
go on finding  
the thread

love everyone everything

i can  
let this be the trail  
the horizon

seeing in

& body telling

& it could be leaves  
greening browning

returning

what is possible

\*\*\* 2/23/19

walking around half the lake in arizona  
out among saguaro & cacti

back & around  
& home again

more rain & cold

all around rain & snow  
the winter becoming spring  
& still pouring flakes & drops

but we're not out  
of drought underground

\*

maharajji would throw fruit  
at the devotees sitting with him  
who were going  
off into thinking

he answered

help the poor  
&  
all are poor  
until they are one  
with god

see the good  
see god

in the heart of all

love all  
as god

love  
is  
god

what is the best way to meditate  
devotees would ask

meditate like jesus  
see god  
in everyone everything

sing to god  
it opens

our hearts

maharajji  
cried  
hearing the sundar kanda  
the song of hanuman  
helping rama & sita

be reunited

said  
there is no difference  
between  
rama and jesus and hanuman  
and  
there is no difference  
in each  
of us

you can be blessed by the divine teacher  
without seeing them in a body

he cried  
when talking about  
jesus' love

said that  
love

is in us  
all

see  
the love  
everywhere

\*\*\* 3/16/19

circling around to  
one story that is like  
this story

again

as if the ways of being human  
are forgotten



only to return

as if i went away

bricks so heavy lined up  
&  
later moved

weeds can be the kind  
that trouble or the kind to eat

or use for remedy

ever the seeker

i might know by now  
& not forget

the one in human form  
giving from their divine being

might also  
be human  
in some contradiction some paradox

the long dock goes far out  
into the ocean

i get to some place  
that i can see from

& still there's the ocean

under my own feet  
ground i could know

if i could really

then sky warm  
then sky in insistent quiet snow

lakes returning

who & how for so long

seem to be questions  
of living

that butterfly?

they come from mexico  
& go up to the northwest—  
get there in generations

the teacher says go but come again

tires wear out get replaced

z's of trails  
the roads to & to

\*\*\* 3/18/19

reservoirs are up it's true

the broken oroville spillway is fixed

we had rain all spring

& i walked my walks & my heart broke  
& it brimmed with peace with unbreakable love

yes the rain the snowpack  
& still

the aquifers may not revive  
would need  
much much more

without  
all the big taking

i can not go back to before  
revelations  
seeing

subtle beings still with my unwavering heart

ram dass says: i am loving awareness  
being  
just in being

here now

underground  
the water going away  
above ground surface sinking

we can bear pain  
we didn't know  
would come our way

the lack of this the overflow of that

what matters, ram dass says, is not the fate of humanity

but the presence  
of eternity

i see this seeking

has let me see

it's not really sacrifices

it's being in

true love

ever flowing

\*\*\* 4/28/19

When Swamiji was in his 20s and living in India, he spent some time with the saint Shree Anandamayi Ma and then when he first met Shree Maa, he thought she looked just like Ananadamayi. In the early days with Maa, he realized he couldn't be in samadhi so much. After the first time he went into samadhi and then came out of it, he would easily return to that high meditative state, and he did so often. He said he knew the way. But now he said he had a practical reality, he and Maa had a mission, Ramakrishna had told Maa that she and Swamiji would be teaching people how to worship, and how to do it in their own homes. He asked Maa to come out of her samadhis, to not stay in her long reveries so much. She said she didn't know how, and so Swamiji told her how.

He hadn't really known Maa's personality because she had been so much in samadhi. But as she spent more and more time out of it, her strict, aggressive approach with devotees emerged. Her grandmother who had raised her had been like this, the traditional [I would add patriarchal-style] matriarch. And early on, Maa was taught to feed and clean for the large family. In her teens she also lived with her mother who was also strict. So this had been her training. And then when she

left home to follow her calling to be in union with God, she had no other alternative models in mothering. And Swamiji's training in the family business has meant that he does not feel comfortable speaking out publicly against Maa's aggressive behaviors even though he disagrees with them.

Adaitya says he asked Swamiji if anyone is free from falling back down into their human self who has attachments. And Swamiji said it can happen even to saints at any time. It's not about falling, it's about getting back up. You can always get confused. And it's ok because we're human, even the saints are human.

Adaitya and his wife Rani went with Swamiji to India in the Fall last year, but they left before Swamiji went to Calcutta to meet up with Maa to do public programs. Adaitya knew they were still not getting along, but Swamiji was going there to put on a public face of harmony and had hope to be able to negotiate an agreement, again, along his particular wishes. He doesn't think Swamiji should do this. Swamiji, he says, has an old style sense of business, so he puts on a public face and expresses his true feelings in private. Adaitya wants Swamiji to be straightforward with the public.

And Swamiji has said that if Maa yells at her devotees, he will go. But he so often doesn't. Adaitya tells him that is how she is, she is unlikely to change.

The core of all this, he says, is that Maa and Swamiji have been in a marriage of over thirty years, and they can't figure out why they can't get along.

Adaitya says neither one of them is coming from a negative intention. When he looks at them from a Myers-Briggs perspective, Swamiji fits the INFJ profile, one who is introverted, acts from intuition, feelings, ideas. His answers are not necessarily logical. He says different things to different devotees, various versions of a topic. He sees words as "deeply unreal," has a metaperspective that all words are various opinions.

