

The Vedanta Kesari

THE LION OF VEDANTA

A Cultural and Spiritual Monthly of the Ramakrishna Order since 1914

Ramakrishna Math,
Chandipur



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CONTENTS

NOVEMBER 2016

Gita Verse for Reflection	404
Editorial	
■ How to Play?	405
Our Heritage ~ Our Heroes	411
Articles	
■ Swami Vijnanananda's Mystical Experiences <i>Swami Jagadiswarananda</i>	413
■ Kanakadasa: The Saint Singer of Dvaita Vedanta <i>P. Nagaraja Rao</i>	415
■ Faith and Self-Surrender <i>Umesh Gulati</i>	417
■ Recollecting a Divine Life <i>Swami Satyapriyananda</i>	421
■ Sister Nivedita and Indian Renaissance <i>Swami Lokeshwarananda</i>	429
■ I Will Protect Them <i>Swami Sudarshananda</i>	434
Reminiscences	
■ Reminiscences of Sargachhi <i>Swami Suhitananda</i>	407
New Find	
■ Unpublished Letters of Swami Saradananda	427
The Order on the March	436
Book Reviews	440

Cover Story: Page 6

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'Doing is very good, but that comes from thinking. . . .
Fill the brain, therefore, with high thoughts, highest ideals,
place them day and night before you, and out of that will
come great work.'

—Swami Vivekananda

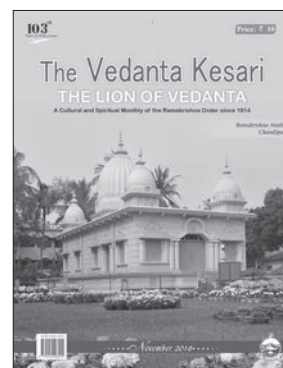


COVER STORY

Ramakrishna Math, Chandipur

In 1914 Ramakrishna Mission conducted a flood relief in Medinipur District. After the relief work, Swami Nirvanananda and other monks set up a medical centre, a free Lower Primary School and a Book Bank. This inspired a few local youth and distinguished persons to establish a Sevashrama in 1914. After a year the devotees requested Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math to take over the Ashrama.

Swami Shivananda and Swami Premananda, direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, sent Swami Tapananda, a direct disciple of Holy Mother, to manage the affairs of the Ashrama. In 1930 the Ashrama formally became a branch centre of Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose visited this Math in 1938. The present Sri Ramakrishna temple was consecrated by Most Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, the then Vice-President of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math on 30 August 2004.



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To be continued . . .



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EACH SOUL IS POTENTIALLY DIVINE. THE GOAL IS TO MANIFEST THE DIVINITY WITHIN.

7

Gita Verse for Reflection

Tr. by Swami Tapasyananda

शरीरं यदवाप्नोति यच्चाप्युत्क्रामतीश्वरः ।
गृहीत्वैतानि संयाति वायुर्गन्धानिवाशयात् ॥

—Bhagavad Gita, 15. 8

When he gets a new body or abandons an old one, the Jiva, the lord of the body, moves, carrying them (the mind and the senses) with him, as the wind carries smells from their seats (in flowers and the like).



Here is a clear statement of the doctrine of transmigration of the Jiva,—of how the Divine Spark in man on account of identification with parts of the evolutes of Prakruti gets embodiments. Besides the physical side of personality, the psychic part of it, consisting of the 'Manas or mind and the five Indriyas or senses', is also formed of Prakruti. This psycho-physical combination is a complex with which the Divine Spark identifies Himself, and thus he gets involved in the transmigratory cycle.

—Srimad Bhagavad Gita

How to Play?

Some physicists, astrophysicists, and philosophers are now seriously involved in theoretical and experimental investigation of the idea that our world is like a computer simulation! Physicists say that the rules governing the behavior of subatomic particles like quarks have features that resemble computer codes. Could it be that the universe is a coding done by a superior intelligence? Again, the exponentially growing power of Artificial Intelligence and mind-boggling realism of Virtual Reality is changing scientific understanding of what is real. And there is the fact that the strengths of fundamental forces and other constants of nature have values that appear fine-tuned, as in a laboratory, to make life possible. All these are making the scientific community to wonder if we are not just players in a game designed by some higher power. In a recent multi-disciplinary debate on the question, 'Is the Universe a Simulation' at American Museum of Natural History, the astrophysicist and cosmologist Neil deGrasse Tyson, remarked that it was possible 'to imagine that everything in our lives is just the creation of some other entity for their entertainment.'¹

We can imagine Sri Ramakrishna listening to this debate with an encouraging smile. He would surely have been interested to follow the arguments of these thinkers and scientists who seem to be slowly understanding what he repeatedly told his listeners at Dakshineswar, 'God has created the world in play, as it were. This is called Mahamaya, the Great Illusion.' 'This world is the lila of God. It is like a game.' 'The Divine

Mother is always playful and sportive. This universe is Her play.' 'God alone has become all this—maya, the universe, living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles.'²

It is not that we are participating in a game; our very existence is due to the game! End of the game is end of our existence. A defining feature of this game is that once into it we are deluded into taking it all too seriously. This is illustrated by one of Sri Ramakrishna's parables: 'Vishnu incarnated Himself as a sow in order to kill the demon Hiranyaksha. After killing the demon, the sow remained quite happy with her young ones. Forgetting her real nature, she was suckling them very contentedly. The gods in heaven could not persuade Vishnu to relinquish His sow's body and return to the celestial regions. He was absorbed in the happiness of His beast form. After consulting among themselves, the gods sent Shiva to the sow. Shiva asked the sow, "Why have you forgotten yourself?" Vishnu replied through the sow's body, "Why, I am quite happy here." Thereupon with a stroke of his trident Shiva destroyed the sow's body, and Vishnu went back to heaven.'³

This Game is like the hide-and-seek game where one must touch the 'granny' in order to be free. Touching Her ends the Game for us by erasing our illusory individuality. Or if She wills we can enjoy the Game while sitting in Her lap! Creating us blindfolded, the Divine Mother has let us run around, like a bunch of school kids, in the garden of the world. Though the purpose of the Game is to touch the 'granny,' most of us are drawn to explore the garden and play with each other. Even

those who wish to seek Her do not know how and where to seek.

How to touch the 'granny?' Where should we seek Her? Scriptures and saints offer many ways or plans to seek the Divine Mother who is within us, as our own true Self.

One of them is to 'give up the serious idea of reality as the characteristic of the changing incidents of the three minutes of life and know it to be but a stage on which we are playing, helping Him to play...' ⁴ It is to learn to play consciously. This learning is called religion. With this game plan, one learns to accept everything that comes in life—pleasant and unpleasant, good and evil—with a sense of joyful equanimity. A powerful example of one established in playing in this manner is seen in an anecdote narrated by Swami Vivekananda, 'I saw many great men in Hrishikesh. One case that I remember was that of a man who seemed to be mad. He was coming nude down the street, with boys pursuing and throwing stones at him. The whole man was bubbling over with laughter while blood was streaming down his face and neck. I took him and bathed the wound, putting ashes on it to stop the bleeding. And all the time with peals of laughter he told me of the fun the boys and he had been having, throwing the stones. "So the Father plays", he said.' ⁵

Another game plan is to assume the 'servant I' and serve God through the universe which is but His own form. Swamiji says, 'I shall call you religious from the day you begin to see God in men and women.... Whatever comes to you is but the Lord, the Eternal, the Blessed One, appearing to us in various forms,

as our father, and mother, and friend, and child – they are our own soul playing with us.' ⁶ This service gathers force and becomes a powerful tool of awakening, a means of touching the 'granny', when we serve the Lord 'in the blind, in the halt, in the poor, in the weak, in the diabolical.' ⁷ This worshipful service called 'Shiva Jnane Jiva Seva' helps us to grow out of selfishness, and when we reach perfect selflessness we become awakened players. As Swamiji says, 'unselfishness is God.'

An easier game plan is to develop the 'child I' and sing the Divine Mother's name and glories. It is to demand Her vision as children demand toys from their parents with loud cries. We should pray, 'Teach me, Mother, how to realize Thee. Who else can help me?', 'Merge my will in Thy will and make me Thy instrument.' 'Be gracious, Mother, and out of Thy infinite mercy grant me love for Thy Lotus Feet.' Rooted in the faith that 'I have a Mother and I am Her son,' when we earnestly sing,

...Open the gates of light, O Mother, to me Thy tired son.

I long, oh, long to return home! Mother, my play is done.

You sent me out in the dark to play, and wore a frightful mask;

Then hope departed, terror came, and play became a task.

Let never more delusive dreams veil off Thy face from me.

My play is done, O Mother, break my chains and make me free! ⁸

the Divine Mother will guide our steps out of this Game of smiles and tears and takes us into Her lap.

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1. 'Is the Universe a Simulation?', 2016 Isaac Asimov Memorial Debate.
2. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, 116,436,136,566
3. Ibid, 226
4. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, 3.95
5. Ibid, 9.417
6. Ibid, 2,326
7. Ibid, 1.442
8. Ibid, 6.176-77

Reminiscences of Sargachhi

SWAMI SUHITANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue. . .)

