

SRI SARVESHWARI TIMES

JUNE 2000

Trust is the greatest wealth one has
A person who loses trust, loses everything

AUGHAR VANI, Avadhuta's Wisdom



Aghoreshwar
Baba Bhagwan Ramji

Sangha Shakti

Need of a Community

On the eve of the new year, the millennium eve celebration at the Ashram, Baba Hariji addressed the gathering with following words:

I could sit like this all night long with you. Every face I look at brings up such wonderful feelings that I could just keep on sitting and looking at you. As John mentioned, I wanted to hear something about community because this is the call of this time and for this nation. Today, family structure is disintegrating: there is no sense of a community where children could be brought up in a safe and sound environment, of a community which is sound enough to instill good values in children.

I remember growing up in a little village in India, where a child was everyone's child. Children could walk in the village free of fear and anyone who was the age of the child's father, mother, or older brother or sister felt it was their Dharma to give this child what they knew. It was and still is a very safe place. Children are everyone's responsibility.

We need a very safe place to raise our children. Although this country is safest compared to the countries experiencing wars and other violence all over the world, somewhere along the line we have lost both our inner security and that delicate security of feeling that the children are safe in their own neighborhood.

So much hype has been created around this millennium eve. I have heard so many fearful words. People are really afraid. There are many factors. I think the fear basically comes from the degree that we isolate ourselves. The more we isolate ourselves, the more fearful we become. The only way out of the fear is through community. This is the most important reason for us be a part of the community. To feel a part of the community causes one to feel connected and to feel whole. Out of this comes trust, love, caring, giving, and receiving.

These are the virtues that are synonymous to the Divine. As BABA teaches: "I'm not looking for God, I'm looking for the spirit of God." And this is the spirit of God, feeling oneness. It fills my heart.

I was just reflecting, in 1990, when I arrived in Sonoma, I did not know a single soul, did not know where my next meal was going to come from, and did not know where I was going to sleep. I had just left my previous place penniless, but I had one thing: I had trust in my teacher's words. He said go to a new place penniless, and I left without question.

I was looking at today with awe and filled with wonder because so many people have been busy trying to create this event this evening. So much energy has been flowing. Truly it is a blessing. There are so many beautiful souls here. I am nobody special. I'm just like everybody else here. I do not feel that I am any more special than you are. I try to live by the words that I have given to myself, and the words that I have given to my Guru. That is the source or the reservoir for me. It would not be right to say you are here because of me. You are here because of you.

Together we create this space, this energy, this beauty that we are all touched by at this moment. It's fun to jump in and help. I get so excited when I see somebody just doing something. I want to go there and start doing that with them.

The community is the only way to pull us out of fear, and we have all kinds of fears. The Buddha said, "Buddham Sharanam Gachhami." I come under the protection of Buddha. What is Buddha? Acknowledge something higher in your life that you can bow to. That word Buddha can be replaced with God, Divine Mother, the Absolute, the One. Words really don't matter. What matters is something higher to whom I can bow. What happens when we bow? Any load that we are carrying on our shoulders slips off. In acknowledging something higher, name, gender, form, and language don't matter, as long as our heart knows that inner surrender.

"Buddham Sharanam Gachhami, Dhammum Sharanam Gachhami." I come under the protection of Dharma. My Dharma is to listen to my inner self. What are the guiding principles in my life that I do not compromise? Having some set of principles in life and abiding by them is living your Dharma. This is all a person really needs, having a Buddha and having a Dharma. But what happens? There comes a time when we may get derailed from the smooth journey of Dharma.

We are humans. Sometimes we find ourselves in such situations or circumstances that we forget the Buddha and the Dharma. We always have good excuses. Then comes the third teaching, "Sangham Sharanam Gachhami," which means that I come under the protection of Sangha. Sangha is the community of those who are practicing that Dharma, who hold that Dharma very high, who live that Dharma. By availing myself of that community, I get back on track. It's very easy to forget, to get derailed, but when we remember the community, we get inspired again. This is one of the most important functions of the community, to remind one another that there is something more to life than our own way of thinking or living. What I think is important today may not be important tomorrow.

I believe very strongly that, although I am a renunciate, I should not be living somewhere in seclusion, because Baba says no, the call of this time is to be in the midst of the people. My idea of becoming a monk was that I wouldn't have to deal with the mundane and just live a free life. But now I find myself with twenty times more responsibilities than I had before. But

this is beautiful too.

I remember the day when I stopped here, looking for a place. I began teaching yoga classes with John, Howie, Bo, and three or four other people who are in this room, and we were talking about meeting somewhere in the evening where we could do a little meditation and chanting. I was living at the Skyfarm during those days. One day I set out to look for a place where we could meet consistently. This was the first place I came to because that house looked very desolate and the grasses were growing tall. I stopped my car right there outside of the yurt.