(I'm surprised to hear this. Swamiji has imparted so many inspiring, wise words. And his translations are so vibrant.)

So for running the Devi Mandir community, he sees it as his job to "make it work" by having Maa be the business brand and that things have to operate in a certain way.

So there still is not an agreement about the direction of Maa and Swamiji together moving forward. Adaitya was going to be Swamiji's successor, but he told Swamiji before he left him when Swamiji was going to Calcutta, that he would rather have no organization and no income and be without the drama. He understands how Maa is, but he doesn't want to do false public relations. If you're in Maa's violation zone, she stays mad. But if you're not, then she forgives you, and goes on.

Adaitya says he's been with them to learn, he has not been there to be attached to their personalities. He has been interested in learning their ways of worship, and discovering his subtle world. And he looks to see how what they say is reflected in his experiences. He appreciates

being told the reasons for their actions, but when he's not told or there's an attempt to cover-up, he doesn't agree with that approach. When he asks Swamiji who his audience is, Swamiji says it's the world. He wants to cast a wide net and bring it back into himself. But Adaitya says Swamiji doesn't see the reality, that Swamiji doesn't really want that, that Swamiji puts out his particular perspective and thinks others will go along, and he wants to be in India in deep personal practice. Adaitya says people have ideal versions of Maa and Swamiji but he doesn't because of being with them day-to-day.

The owner of the new temple property did not know about the disagreement when he offered the property to Maa and Swamiji. And at first the public was being told the Devi Mandir temple was being relocated to the Yuba City property. But it evolved to one day being called the Lalita Temple where, we were told, they were privileged to have Maa come and offer us pujas. It was being presented as Maa being a guest and left us, on the outside public, to wonder what happened to our Devi Mandir settling there. Adaitya says that, at least at this point in the evolution, it is Maa's and our community's new temple. The owner of the property had intended this from the start, but then Swamiji has been trying to still convince Maa to not have a specific temple. But this time Swamiji is not the administrator; it is being managed by a board—all members being of our community.

\*\*\* 5/11-12/19

buddha, a story goes

was in despair  
he'd gone around learning  
from sages

practicing what they'd said  
of austerities

got so thin  
so so thin

he still wanted the peace  
of peace

but he knew  
he remembered  
once when he knew

he was a boy  
sitting under a tree  
his father out in the field clearing weeds

he sat there  
& in the next moment

was full was overbrimming  
was peace

& now again  
in this re  
membering  
he was in  
peace again

a part of him  
pulled away in fear

what had he been doing

this  
is not what the sadhus had said  
of how-to

& how could it be

there was no sense  
he had denied  
a love of something someone  
a gratification  
from seeking or needing

he hadn't done any of these austerities  
this time

he realized  
it must be  
like earth  
like a plum

natural  
his being  
this being  
good being peace

not missing  
in action or sitting  
any & all

maybe this is  
the way

a woman came  
& offered him  
some pudding

he found  
it tasted good  
to him

his disciples left  
not knowing

what he was saying

he went  
into the woods  
sat with a tree

prayed

was tormented  
by demon mara

touched earth  
& she said  
all's good

another woman came  
offered him  
pudding  
&  
it was good

he could see  
the love  
everywhere

not to be this that  
not to be made

\*

krishna das said  
the americans asked maharajji how do we find god?  
maharajji answered serve everyone  
he didn't say do practices to better yourself

how do we raise kundalini they asked  
 maharajji said feed everyone

k.d. was going to kill himself in the six inch river  
 maharajji you can't die  
 only jesus died  
 he gave everything for humanity and the universe  
 that's the real death

\*

maharajji: asking the mind to kill the ego is like asking the thief to be the priest  
 there will be a lot of practice & investigation but no wisdom

\*

we are poem music dance art

we are one person one poem one song  
 one dance one art

\*

how did jesus meditate ram dass asked

maharajji cried a bit & said  
 jesus loved all was one with god

he died on the cross to give  
 his spirit of love to all

his body died but he lives  
 in all our hearts

\*

r.d., who had a major stroke over 20 years ago,  
 does have body pains  
 but he is in love  
 with everything

\*

color among  
 the burned hillsides



green coming again

red stone  
black trunk home to new lichen

what ends

there's still  
the mountain

and the trail

\*\*\* 5/18/19

it could not be  
that i could fall

there would be no hole

what seems to be surrounds

flowers are going to seed

new uncertainty  
blooms in each moment

but ever & ever  
is the age of love

pigeons sing their sun rising song

what now  
in these rooms  
to start

what winds down

\*

they were in the bus  
looking for maharajji  
heading to delhi  
debating voting & re-voting  
to take or not take a short detour  
to a pilgrimage site  
for its annual celebration

decided finally  
to go the detour  
but  
when they got there  
the pilgrims were gone

but  
there was maharajji walking with a man

they all got out of the bus  
& bowed to maharajji

he said, go with this man  
to his house

when they got there  
the wife said  
maharajji said you'd come  
we've been cooking all this morning for you

sit down eat

there were twenty devotees  
they ate  
& had second & third helpings

\*

another day  
of late rain

this time  
light

blue sky in the grey's small windows

at the edge of can't  
is the sweet voice  
of i will serve you  
love you

doubt stumbling  
the price of the land of materialism

but  
always the love giving

what death is there  
what grief  
in this  
dancing

this  
ever bringing me in

\*\*\* 5/19/19