Swami Premeshananda (1884–1967) was a disciple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. For over two decades, he lived at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Sargachhi, first as its monastic-in-charge and later as a retired sanyasi. He inspired countless people to lead a life of spirituality and service. Influenced by him many young men and women entered into monastic life. His conversations and teachings were noted by his attendant novice who is now Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. These spiritual dialogues were serialized in Udbodhan (the Bengali monthly of the Ramakrishna Order) and later published as a book titled Sargachchir Smriti. Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee has translated these reminiscences into English. English words and expressions which appear in the original have been retained and shown within single inverted commas.

11

9.9.59

Maharaj: Listen. When I will be dying, let me hear the name of Thakur uttered slowly. And hold the photographs of Thakur, Mother and Swamiji before me. I will close my eyes uttering 'Mother, Mother.' Mother is my Guru, my Ishta; to me she is greater than even Thakur.

In the monastic life if the mind does not turn towards God, then there is no way to escape from the temptations of the world. The five sense-objects—form, taste, sound, scent and touch always draw us outwards. Likewise, inside us there are many things like the mind and intellect, their activities, their seed cause, and the source of the world. Only if the mind is turned this way, can one be saved from outside temptations.

There is an aperture inside one's bosom—one can go up through that aperture. Constant practice enlarges that aperture; you will be able to go through that.

Attendant: Maharaj, during meditation should one hold the hands in front of the chest or the upper side of the abdomen?

Maharaj: People keep like that at the time of japa. But in meditation can there be any attention on the hands? It is enough if one sits as our Thakur does. The real thing is to gather the mind and place it on the object of meditation. Ability to discriminate means to judge what is acceptable and what is not. Discriminate through knowledge and see what things are to be accepted in order to attain devotion.

Attendant: But we feel that there is no way out.

Maharaj: That is Vaishnavite affectation. 'I am a sinner'—we don't have such thoughts. Our stand is, 'Each soul is potentially divine.'

Attendant: But could we come away from our home?

Maharaj: In Dhaka Swami Chandikanda used to speak about Thakur. A person came and tearfully said, 'Maharaj, there is no hope for us.'

—‘Why?’

—‘Maharaj, we have not been able to leave our home as yet.’

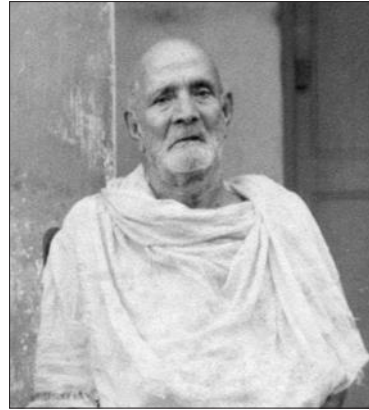
As if all righteousness lay in leaving one’s home! As he has not been able to abandon his parents, how can religion be possible for him!? Always keep this in mind—religion is not in dress, nor in leaving one’s home, nor in visions—it is ‘Being and becoming’—continuously being and through that becoming.

I have seen many people who remain without involvement in any work; but when you give them a little authority, some worldly assignment, then at once they are beside themselves. See, all through my life I have seen that there can be no spiritual progress unless the four Yogas are practised simultaneously. Mr.... remains engrossed in work; but one should also meditate well. Again I am afraid he will probably say ‘I will live in Hrishikesh begging alms.’ A little work is absolutely necessary. There is no way of purifying the mind without work. Swamiji’s mantra is—*Atmano mokshartham jagat hitaya cha*, (For one’s own salvation and for the welfare of the world). The good of the world is for the sake of one’s own liberation—if this is not understood, you will be entangled in the troubles of the world.

10.9.59

The attendant was reading Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s classical work *Krishna-charitra*. In that context Maharaj asked him to read Bankim’s article titled ‘Babu’. And it was read.

Maharaj: See, what a ‘critic’ and what ‘power of observation.’ We do not have many such geniuses among us. He has deliberated on all kinds of topics. After reading his books, it becomes easy to understand many things of Swamiji.



Swami Premeshananda

A gentleman had brought from abroad a special stick for Maharaj’s use. The stick was very nice-looking. He said, ‘Maharaj, I have brought this stick for you. Kindly accept it.’

Taking the stick in his hands, Maharaj asked with an amused look in his eyes, ‘You have brought this stick just for me. Isn’t it so?’

Gentleman: ‘For sure, Maharaj.’

Maharaj: Suppose I break this stick before you?

Gentleman (taken aback): ‘Oh! Will you break such a nice stick?’

Maharaj: So you see. You have not given the stick to me. Had you truly given it to me, you would not mind if I deal with my own thing as I like it. Can I break my own thing or not?

11.9.59

Attendant: After going to the Himalayas Swamiji said—When you come here, the mind becomes introverted. This shows Swamiji’s dispassion towards the world.

Maharaj: What does dispassion mean? He was not dispassionate in the ‘sense’ we use the word. You can say he was not ‘attached.’ Was he attached to anything in this world that he had to cultivate dispassion?

12.9.59

Question: Nowadays there are so many rules for joining the Order; but the monks of earlier days did not observe rules like that.

Maharaj: You see, the swamis of those days could transform many people into monks. They were persons with authority.

There are some who think that those who do not meditate won't achieve it. Someone perhaps works the whole day, and another perhaps is engaged in meditation and reading scriptures. But it has been seen that the person who ran after work, at the time of death passed away uttering 'Jai Ramakrishna.' This means, he who remained engaged in work knew that he didn't have the capacity to meditate; but he had firm conviction that he was doing Sri Ramakrishna's work. You surely have read in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* that Sri Ramakrishna cares for what is in the mind.

Attendant: So much Rajoguna has entered into the work of Ramakrishna Mission. Will this do any harm?

Maharaj: This will actually benefit the worldly people. As many 'building' is done, as many Rajasik works are done, that much more welfare for the country. But a monk's life is different. After working for sometime, a monk should stand aside and consider 'how much have I entangled myself?' What is the meaning of meditation? It is to see—What are the things to which the mind dances? Why doesn't the mind seek Sri Ramakrishna? What does it desire? Instead of entering into the heart, why does it desire external form, taste, sound, scent and touch? Whenever you see that the mind is restless, understand that it has become excited either by lust, or anger, or greed, or jealousy. Meditation is the practice to keep the mind calm. That is, in the course of the day's work, I will at least for some time think of something peaceful—something that will remind me of my purpose.

The real thing is to become natural. To remain one's own self in walking, moving, eating. Some eat pungent food, some walk with heavy steps; know for sure that there is some reason behind such behavior.

Those who are endowed with Rajoguna, wish to express themselves to gain respect and fame. See, I only make a 'statement of fact' and show you your defects. But I do not hate anybody—I call everyone near, make them sit, and chat about joys and sorrows of life.

Whoever showers any praise on you, take it warily. For, there is nothing in this world for you to accept—everything has to be rejected. If someone calls you a great man, beware.

If you have passion for work, there is no relief even if you go to the Himalayas; you will create trouble for yourself by building houses etc., even there. Such is the intoxication of work.

22.9.59

Attendant: Maharaj, what difference do you see between your times and the present day?

Maharaj: You see, you have many advantages. The country has become free, and all around there is a desire for education and progress. The circumstances are congenial. What trouble I had to undergo to become educated!

Attendant: Maharaj, is it proper for us to discuss astrology?

Maharaj: See, we cannot say what will happen to us after one day. And we boast about this intellect! A monk is prohibited from studying things like astrology. That is because those things contain only a particle of truth. There is a story—a Yogi said that the King would die on such and such day. The King's minister put a counter-question and learnt that the Yogi's death would occur twenty years

later. But the minister beheaded the Yogi and proved his calculation wrong!

Attendant: How does the mind become one's own guru?

Maharaj: If you have great attraction for your Ishta or Chosen Deity, then your mind will not like to go towards anything else other than love for the Ishta. That is, the mind will accept only good things. It is then that the mind becomes one's guru. You must have faith—I have taken shelter in Sri Ramakrishna, what worry is there for me? But it won't do to shirk one's duty saying everything happens by God's will, God has assumed all forms. I have no right to speak so, as long as I remain in the body.

Attendant: What is the state of being beyond the body?

Maharaj: It is just like getting into and out of a car. So long as you are in the car you feel the happiness and misery of the body. As soon as you get down, you revel in your Self—you are self-effulgent. Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother would often enter into that state and experience bliss—supreme bliss. All day long Mother would cut vegetables, ground spices and now and then say, 'What is this I am doing!' But they could go there as well as come back here. Their bodies were pure to the core and free from lust and anger. If we go there once, will we come back to this hell again leaving that market of joy?

Attendant: It is said in the Gita, 'I am the same towards all beings. None is hateful, and none dear to me.' (9.29) and again there is, '(They) are hurled down by me into demoniac wombs.' (16.19) How shall we reconcile these mutually contradictory ideas?

Maharaj: These are relative truths. At one level it seems—I hurl'; again at the next level we see—nobody hurls anyone.

At noon-time, while lifting Maharaj the attendant happened to tear his shirt. He stood silent, full of remorse.

Maharaj: What does it matter? So what if a monk's clothes are torn? A torn sheet and a shaven head. The other day a baby girl came with her mother. I told the baby, 'Will you stay here?' Clinging to her mother's neck, she replied, 'If mother stays.' One should have such attachment to God. Listen very carefully—spiritual life is entirely a matter of the mind. The inner life is not something to be shown off to others—the purpose is not to keep a tuft of hair on the head or to wear an ochre robe; these are merely means. One should become indifferent towards the things of the world. Suppose you see some excreta on the road, will you stir to see in it or sidestep it? Similarly, if you see something bad in the world, don't stir it but try to be indifferent towards it.