Steve, our present landlord, was here and said, "Oh, sure you can rent it. You can rent either the tower or the house." I said, "I like the house, but I don't think I can afford the rent. What is the rent? I don't have any money." And he looked at me very strangely because I am trying to rent a place and don't have any money. He said, "Oh, just pay whatever you can pay." All I had on me was three hundred dollars that I had gathered from the donations in the yoga classes. I said, "That's all I have, Steve." "Fine." So that's how it all began.

The first night was just Howie and me. All we had in the house was a can of tomato soup and spaghetti without a can opener. We used a nail and hammer to open the can and made dinner. And now, look at the new kitchen that has just been completed. It is filled with all kinds of pots, pans, and utensils.

I was reflecting on those things today. All this is possible because of people like you. Each person in this yurt has contributed in their own way to creating this place. It gives me so much joy to see that today this little community of friends and family is able to provide that shade for the weary in our community. That shade is for any person going through rough times who wants to come and find a little solace. Sometimes that's all we need, a little breathing space.

The whole idea of having this event was that we'll be here together in the yurt with our friends, and this was a good excuse to get the building done. Look at the barn. Remember! what the barn used to look like? We were all afraid to go in there because it was so full of things like broken tires, broken cars, and scattered engine parts. We took at least twenty truckloads of stuff to the dump. But today it feels safe and inviting.

At the beginning of this new year, make a promise to yourself. It's a very worthwhile cause to find a little time in your busy life to devote some effort, some importance, to come closer to each other. And this will be a theme at the Ashram for the year ahead. My image is that there are many circles: there is an inner circle, then there is a little bigger circle, and then there is an even bigger circle outside of that one. Some people are right on the edge looking over. Come closer. If you consider yourself to be on the outer circle and you just come here to do a little yoga ... Come closer. There is no need to tiptoe from the periphery.

There is plenty of opportunity to come closer and the closer you come, the more sweetness we create together. So it's an open invitation from my heart to each one of you to come closer. May this be our aspiration, with our hearts open, to embrace each other with love, kindness, consideration, and joy. I hope you have listened to and grasped what I was sharing with you about the need for community in this time and age. Community, Sangha is not formed just by coming to the party. It is formed by effort and dedication on each individual's part. I wish each and everyone present here a wonderful year ahead. May the seeds of love and trust keep growing in your heart. May you find yourselves surrounded by a community

of friends and loved ones in the times ahead.

Meet the faces at the Ashram:

Starting with this issue, we will be introducing you to those individuals who make this place a special place. Although many lend their energies and expertise at a given time, but the Ashram would not be the same without the consistency of efforts and mindfulness of a few. Through this column we salute those special individuals:

Melissa Goode

Melissa Goode is the youngest child of Fred and Marilyn Goode of Sonoma. Prior to coming to the Ashram, she was living in New York City. During one of her visits to her parents in Sonoma, her mother introduced her to the Ashram. The Ashram was just starting here and ever since she has been a constant presence at the Ashram.



There are so many things that Melissa Goode has done and continues to do at the Ashram that no one person can keep track of. Ever since she first came to the Ashram, five years ago, she has maintained her sadhana of service. She serves the Guru and she serves the community. And she does this without soliciting a thank you.

If you are a stranger and have never met her, she is the one who will silently appear with a hot cup of chai on a cold day, and a cool drink on a hot one. If you hear the vacuum running it is most likely her operating it. If you see the goat, cats, or chickens following someone most likely that would be Melissa, as she is the one who consistently sees that they are cared for.

During the winter when Baba goes to India, Melissa is one of the residents who keep the fires burning, figuratively and literally. It is during the winter time that she prepares the Ayurvedic oils, and that is a great time to sit with her and get to know her, as she sits in one place for hours and days. I mention that time because she seems to always to be in motion during the other months, watering, washing, weeding, preparing and cleaning the puja trays, or executing the pujari duties. She seems to have a special gift at arranging flowers that are always smiling at you from the altar.

One of the first outreach programs the Ashram offered was the children's summer camp. Melissa successfully spearheaded that effort. And she continues to develop special relationships with the young people who visit the Ashram.

My daughter Marna once told me how impressed she was that Melissa would devote herself to living at and serving the Ashram. I silently felt appreciation to Melissa for offering such a positive role model as one choosing to live the life of a sadhak in our community. I feel blessed to have a sister like her in our Ashram.

-- JM

Ashram news and events:

Annual retreat in the redwoods: Jun 23-25th

The Ashram is holding its annual retreat in the redwoods in the Kings Range coastal mountains near the Pacific Ocean in Humboldt County. The retreat center has cabins with hot showers. Please contact the Ashram if you want to join the retreat.

Full Moon: Full Moon Havan at the Ashram is on Friday the 16th of June.

Guru Purnima: July 16th.



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