

Bro. Devananda talk--Daya Mataji's 100th Birth Anniversary

ONLY LOVE

Visit to Phoenix by Bro. Devananda from Hidden Valley

Celebration of Daya Mataji's 100th Anniversary of her Birth -- talk given on February 02, 2014

Brother Devananda told stories of his experiences as a young monk when he entered the Ashram shortly after attending his first convocation in 1970. Daya Mata gave the opening talk at that time, and he experienced the overwhelming feeling from Ma that the main necessity to find God was love. It was the same kind of feeling he had for Master. He decided at that time to become a monk. Now, he could have been labeled as "the least likely to succeed" at that time, but in those days manpower was needed, and as long as you were strong and had arms and legs, you were most likely accepted. Brains were optional (note: you need to understand that Bro. Devananda jokes a lot! :-))

He heard about the All-Day Christmas Meditation and the first thought was - do I have to attend that? It was not optional for monastics, and he was terrified by the thought of such a long meditation. He fervently prayed - God, you must help me. Ma lead the meditation, and about an hour into it he heard that Ma was talking - having a conversation with someone ... with God, with Divine Mother, in the most intimate, personal way. After that, she saw Jesus and spoke to him, and the vibrations in the whole room lifted. After that, everything changed. He knew here was an example of someone who had learned to build a relationship with the Divine.

While she was still a young devotee, Ma was in charge of cleaning the bathroom on the 3rd floor. And when she became president, she insisted on continuing with that duty for a very long time. She saw no reason for not continuing with that task until it became physically too difficult for her body.

Ma met regularly with the monastics, she was like their mother exhorting them - you must get along with each other, you must be serviceful, you must meditate more.

Brother soon started leading the chanting, and in group meditation everyone was there, Ma, the Board of Directors, the devotees. Ma always set the tempo - when she started clapping the speed of the chanters picked up, and at times it was almost impossibly rapid-fire, the cymbals had a hard time going so fast until they suddenly reached the right tempo, Brother prayed that it would slow down but it went on and on - until suddenly Ma stopped. The whole room was lifted into a state of prathyahara. From then on, the rest of the time just flew by.

Ma was also a disciplinarian. There was one monk who felt he could be more familiar with Ma, as they worked together. Ma stopped, and just looked at him. For a long time. Saying nothing. The man just shrunk, and it never happened again.

Before leaving for her long trip to India, Ma addressed them all at length, exhorting them over and over to cooperate, get along, be serviceful, meditate longer, until they were all fired up. She asked that they

all stand, raise their right hand, and repeat after her - I promise - before God and Guru - that I will meditate for 6 hours once a week.

That was a surprise, and to Brother and most of the monks this seemed an impossible task. He talked to another monk asking him to meditate with him, then more monks joined, and eventually a whole group would meet voluntarily for a 6 hour meditation. Brother was always the chant leader. It was a challenge at first, but after a while time seemed to flow faster. This long meditation became the spiritual highlight of the week - that's why they really learned what it means to meditate. If you never push yourself beyond your limits, you will never get to real meditation.

Daya Mata was indeed a mother of compassion. Bro. Devananda worked in Monk's Personnel, closely with Ma, processing applications, doing correspondence, etc. Bro. Anandamoy was his supervisor. One young man in the ashram was a real trouble maker, he always knew how to shift his tasks onto someone else, and eventually he left. Relief! But one day, he and Bro. A. received a call from Ma; the young man wanted to come back, and Ma asked them, "what do you think?" We both knew that he was nothing but trouble, and did not really want him back, but Ma said, "he's a good boy, would you take him back - for me? Would you want justice, or compassion?" We were sure Ma knew that he wouldn't last, and indeed, he left for a second time a while thereafter.

In the late 1940s Master sat with a group of guests upstairs, giving satsang. They heard someone singing down the hallway and it turned out to be Ma. Master smiled and said - I am with guests now, telling her that he was busy, and she left, singing again. It was like a family life. A saint also has a human side.

The monks have a mountain retreat where they may go from time to time; there is also another building where Ma, Mrinalini Ma and Ananda Ma sometimes went. One winter day they had all gone there, and the ladies needed some help with firewood, snow shoveling, so the monks on retreat were called to visit Ma and provide some assistance. They thought - let's make a cheese cake and bring it to them, and they baked a very large one, huge - you needed almost two arms to balance it, and took it with them as they did their errands, shoveling etc. They found Daya M and Ananda Ma in the kitchen, with aprons on, who proceeded to cut up the cake in very large pieces for the monks (we liked that!) and she served us. We all sat around, the fireplace was blazing, and Ma shared stories of Master. We felt a little bit of sadness that we did not meet our Guru in this life, and Ma said, "well boys, in your next life, you will not miss Master, you will be with him."

Brother then read from Ma's book *Only Love*, p. 72, from the article *Spiritualizing Life*:

The problems that arise every day give us an opportunity to practice even-mindedness. We should welcome them instead of resisting, becoming upset and irritable, and thinking we are not making progress. Remember this: Often the devotee makes the greatest progress on the spiritual path when he is facing tremendous obstacles, when he is forced to exercise to the limit his spiritual muscles of inner strength, courage and positive thinking in order to resist the onslaught of negation, evil or unkindness. It is not always when things are going smoothly that we are growing.

At the end of every business conversation, Ma always brought it back to God. Once a monk asked, “Ma, when I leave the body, what will it be like when I meet Master?” Ma sat quietly for a very long time. Then she responded, “You will be like a mighty warrior, with wounds, scars, a broken sword. Guru will see you and the efforts you have made. He will open his arms and you will walk right into them. That’s what it will be like.”

Jai Guru! Jai Ma!