You are young in age, if you want you can realize God this very moment. You only have to concentrate the entire mind and senses. 'Establishing the mind in the Self, one should not think of anything.' (Bhagavad Gita 6.25)—the mind has to be taken to the depth of the heart. Attainment of God is nothing other than realization. When I was young, there was a handsome youth in our village. Some people would comment against his character. One day he said, 'I want to enjoy till the age of eighty. That's why I have to be self-controlled now.' I was startled to hear his words. Oh Lord! if one has to be self-controlled to just enjoy, then how much more power is needed to think of God! How much self-restraint is needed for that! One day, try to concentrate the mind on the chosen deity by force and see how much strength is necessary.

(To be continued. . .)



Our Heritage ~ Our Heroes

The Sun is an important Vedic deity who is worshipped as the nourisher of life, the dispeller of darkness and the endower of knowledge. He is the deity of the Gayatri Mantra. He bestowed the Shukla Yajurveda on the sage Yajnavalkya and was the guru of Hanuman. Agastya Maharishi taught Sri Rama Adityahridayastotra in praise of Surya which helped him to defeat Ravana. Again, on the advice of Rishi Dhaumya, Yudhishthira while living in the forest with his brothers and wife, worshipped Suryadevata and obtained the akshayapatra.

In Northern India, especially in Bihar, Jharkhand, and some parts of Uttar Pradesh, the worship of Suryadevata is a grand festival known as **Chhath Puja** or Surya Shasthi. It is a four-day festival where worshippers thank Suryadeva for blessing the earth with life and also pray for the well-being and success of their family and friends. Devotees also invoke the blessings of Chhathi Maiyya who is the Vedic goddesses Usha and Pratyusha, the two consorts of Suryadeva. Usha is the first light of dawn and Pratyusha is the last ray of the setting sun. The worship starts four days from Diwali and concludes on Kartika Shukla Shasthi.

On the first day the worshippers, who are generally the ladies in the family, take a holy dip in a pond or a large water body or a river and clean their houses and surroundings; they have only one meal in the day. On the second day, the worshippers fast the whole day and break it after worshipping the setting sun and the moon. After this meal the worshippers fast until the fourth day morning. The third day is spent in preparing offerings and in the evening the entire household accompanies the worshippers to the riverbank or water body where they offer Sandhya arghya or worship to the setting sun. On the fourth and final day the worshippers along with family and friends go to the river or water body before sunrise and offer the Usha arghya or worship to the rising sun. This worship of Usha, the first light of dawn is symbolically a prayer for the awakening of divine consciousness in the worshipper. *

Jagaddhatri, the Bearer of the Universe, is one of the forms of the Divine Mother. **Jagaddhatri Puja** is celebrated mainly in West Bengal and in some parts of Orissa. Mother Jagaddhatri is worshipped in some centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. It is in continuation of the worship started in Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's parental home in Jayarambati. Once, Shyamasundari Devi, mother of Sri Sarada Devi, had gathered some rice as offering for the Kali Puja in the village. But for some reason the rice was not accepted by the person conducting the worship. Deeply pained, Shyamasundari Devi wept the whole night. She then had a vision of the Divine Mother as Jagaddhatri



* HERITAGE *

4-7 *Chhath Puja*

9 *Jagaddhatri Puja*

* HEROES *

11 *Swami Subodhananda Jayanti*

13 *Swami Vijnanananda Jayanti*

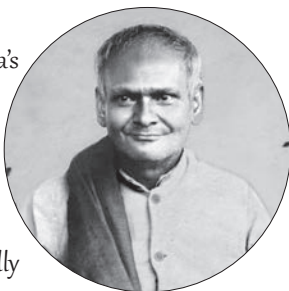
14 *Gurunanak Jayanti*

17 *Kanakadasa Jayanti*



who asked her to offer Her the rice vowed to Kali. Accordingly the worship was done with due éclat. The next year due to financial constraints and the strain involved, Holy Mother advised her mother not to perform the worship. That night Jagaddhatri appeared in Holy Mother's dream with Her two companions Jaya and Vijaya and asked, 'Shall we go away then?' On learning who they were, Holy Mother asked them to stay back. The worship was performed every year from then on. *

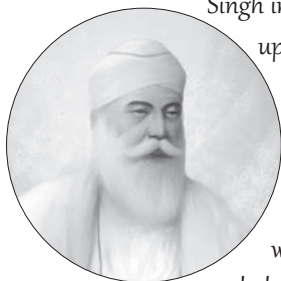
One day in Aug 1885, Subodh Chandra Ghosh, an 18 year lad entered Sri Ramakrishna's room along with his friend. Though seeing him for the first time, Sri Ramakrishna asked, 'Do you not belong to the family of Shankar Ghosh?' When a surprised Subodh asked how he knew it, Sri Ramakrishna replied, 'I knew you would come. Well, the Divine Mother sends here those who will attain spirituality. You belong to this place.'



Swami Subodhananda

As one of the youngest disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and others fondly called Subodhanandaji as 'Khoka' which means 'little boy.' As an itinerant monk he visited many pilgrim places and practised austerities for a long time. Once somewhere in central India, he slept under a banyan tree for the night. He had a dream in which an old woman told him, 'You get up. Because of you the snakes are unable to get out of their holes.' She guided him to a shelter further on. **Subodhanandaji** followed the advice and the next morning when he came to the banyan tree he saw many holes and learnt that the place was infested with snakes. Later Subodhanandaji identified the old lady in his dream as the Divine Mother. His love and respect for Swami Vivekananda was phenomenal. Whenever Swamiji was in a serious mood, none of his brother disciples dared to approach him. It was left to Khoka maharaj to go and interrupt his mood. *

Guru Nanak was the first of the ten Sikh gurus, a guru parampara that ended with the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708. Born to a Hindu couple on 15 April 1469 at Talwandi, a village in Punjab, Guru Nanak grew up as an inquisitive boy. When he was 13 years old, the elders arranged for the sacred thread ceremony. But Nanak refused to accept the sacred cotton thread. It is said that he sang out, 'Let mercy be the cotton, contentment the thread, Continence the knot and truth the twist. O priest! If you have such a thread, Do give it to me. It'll not wear out, nor get soiled, nor burnt, nor lost. Says Nanak, blessed are those who go about wearing such a thread.' As a young man herding the family cattle, Nanak would spend long hours absorbed in meditation and in religious discussions with Muslim and Hindu



Guru Nanak

holy men who lived in the forests surrounding the village. He married and had two sons. When he was 30, early one morning Nanak plunged into the River Bain for his bath and did not surface. It was assumed that he had drowned. But he returned after three days as the divinely inspired Guru. He spoke of one formless God, universal brotherhood and a casteless society without any distinctions based on birthright, religion or gender. He did not accept the idea of incarnation or prophethood, and rejected rituals and sacrifices. He institutionalized the common kitchen called langar where the rich and poor share a common meal. Preaching through his poetic hymns he travelled far and wide touching even Sri Lanka, Mecca and Medina. His followers included both Hindus and Muslims. His teachings are included in the Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred text of Sikhism. Guru Nanak passed away on 7 Sept 1539. *

Swami Vijnanananda's Mystical Experiences

SWAMI JAGADISWARANANDA

Swami Vijnanananda was one of the sixteen monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and became the fourth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. He was born on the 30th October, 1868 and passed away at the age of seventy on the 25th April, 1938 at Allahabad where he had established in 1910 a branch of the Ramakrishna Math. Swami Vivekananda fondly addressed him as the Bishop of Allahabad. Of his monastic life, extending for about four decades, nearly 37 years were spent at the sacred site of Allahabad in study and *tapasya*, in work and worship.

Swami Vijnananandaji was blessed with many extraordinary spiritual experiences. But as he was very reserved and reticent he did not express them, unless importuned by the devotees, or sadhus. Several mystic visions, noted from his talks, are described here to show how rich and varied was his spiritual life. Once the Swami accompanied a junior monk of our order to the Temple at Kalighat, Calcutta. There he saw and touched with great devotion the holy image. While he was circumambulating the temple he got a vision of the presiding deity. On another occasion when he had gone on a pilgrimage to the Puri temple, he embraced the sacred image of Lord Jagannath, and felt the wooden image to be as soft and delicate as butter. While narrating this unique experience he observed. 'If one visits a sacred place with sincere devotion, and sees

the image in the temple with a pure mind, leaving outside one's worldly thoughts, he is sure to be illumined'. At Triveni (Allahabad) the confluence of the three sacred streams, the Swami got the vision of the goddess Triveni. After a dip in the holy waters of the confluence he saw a girl of divine radiance with three plaits of hair on her head floating on the water. From Swami Brahmananda he ascertained that the goddess was none other than Triveni. In this connection he remarked, 'A vision is true if it deepens our spiritual emotions and unfolds greater wisdom and bliss: Even now after so many years when I think of the vision of the girl form of Triveni I am transported with joy.'

Swami Vijnanananda got a vision of Lord Viswanath at Benares. He went to this holy place, one of the seven centres of salvation according to Hindu belief, to supervise the building work of the local Sevasram. From the cantonment station he was going in an Ekka carriage to the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashram. While the carriage was taking a turn at a cross-road, it toppled down and the Swami fell on the ground with his leg caught in the wheel. Somehow he pulled out his leg and in the same carriage reached the destination. The doctors did their best; but at night he got high fever coupled with shivering of the body and pain in the leg. When he was restlessly rolling on the bed without sleep at the dead of night he thought within himself: 'Oh Lord Viswanath,

☞ Reproduced from *The Vedanta Kesari*, November 1946

I have come into your safe jurisdiction for a philanthropic work of Sri Guru Maharaj and such a calamity overtook me! I do not mind my troubles; but Lord's work will suffer. What can I do?' Thus thinking he fell asleep. At about 1 or 2 A.M. he had the vision of Lord Viswanath with matted locks, and smiling face. The divine figure approached the Swami with slow steps looking at him with compassionate eyes. The Swami said to him, 'Oh Lord, have you come to take me with You? I cannot go now as I have yet to do my Lord's work.' The holy figure drew near the Swami and embraced him lovingly and the latter felt that his body had become as cool as ice and all his pain and fever had subsided. The Lord's form vanished with a sweet smile playing on his lips. The Swami got up from his bed next morning and was astonished to find that he was quite all right and even his wound had healed up! While describing this experience the Swami said, 'Whenever I recollect this vision, I see before my eyes the superbly serene form of Lord Viswanath standing before me with a smiling face and matted hair. I talk to Him and derive infinite joy'. The Swami once visited an Art Studio at Calcutta. There a beautiful picture of Lord Shiva in the standing posture with matted locks, attracted his attention. He was absorbed in the thought of Lord Shiva who then seemed to speak to him. Later in life he remembered the enthralling ecstasy of this experience and asked his attendants to bring from the market that picture. But unfortunately it was not available.

The Swami used to relate his two visions of Lord Buddha, one at Sarnath, Benares and the other at Pegu, Burma. Sometime in 1918 or 1919 he was at Benares. One fine morning he went on foot to Sarnath to see the Museum

there. In the Museum the guide was showing him a beautiful image of Buddha at whose foot a short description of Lord Buddha's life from birth to death was given. While he was intently looking at the image, the external world vanished from him and he beheld a boundless ocean of Light. He later returned on foot to the Ashram at Benares by 4 or 5 in the afternoon; but his ecstatic mood brought on by the vision persisted, and continued to enthrall him for three days. To Swami Prabhavananda and Sister Lalita of Hollywood Vedanta centre, he described this vision thus: 'Suddenly I lost outer consciousness. My mind got rid of all mentations. An ocean of light engulfed me in the midst of it. This light was redolent of peace, bliss and wisdom. I felt I was full of the Buddha and had no existence separate from the Blessed One. I cannot say how long I remained immersed in that state. The guide was under the impression that I felt sleepy. So he tried to rouse me and thus I came to my senses.' In December, 1936 the Swami went to Rangoon on a flying visit. From Rangoon he motored to Pegu to see the huge lying statue of Lord Buddha there. All his companions came out of the Pagoda soon after seeing the colossal statue. But the Swami stood still and speechless. He was in an exalted mood. After some time when his mind came down from the superconscious plane he came out of the temple. On his way back in the motor car the Swami sat motionless and completely indrawn. In the Rangoon Sevashram when requested to narrate his experience at Pegu, he said, 'Lord Buddha out of his infinite mercy granted a vision to me. I saw the lying image of Buddha pulsating with life. How wonderful was the luster of His fascinating beauty!' *

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Kanakadasa

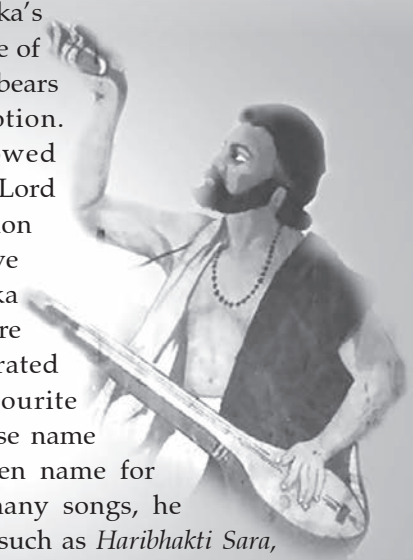
The Saint Singer of Dvaita Vedanta

P. NAGARAJA RAO

In the history of Indian Philosophy there are two traditions. The living Philosophy of the Hindus is the Vedanta system in different forms, drawing its authority and doctrines from the triple texts, the Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahma Sutras. The commentaries on these texts and the exegesis on the commentaries constitute the acharya tradition (*sampradaya*). Mostly the literature is in Sanskrit. Side by side with this tradition in every school of Vedanta, another tradition of saints has grown up. These saints wrote in the regional language and popularized the doctrines of their systems to the community at large without any distinction of caste, creed, sex, age and status. They set their songs of devotion to music and thus at once developed the grand heritage of Karnatak music and the rich storehouse of devotional literature. These saint-singers humanized religion and made morality and social justice the bed-rock of religion. They made character the touchstone of religion and love its very life and essence. Tukaram, Tulasi, Tyagaraja, Purandara, the great Alvars, the Saivite saints, the Vachanakaras of Karnataka and the Dasas of the Madhva *sampradaya* belonged to this tradition of saint-poets.

Kanakadasa belongs to the illustrious tradition of Madhva's philosophy. He was an unlettered shepherd of Bada in the Dharwad

district of Karnataka. He wrote several songs and was the second disciple of Vyasaraja the great dialectician of Dvaita Vedanta. He was a contemporary of Purandaradasa. He was a zealous reformer in his outlook and for him Bhakti alone was the means of moksha. He was persecuted for his straightforward and aggressive criticism of so called morality which only drew a mask over selfishness. He preached devotion to God and love of humanity. The disciples of Vyasaraja found fault with him for showing special favour to Kanaka. But Vyasaraja stood firm and revealed the true worth and spirituality of Kanaka to his followers. Even to this day *Kanakana Kitiki* (Kanaka's window) in the temple of Sri Krishna at Udipi bears witness to his devotion. As he was not allowed into the temple, the Lord turned in the direction of the devotee and gave him darshan. Kanaka died at Kaginele where he built and consecrated a temple to his favourite deity Adikesava whose name he adopted as his pen name for his songs. Besides many songs, he wrote several works, such as *Haribhakti Sara*,



♫ Reproduced from The Vedanta Kesari, June 1967-68.

Ramadhyana Mantra, Nalacharitra and Mohana Tarangini. Kanaka describes his cumulative spiritual experience in a famous song: 'For all these days, I was thinking that Vaikuntha, the city of God, was too far away. But when I saw it with the insight given by the master, I found it here in my heart in the form of God *Rangashayi*, the Lord of creation. Vaikuntha was wonderfully beautiful on account of the dense forests, beautiful gardens and great overflowing lakes and on account of majestic and imposing palaces with golden turrets.... I came out triumphant like a hero after having crushed eight *madras* (intoxicants, prides), defeated six enemies, trodden under feet five mischievous vices and having slain the powerful opponent egoism (*ahankara*).... Then I saw the effulgent main door of the palace, and inside it the beams of diamond set in jewels of different kinds and the house of the best gods, and the last of all *Rangashayi* who is the destroyer of the wicked.' The basic beliefs of a devotee is thus set out in a popular song by Kanaka, 'It is our past karma that has given us this life. Life in this world is always a mixture of pleasure and pain. Pain is the result of sin. It is sin that subjects us to the torture of Yama in another world as well. So Kanaka's prayer is 'Free me from sin. I am weak. I am a fool. I have not strength to perform *Japa* or *Tapa*. Do not neglect me on this account. Make no invidious distinctions. It is for you to correct me. Rid me of my passions and desires. Cure me of my base instincts. Give me good sense. Make me your servant. Correct my mind. Bestow the right knowledge. Purify my heart. Keep me in the company of the good. Let me always keep you in mind and utter your name with love and gladness of heart. You are my father and mother. Out of your grace and benevolence pardon my mistakes. Put me on the right path. Give me *Jnana* and *Bhakti* and

make me meditate on you. Rid me of this cycle of births and deaths which is the source of all miseries. It is you and you alone that can rid me of this bondage and give me eternal bliss.'

In some other song he sings, 'It is only when man realizes and trusts that the burden of looking after one's wife and children is also on God and accepts with resignation whatever happens, he can be happy.' 'For there is no toll to pay when you have surrendered your goods at the toll gate. The name of the Lord will overcome all dangers.' 'The best thing we can do is to put ourselves in the hands of the best, i.e., the Lord. That is the end of all misery.'

Kanaka strongly condemned hypocrisy and pseudo-religiosity and exhorted people to be truthful in thought, word and deed, the three levels of human life. As an itinerant songster he did for the women and the unlearned strata of society, what the *acharyas* did for the learned.

In a very fine song Kanaka brings out the need for devotion and affirms its supremacy. 'Choose not Evil, hold the rod of chastisement in the hand, use it against yourself; be not elated at the thought of body and possessions. Walk not the way of destruction; consort not with the wicked.'

'Fall not, fall not; Kashi, Kanchi and Rameswaram, what is the use of going to these and other places? What do you gain by these? What good comes of living beside sacred rivers like Krishna, Ganga, Godavari and Tungabadra? And fasting and bathing in them with devotion and performing ceremony and fulfilling vows? Why this exertion? Get near to the soul of all dwelling within, experience good, and get real release and get strong.'

Kanakadasa represents a place similar to that of *Nandanar* among the Saivites. His contribution to Dvaita Vedanta is significant. He was a Lord's singer. *

Faith and Self-Surrender

UMESH GULATI

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that two things are necessary for the realization of God: Faith and Self-Surrender. What do we mean by faith? It is confidence in oneself, devotion to the ideal, and a genuine effort to serve the ideal. Fickle-mindedness, doubt, vagueness of purpose and slovenly execution are the traits of a person lacking in faith. A man of faith is consistent, up and doing, earnest, and dedicated to the ideal. Obstructions only increase his faith. So, faith or *Sraddha*, as it is called in Sanskrit, is different from a mere static belief. *Sraddha* with reference to the existence of God must lead to relentless effort for God's vision and realization, or else it won't be called *Sraddha*; it will be only a belief.

Yearning is another word that is often used in connection with realization of God. Yearning means deep or intense longing to see or realize one's object of devotion. A four-year old child whose mother just goes out of sight feels such a deep longing to see her that he would not stop crying until he sees her. A newly married bride intensely yearns for the company of her husband who had to go away to another town for a few days; the same would be the condition of the husband who leaves her back home. A wealthy man whose beautiful and expensive house burns down to ashes because of a fire will have many sleepless nights not knowing how the house would be rebuilt. All these three states

of intense feeling is an expression of yearning. Can we direct that intense yearning to God's realization? Sri Ramakrishna stressed similar kind of intense and one-pointed yearning for the realization of God.

Faith and yearning are not only necessary for the realization of God, they are also necessary in any scientific endeavour. How many years of dedicated research, experimentation, and trials did it take, for instance, for scientists to send a human being to the moon, and ultimately succeed in their efforts? Besides, without having faith in themselves, scientists would make no effort to proceed with the space mission in the first place. So, faith is an important factor both in a scientific inquiry and religious truth, especially in a religion like Hinduism where the objective of a devotee is to 'see' God. This *seeing* is not like we see each other; rather, it is like seeing a beautiful sunset, which can be felt and is very personal, and cannot be described in words.

To further illustrate the above points regarding faith and yearning, which are necessary to know the truth about God and His realization, Sri Ramakrishna would give this example: Suppose, a thief knows that a bag of gold lies in a rich man's room in which the master of the house is lying down at night, will the thief get any sleep? Will he not wait for the time when the master has fallen asleep, so that he can enter the room and get the bag of gold?



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It is that kind of yearning that one has to have if one is serious about realizing God, a mere belief in God won't do.

So Sri Ramakrishna said, One attains God when one feels yearning for Him. He illustrated it by another example. A man had a daughter who became a widow at a very young age, and had never known her husband. She knew some girls of her age who were also married. She asked her father. 'Where is my husband?' The father replied: 'Govinda (a name of Krishna) is your husband. He will come to you if you call Him.' At these words she went to her room, closed the door, and cried to Govinda: 'O Govinda, come to me! Show Yourself to me! Why don't you come?' God could not resist the girl's piteous cry and appeared before her. She was indeed filled with unspeakable joy!¹

It is hard for rational thinkers to accept the veracity of the above story. But what one needs to understand is the point that the story is making. In fact, once Narendra, the future Swami Vivekananda, told Sri Ramakrishna the same thing about the Vrindaban episode of the divine play of Sri Krishna with the Gopis. He said that these were just the imaginations of the writer of the Bhagavata scripture. Sri Ramakrishna told him, 'I am not asking you to accept the stories of the divine *leela* (play), but think about the deep love and intense yearning of the *gopis*, including that of the foremost of the *gopis*, Sri Radha, those stories represented.' It is that kind of love we all need to cultivate for the realization of God.

The point is, said Sri Ramakrishna, one must have a childlike faith – and the intense yearning that a child feels to see its mother. Sri Ramakrishna gave still another example of his nephew, Shibu, who was then four or five years old. One day, 'Shibu was chasing grasshoppers by himself, while leaves rustled

in the nearby trees. "Hush! Hush!" he said to the leaves. "I want to catch the grasshoppers". He was a child and saw everything was throbbing with consciousness. One cannot realize God without the faith that knows no guile, the simple faith of a child.'²

Many of us want to lead a spiritual life, but fail to cultivate this desire. The reason is obvious. Most of us cannot but spend our time thinking about 'woman and gold' (lust and greed), to use Sri Ramakrishna's words, and other worldly things, and yet expect to have peace of mind. As the saying goes, a person is what his or her thoughts are. If we think of worldly things, we cannot be spiritual; we will remain worldly. On the other hand, if we read and think about spirituality and spiritual matters, we will feel joy and peace.

Sri Ramakrishna often used to get irritated when any of his devotees from Brahmo Samaj, one of the reforming sects in Hinduism and very active in Bengal of the nineteenth century, said that he was a sinner. His response to that assertion always was, if you keep repeating, I am a sinner, I am a sinner, then you will certainly be drowned in the worldliness. 'One should have such a burning faith in God,' he once said, 'that one can say, "what? I have repeated the name of God, and can sin cling to me? How can I be a sinner any more? How can I be in bondage any more?" ... Why should one talk only about sin and hell, and such things? Say but once, "O Lord, I have undoubtedly done wicked things, but I won't repeat them." And have faith in His name.'³

Apart from a childlike faith that is needed to realize God, Sri Ramakrishna told his devotees to surrender to God in order to receive His grace. God never disappoints a devotee who does practice this discipline earnestly. Sri Ramakrishna would often

illustrate this with the story of a pious weaver who had surrendered every act of his to the 'will of Rama'. Once the weaver was caught along with a band of robbers and produced before the magistrate. When asked to make his statement, he said, 'Your Honour, by the will of Râma I finished my meal at night. Then by the will of Râma I was sitting in the worship hall. It was quite late at night by the will of Râma. By the will of Râma I had been thinking of God and chanting His name and glories, when by the will of Râma a band of robbers passed that way. By the will of Râma they dragged me with them; by the will of Râma they committed a robbery in a house; and by the will of Râma they put a load on my head. Just then, by the will of Râma the police arrived, and by the will of Râma I was arrested. Then by the will of Râma the police kept me in the lock-up for the night, and this morning by the will of Râma I have been brought before Your Honour.' The magistrate realized that the weaver was a pious man and ordered his release. On his way home the weaver said to his friends, 'By the will of Râma I have been released.'⁴

Some incidents in the life of Swami Vivekananda gloriously highlight the power of surrendering to the will of God. One such incident happened when Swamiji was wandering across India as a *parivrajak*. In Vrindavan while going round the Govardhan Hill, Swamiji one day vowed to eat only what came to him unasked. By noon he felt very hungry. A heavy shower added to his discomfort. But he continued to walk through the woods. Soon he heard a voice calling him from behind. Swamiji began to run away to test this apparent act of Providence. But the man who was calling him soon overtook him and insisted that he must accept the food he had brought. Swamiji accepted it,

saying nothing. Shortly afterwards, the man disappeared in the woods. Ecstatic for this miraculous act of the Lord, and with tears streaming from his eyes, the Swami cried out, 'Glory to Shri Radha! Glory to Shri Krishna!' It is quite clear that in the wilderness the Lord had taken care of His devotee.⁵

Self-surrender always springs from a strong faith in God; a faith that grows in a strong mind and heart. Good-for-nothing people talking of self-surrender is only a cloak for their laziness and weakness. Swamiji therefore advised to first gain physical and mental strength; develop talents, capacities and work-efficiency, and grow in self-confidence. A householder should grow in knowledge, increase his prosperity with honest and hard labour and share his wealth and happiness with others. From this active and purposeful life grows renunciation of wealth, renunciation of 'I', and complete surrender to God.

In the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna says: 'Renunciation of action, O mighty-armed, is hard to attain by one who has not passed through the yoga of action; the meditative person, purified by the yoga of action, quickly attains Brahman.'⁶ That is to say that although God's grace is imperative, yet hard work and determination are absolutely necessary for success. As Sri Ramakrishna says, the wind of God's grace is always blowing, but you must first unfurl the sails.

Swami Vivekananda often used two terms, 'manhood' and 'sainthood'. One should not try to become a saint (with total self-surrender) before becoming a man in the true sense of the term. Renouncing the 'I' cannot come without training the 'I' and strengthening it; otherwise it will be a fake renunciation. Therefore, without this training in Karma-yoga, by which one develops character efficiency and the public spirit of

service and dedication, none can achieve real renunciation.

There is a story in Srimad Bhagavata that reflects this idea. An elephant was caught by a crocodile and was suffering terribly. He tried his utmost to free himself from that crocodile, but failed. In the end, he praised the Lord by offering Him a lotus from the pool he was in. And the Lord came and saved that elephant. This is the story well known as *Gajendramoksha*, 'salvation of the lordly elephant'. In the story the elephant praises the Divine, and those verses says, 'I prostrate myself before Him who is the creator of the worlds, who is the form of the world,... for whom the world is a toy, who is the soul of the universe...'⁷

Another story of self-surrender is that of Girish Chandra Ghosh, one of the householder devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. Christopher Isherwood writes, 'Girish was a person of great vitality, strength, ingenuity, force, drive and indeed – a protean kind of talent. He was a poet, dramatist, an actor, and he threw himself into everything with the utmost vitality. It was a function, an aspect, of this vitality that he was also exceedingly sensual; ... and he drank enormously ... in the case of somebody like Girish, without this energy he would not have had all the positive qualities as well as the negative ones.'⁸

Girish asked for instruction from Sri Ramakrishna: 'What shall I do? Is there anything I can do?' Sri Ramakrishna answered, 'Try and call on God three times a day.' Girish

said: 'I am sorry. I can't promise. I may forget.' Then the Master said: 'Do it twice a day. Do it once.' 'No, no, I can't promise anything,' Girish told him. Then the Master said, 'All right, then give me your power of attorney. I'll take it over. I'll be responsible for you. Now you have no will at all. You will only say, "I do whatever the Lord wills." Don't ever say again, "I will do this" or "I will not do that."'⁹

Girish's self-surrender was truly phenomenal. Swami Vivekananda once remarked: 'In G.C. [Girish] alone I have seen that true resignation – that true spirit of a servant of the Lord ... I have not met his parallel. From him I have learnt the lesson of self-surrender.'¹⁰ To just illustrate the extent of Girish's self-surrendering, he, in his old age, once asked M the chronicler of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*: 'Brother, could you beat me with your shoes? I am not joking I am serious'. M smiled and asked the reason for such a request. Girish replied, 'Sri Ramakrishna is sitting within my heart and is always protecting me. Yet I wonder what will happen to me after death!'¹¹ And Girish really began to live like this. It seems that Girish in some way did turn into the kind of devotee who was indeed a saint. This indeed was an absolute surrendering at Sri Ramakrishna's feet, and that was the way he lived. And like *Gajendramoksha* of the Bhagavata story, Girish too, we assume, became immortal. Truly, when one surrenders to God in earnest, God's grace is bound to follow. *



References

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 337
2. *Ibid*, 568
3. *Ibid*, 138
4. *Ibid*, 649
5. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 218-19
6. *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, 5.6
7. *Srimad Bhagavata*, 8.3.26
8. *Girish Chandra Ghosh*, Swami Chetanananda, p.12
9. *Ibid*, p.18
10. *The Complete Works of Vivekananda*, 7. 271
11. *They Lived with God*, Swami Chetanananda, p.313

Recollecting a Divine Life

SWAMI SATYAPRIYANANDA

‘The future, you say, will call Ramakrishna Paramahansa an Incarnation of Kali? Yes, I think there’s no doubt that She worked up the body of Ramakrishna for Her own ends.... You see, I cannot but believe that there is somewhere a great Power that thinks of Herself as feminine, and called Kali and Mother. . . . And I believe in Brahman too.’ said Swami Vivekananda.

That Eternal, Effulgent Energy, Which encompasses all, the Grand Empress of all Existence—creating, sustaining and destroying all, decided out of Her Infinite Grace and compassion to take a human form and tread the world of mortals for their emancipation! She filled her parents’ hearts with light and joy, the hamlet she was born in with prosperity never before witnessed, and the hearts of countless people with her words of strength and solace, ‘when you are in distress, say to yourself, “I have a Mother”!’

The highest of all feminine types in India is mother, says Swami Vivekananda. How else would this world brimming with scientists, artists, musicians, actors, sculptors, Nobel Laureates, saints, space explorers, politicians, philanthropists, and a lot more, have come into existence? Yes, people with evil propensities too have a mother. Was that why Sri Sarada Devi would say that she is the mother of the virtuous as also of the vice? Was

that why she held that Amzad, a Muslim and a much-dreaded dacoit was as much her son as Swami Saradananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the first Secretary of the Ramakrishna Order?

Sri Sarada Devi was truly a mother be it as a young girl, or as a daughter of her parents Ramachandra Mukherjee and Shyamasundari Devi, or as the sister of her brothers, or as the Divine Consort of Sri Ramakrishna, or as the Mother of the Order named after him, or as the Mother of countless devotees who came to her during her lifetime to unburden their problems and anxieties, and also

of those devotees who even to this day come as a steady stream to offer her their heart-felt devotion and enforce their demands on her. She is our Mother and we have every right to force our demands on her! Never could a woman be so fortunate to be literally addressed as the Mother by even those who saw her only in a picture.

Mother represents love and compassion that knows no barter, love that never ends. Correctly has it been said by Swami Abhedananda that Sri Sarada Devi was a wonder, very unique, very special, very different, in that she would embrace her countless children with all their faults without requiring them first to cleanse themselves.



✽ A former editor of Prabuddha Bharata, the author is a resident of Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math.

The touch of the unholy would make her feet burn, but the Mother in her would absorb all that pain silently. Like a dip in the holy River Ganga, or the utterance of that divine name Sita, the very remembrance of Sri Sarada Devi is edifying. She binds her children with the bond of love, and habitually practises the virtue of not seeing faults without giving the least scope to the need of forgiving the multitude for their countless faults. Not constituted to even seeing faults, forgiveness had no place in her life. Same-sightedness was the quality of her extra-ordinary mind. To rise to the occasion, to take up the burden of the whole world on her shoulders, that is the mother's mindset. The life and teachings of Sri Sarada Devi is captivating for both Indian and Western minds. Her life demonstrates how amidst the busy schedule of daily life one can incessantly repeat the name of God. Her life is an outstanding example of how one can embrace the whole world. Recollecting some of the well-known life incidents in her life is an excellent spiritual practice.

Sri Sarada Devi as a young girl: Morning shows the day.

Even as a young child she would bring up her brothers, glean grains, cut grass for fodder, and perform a multitude of tasks thereby lightening the burden on her parents. She would pluck cotton pods, and spin sacred thread which would fetch some earnings. She would plunge into neck-deep water to cut grass for the cattle, and walk to the fields with puffed-rice for the labourers. Diligent in work, intelligent, quiet, well-behaved, highly resourceful are some of the adjectives used with her. She would perform her duties without requiring to be told or reminded. She worshipped Kali and Lakshmi in images fashioned by herself. She would remain so lost

in her meditation on Jagaddhatri, that it would be difficult to distinguish her from the deity.

Famine, the Great Awakener of Motherhood.

It was 1864, the year of dire famine, and the generous-hearted Ramchandra threw open his granary to feed hungry mouths. *Khichudi* would be cooked in large quantity to feed the large number of people. In her own words, 'no sooner was the hot food served on the leaves, than I would fan it with both hands so that it might cool quickly'; this reveals her compassionate motherly heart. Once a girl whose hair on the head had become shaggy for want of oil, and whose eyes were bloodshot like those of a lunatic, rushed to the tub where some rice-dust was soaked for cattle and began gulping that. What a pitiable condition it must have been in those days!

Lessons in Renunciation.

Sri Ramakrishna who had completed his twenty-third year was caught in a tidal wave of spiritual fervour. People thought him to have become mad and when this depressing news reached the ears of his mother Chandramani Devi at Kamarpukur, she had Sri Ramakrishna brought home. She thought that marriage would be the right solution to the unworldliness of Sri Ramakrishna. But who would marry a mad person? The eldest son, Ramkumar, being dead by then, Chandramani Devi took the help of her living elder son, Rameshwar, to look for a suitable bride for Sri Ramakrishna. When all attempts failed, Sri Ramakrishna himself told, 'go and find the bride marked out with a straw in Ramchandra Mukherjee's house at Jayrambati'. He was referring to Sri Sarada Devi. Thus the matrimony between Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi was divinely ordained.

Sri Ramakrishna's family paid three hundred rupees as bridal money and Chandramani borrowed some ornaments from the Lahas, the village landlords, to adorn the young Sarada. When it was time to return the ornaments to the Lahas, it was Sri Ramakrishna who deftly removed the ornaments while Sarada was still sleeping. When she woke up to find her body unadorned, she wept bitterly. Chandramani could only assure Sarada by saying that Sri Ramakrishna would later in life give her better ornaments, which of course he did by asking Hriday to make two armlets for Sri Sarada Devi at a cost of rupees two hundred, on the pattern of what he had seen Sita wearing in a vision. Yogin-Ma would later say, 'she wore a gold necklace, a big nose-ring, ear-rings, and bracelets which Mathur had given to Sri Ramakrishna when he took to spiritual practice assuming the role of a handmaid of the Divine Mother.'

Sri Ramakrishna did not merely give Sri Sarada Devi some gold ornaments, he more importantly gave her a unique embellishment which only Sri Sarada Devi could recognize, and that was 'renunciation'. Sri Sarada Devi would say in later days, 'renunciation was his ornament.' One who was under the tempest of spiritual emotion could not be expected to find anything worthwhile in this impermanent world to possess. Nor could he be expected other than to imprint on the young mind of Sri Sarada Devi the value of possessing nothing but God. Later in life he would say, 'detachment and devotion are the only things that matter,' and would instruct Sri Sarada Devi not to stretch out her hands seeking help after his passing away. Sri Sarada Devi did just that and at Kamarpukur she lived a simple life wearing poor clothes stitched in many places and eating simple garden grown vegetables.

That was the situation until the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna came to know of her spiritual greatness and silent tapasya.

Among Sri Ramakrishna's devotees there was a rich Marwari merchant named Lakshminarayana. One day he wanted to deposit ten thousand rupees in his name, so that from the interest of it, all his personal needs might be met. Sri Ramakrishna could not brook the proposal because he was full of the spirit of renunciation. He directed the merchant to Sri Sarada Devi, telling him that he might give the amount to her if she had no objection to accept it. But Sri Sarada Devi too rejected the proposal, saying that if she accepted the money it would be as good as Sri Ramakrishna accepting it, because all the amount would then go only to his service. Sri Ramakrishna was very much pleased with her reply.

Living in God.

Once Sri Ramakrishna asked Sri Sarada Devi, 'Well my dear, have you come to drag me down to the worldly level?' Sri Sarada Devi replied, 'Why should I drag you to the worldly level? I have come to help you in your chosen path.' Those are the words from the lips of the spiritual dynamo that possessed the capacity to help an incarnation of God! Sri Ramakrishna too engaged himself in self-examination one day with the thought, 'O mind, this is what is called a female form. People think of this as a thing of supreme enjoyment and wistfully run after it. But, if this is accepted, one becomes enmeshed in body-consciousness and cannot attain God who is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. ... Tell me truly, do you want this or God?' With such self-inquiry no sooner did he stretch his hand to touch her body than his mind suddenly recoiled and got lost in the higher reaches of ecstasy. Sri Ramakrishna paid rich tributes to Sri Sarada Devi for her

high level of mental purity which lay behind his success during this self-examination.

Sri Ramakrishna would repeatedly point out to Sri Sarada Devi, 'what would one gain by bearing children, like bitches and vixens?' Once he highlighted this by saying, 'you may dance and sing bedecking yourself with ornaments at the first rice-eating ceremony of your son but you will writhe in agony when the son dies.' When Sri Ramakrishna again and again went on alluding to the death of sons, Sri Sarada Devi blurted out in a low tone, 'will all of them really die?' The point made by Sri Sarada Devi was unique and could be easily missed by a mere superficial reading. It does not require anyone to point out the self-evident impermanence and joyless nature of this world. But even then one continues to live merrily seeing the existence of relative permanence in the midst of impermanence. What really matters to be noted is that bringing the mind to the level of bodily enjoyment takes away the possibility of raising the mind to the level of God consciousness.

Divinity of Sri Sarada Devi.

There are several incidents that reveal the divinity of Sri Sarada Devi. While at Kamarpukur, as a new bride, Sri Sarada Devi felt it was improper for her to go alone to the Haldarpukur pond for bathing. But there was no one at home to accompany her. As she stood perplexed, eight ladies approached her from nowhere and accompanied her to the bathing ghat—four leading her and four trailing her. They returned in the same fashion. This happened day after day for the entire period of her stay then in Kamarpukur.

It was the year 1872 when news reached Jayramabati that Sri Ramakrishna had gone mad and quite a few would point out to Sri Sarada Devi and say, 'that is the wife

of a madman,' or 'Alas! Shyamasundari's daughter has been married to a lunatic'. Though Sri Sarada Devi did not believe all this, she was anxious to meet Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar. When this was conveyed to Ramchandra Mukherjee he readily agreed and the father-daughter duo started walking the sixty mile journey. On the way Sri Sarada Devi became indisposed with high temperature and had to take shelter in a hut. In this hour of dejection a divine vision came to her in the form of a dark woman of peerless beauty who comforted and assured her that she would soon get well and join her husband at Dakshineswar. The dark woman identified herself as Sri Sarada Devi's sister from Dakshineswar. It is believed this was Mother Kali Herself. The next day Sri Sarada Devi resumed her journey. At Dakshineswar she found her husband full of sincere care and love which he expressed in ever so many ways, and this consoled her immensely.

Speaking of Sri Sarada Devi, Sri Ramakrishna would say, 'She is Sarada, Saraswati; she has come to impart knowledge. She has descended by covering up her beauty this time, lest unregenerate people should come to grief by looking at her with impure eyes.' 'She is the communicator of knowledge, she is full of the rarest wisdom. Is she of the common run? She is my Shakti.' Sri Ramakrishna always looked upon Sri Sarada Devi as Mother Kali Herself. Once he told her, 'the same Mother that is in the Kali temple, gave birth to this body and now resides at the Nahabat, and she, again, is now massaging my feet. Truly do I see you as a veritable form of the Blissful Mother!' With this faith in mind, Sri Ramakrishna performed the Shodasi Puja in the person of Sri Sarada Devi praying to her, 'O Thou eternal Virgin, Thou Mother Tripurasundari, the Source of all Power, do Thou open the gates of perfection.

Sanctifying her mind and body, do Thou manifest Thyself through her and ordain all good.' Both Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi lost all outward consciousness and became identified in the plane of ecstasy. On coming to the relative plane of consciousness, Sri Ramakrishna offered himself to the Deity; and then laying himself, the fruits of all his disciplines, and his rosary at the feet of the Goddess, he saluted her with appropriate mantras.

Sivaram, the nephew of Sri Ramakrishna, once while escorting his aunt stood still when they reached the vicinity of Jayarambati. He wanted to hear from Sri Sarada Devi who she really was! No amount of telling him that she was just an aunt of his satisfied him. At last Sri Sarada Devi had to tell that people called her Kali. Even this phrase 'people call me Kali' did not satisfy him and Sri Sarada Devi had to affirm herself to be Kali. Once while proceeding with her companions to Dakshineswar, Sri Sarada Devi lagged behind unable to match the pace of others. They had to pass through a place called Tele-bhelo, which was notorious for robbers. Not wishing to put her companions in danger, Sri Sarada Devi asked them to go ahead. As the sun set and darkness descended all around a robber accosted her. He was soon joined by his wife. With great resourcefulness Sri Sarada Devi addressed them as 'father' and 'mother' and placed herself in their hands as their helpless daughter. The robbers really took care of her as their own daughter. Later they declared that they had seen Mother Kali, their Chosen Deity, in the person of Sri Sarada Devi. They even went to Dakshineswar later and met Sri Ramakrishna who behaved with them like a true son-in-law.

Harish was a devotee whose intimacy with the monks of Ramakrishna Math had

aroused fear in the mind of his wife. So he had been drugged which left him deranged. In that mental state he once went to Kamarpukur. Though Sri Sarada Devi had informed the monastic disciples about this, help was late in arriving. Harish met Sri Sarada Devi and with bad intentions chased her. She ran as fast as she could with Harish following her around a barn, until tiredness made her halt. Sri Sarada Devi later recounted, 'I threw him to the ground, pressed my knee on his chest, drew out his tongue and slapped him hard on the cheeks until my fingers became red with slapping. He began to gasp for breath.' The consciousness of Vagala, one of the Mahavidyas, must have been on her, as Vagala is said to have killed an Asura in the same manner as the Mother now punished Harish. This punishment had a salutary effect on Harish. He fled to Vrindaban, and gradually his mental equilibrium was restored.

Sri Sarada Devi once went to Rameshwaram with a big retinue of devotees to have a darshan of Lord Shiva. Under the instruction of the Raja of Ramnad, special arrangements had been made and Sri Sarada Devi and her party were allowed to enter the *sanctum sanctorum*, and worship the uncovered image of Shiva to their hearts' content. Sri Sarada Devi offered one hundred and eight golden leaves shaped as the Bilva leaves. During all the three days they stayed at this place, they visited the temple in the morning and evening. On the third day Sri Sarada Devi arranged for a special worship at the temple, fed the *pandas* after hearing the recital of the glory of Rameshwara, and presented a water pot to each of them. On seeing the uncovered image of Shiva, she had remarked, 'it is just as I had left it'. The devotees who were near became inquisitive to know what she had meant. This remark was repeated once more which Golap-

Ma heard while passing by, and pressed Sri Sarada Devi to know what she had implied. Devotees believe that Sri Sarada Devi was an incarnation of Sita who had worshipped the sacred Shiva emblem in the image of sand on the sea coast of Rameshwaram. Countless are the other instances revealing Sri Sarada Devi's divinity.

Sri Sarada Devi held in great esteem by Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna once told Hriday, 'Well, you often slight me. But don't you do that with her (meaning Sri Sarada Devi). You may be saved if the being that resides in this body raises its hood, but if the being that is in her is angry, even Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshvara won't be able to save you.'

One day Sri Ramakrishna commissioned Sri Sarada Devi to the heavy and responsible task of spiritual ministration. She remonstrated saying that she was 'only a woman.' But he told her that and she had to do a lot more than him for the good of the world. That shows Sri Ramakrishna's estimate of her spiritual power. Sri Sarada Devi would later say that she had been left behind to demonstrate the motherhood of God.

Spiritual Ministration.

Countless are the instances of her granting spiritual initiation without discriminating between the worthy and the unworthy. Swami Premananda, speaking of the spiritual dynamo that Sri Sarada Devi was, would say, 'Glory to the Mother! Glory to the powerful Mother! A poison that we cannot assimilate we pass on to the Mother. She draws everyone to her lap. An infinite power—an incomparable grace! ... She grants shelter

to everyone, eats from the hands of almost anyone, and all is digested!'

Numerous are the instances of her guiding the affairs of the Ramakrishna Sangha of which she was the Mother. It was with her permission and blessings that Swami Vivekananda embarked on his world-conquering mission. It was with her support and insight that he could on his return to India establish, despite criticism from some quarters, the Ramakrishna Mission with its welfare activities. It was because of her motherly prayer to Sri Ramakrishna that the Belur monastery came up at its present site. It was she who prevented Swami Vivekananda from selling the Math lands for conducting a single relief, for she knew that several such relief works would be carried out from there in future. It was again she who pointed out to the inmates of Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati that Sri Ramakrishna was Advaitin and all his followers were Advaitins. By dining with Swamiji's European and American disciples she it was who paved the way for their reception in the local society; she accepted Nivedita whole-heartedly as her Khooki (daughter). It was Sri Sarada Devi again who, when some levelled criticisms for placing the picture of Swami Vivekananda alongside that of Sri Ramakrishna, said emphatically that had Sri Ramakrishna been in flesh and blood he would not have kept Swami Vivekananda by his side; rather he would have carried him on his shoulders and danced in ecstasy for his achievements in just less than forty years.

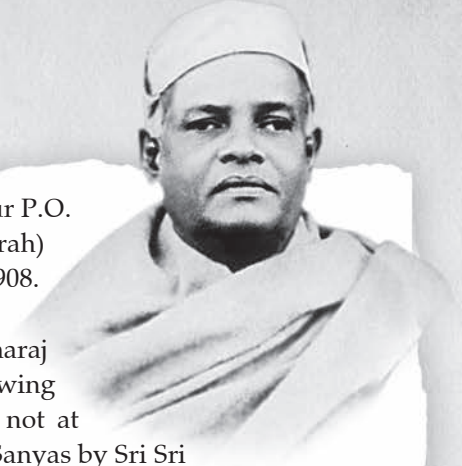
Even a simple reflection on the divine life of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi acts as a powerful spiritual practice that purifies our mind and heart. *



Unpublished Letters of Swami Saradananda¹

The Math. Belur P.O.
(Howrah)

Dated. July 13, 1908.



My dear Sasi Maharaj,²

The enclosed letter is from the boy of whom Rakhal Maharaj wrote to you in reply to your letter demanding an English knowing worker for Bangalore. As we let you know before, we have not at present any such excepting this one. He has been initiated into Sanyas by Sri Sri Mata Thakurani. He is inexperienced and young but Maharaj thinks, under proper training he will prove to be a valuable worker. Kindly write to him yourself and send his passage money directly to him, if you are willing to keep him under your care and training in Madras. As you will find from his letter he wants to be with you & serve you & not to go to Bangalore.

I hope you are well with Rudra. Our pranams to you & blessings on the latter. [Bengali]

Maharajji is at Puri now & well. Tulsi &, who went with him to see the Car festival, has returned yesterday. Jogin (Umananda) & Krishnalal (Dhirananda) are with Maharaj. Everything here is getting on well and all the Math members are joining me in sending love to you.

Yours affectly
Saradananda

P.S.

Has the balance of the costs for erecting the Madras Math been subscribed yet? If so do not forget to raise subscriptions for the Memorial Temple of Sri Swamiji. I hope your tour to Bangalore has benefited you by giving you the much needed rest. How is Atmananda (Sukul)? Our love & blessings to him please.

Yours
S.

* * *

1, Mukherji Lane,
Bagh Bazar, Calcutta.
6th April. 1920.

My dear Miss Fox,

I was so surprised to find myself so much distinguished one morning as to be elected a member of the National Geographical Society of Washington, D.C.! It was very kind of you to have thought of your poor Indian friend in this way. And I can not tell you how very grateful I feel towards you with this new expression of friendship and sisterly love to me, over and above to all the deep obligations you have laid me under on account of Naresh. May the Master bless you and

lead you to the direct realization of the peace and Light which the Vedanta promises to every sincere student!

I have been kept very busy of late with the Mission's growing works, and have not been able to write to my friends, though I always think of them and thank the Lord for enriching my life by bringing these into mine.

Sarada Devi is here with us since February last. She has been very much reduced of late on account of her frequently getting attacks of Malarial fever in her native village. She is a little better now. Her blessings on yourself and your sister and also on our common friend Gurudas.

Naresh is at present serving as the Asst. Mine Manager, Cape Copper Co. Ltd., Rakha-mines P.O., Singhbhum Dt. He is well with his wife and boy.

Bengal is passing through a very hard time on account of the cyclone which visited its eastern districts little while ago and for the very high price of food stuffs and other necessities of life. From the latter it is suffering in common with the rest of India. And I learn that it is the same with you in America.

With my very kind regards to you and wishing to be remembered kindly to your sister and all friends,

Yours in the Lord
Saradananda

* * *

Sri Ramakrishna Math.
Belur P.O. Howrah Dt.
16.4.20.

Dear Madam,

I regret to inform you that as I do not know the dialect prevalent in your part of the country (viz. Malayalam) I could not decipher your letter. If you can find one to write (what you want of me) in English I shall try to serve you to the best of my ability. With my blessings and best wishes,

Yours in the Lord
Saradananda

[[On the post card::]]

Srimati K. Palat Purukutti Amon.
Verode. Ottapalam.
P.O.Chlenangad.
South Malabar Dt.
Madras Presidency.

* * *

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1. A direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna
2. Swami Ramakrishnananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna

Courtesy: Ramakrishna Museum, Belur Math

Sister Nivedita and Indian Renaissance

SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue. . .)

Indeed, slowly but inevitably, Nivedita had transferred her loyalty from England to India, a change her Master had very much hoped for, without, however, knowing that it would occur much sooner and much more thoroughly than he might have thought possible. Among the factors that hastened this process were the short-sighted policies which the British Government followed in repressing the legitimate aspirations of India. She had observed with pain and shame how the British scientists received with studied coolness the fine discoveries that Dr. J. C. Bose had made about plant life just because he happened to be an Indian. While the Bose incident was a revelation to her in so far as it showed how wicked racial arrogance could be, she was stunned when she found that so innocent and desirable a proposal as that of founding an Indian university which was mooted by Jamshedji Tata, or the proposal of Mrs. Besant to start a Hindu college at Benares, was turned down by the British Government for no rhyme or reason. She wrote then, 'I am permanently embittered and disillusioned, I much fear.' She had till then thought it possible that while continuing in the status of a colony of Great Britain, India could enjoy enough opportunity to grow to be a prosperous and progressive country, but after these incidents, she became convinced that there was no other way than

that India should strive to be, by all means, mistress of her own fate, a free independent country. Arguing that a foreign Government, however good it might be, could be no substitute for a native Government, she said, 'To my mind, what a people do not do themselves is ill-done, no matter how brilliant it seems.' Describing the British conquest of India as nothing short of gangsterism, she said, 'India was absorbed in study; a gang of robbers came upon her and destroyed her land... Can the robbers teach her anything? No, she has to turn them out and go back to where she was before. Something like that, I fancy, is the true programme for India.' Anxious that England should realise her mistake and should willingly withdraw from India, she once met some important members of Parliament and appealed to them to terminate their rule in India as soon as possible. As might be expected, she was not able to bring them round to her viewpoint. She then



The author was a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order. This article is reproduced from Nivedita Commemorative Volume, 1968. ❧

turned to those Indians who were in England then—students, businessmen or people who were merely on a sight-seeing tour, and tried to impress on them how imperative it was that India should try to attain political freedom. While the limit of a patriotic Indian's aspirations was then only to get from Britain bigger Indian representation in the services and in the legislature, she, a British woman turned Indian, would have nothing short of complete severance of all ties with Britain and unadulterated political freedom for India.

Nivedita was now impatient to get back to India, for she felt that it was in India that her field lay and she could do very little to help her rise on her feet by staying away from India. What her feelings about India were might be gauged from the following excerpts from a letter she wrote to a friend about this time, 'I wish I were back in India. I am just longing to get there... I cannot bear to be away. How wonderful India is!'

Coming back to Calcutta in February 1902, Nivedita resumed her school work, but what now claimed her attention most was not teaching though she enjoyed it more than anything else, but spearheading a concerted move with leading Indians of the time to bring about a resurgence in the country. She concentrated on the task of marshalling all the progressive forces of the country to create with their help a new climate of vigour, hard work and creative activity in the country. The role she specifically played was to inspire in the leaders of the country a sense of national pride so that instead of looking up to Great Britain for a slow yielding of power, as many of them unfortunately did then, they would depend upon their own strength and resources so as to create a situation in which she would be forced to abdicate her power in favour of India. In urging the country to shed its sense

of defeatism and proceed with its programme of reconstruction entirely on national lines, Nivedita used her superb intellectual gifts to great effect. To her perceptive mind, and her capacity to unravel the true meaning of the Indian symbols, forms and rituals, which, according to Rabindranath, was amazing, she added a mastery of language, which made her the most forceful and convincing spokesman on behalf of India. It was not that she spoke about India as an apologist, but as one who knew what she was talking about and was able to prove everything she claimed about India with well-documented facts. It was this that gave weight to whatever she said and carried conviction with her audiences. She had infinite faith in India which she exuded whenever she had occasion to make any pronouncement about her. Also, such was her warmth of feeling and tenderness towards her people that when she spoke about them, one had the impression, as Rabindranath used to say, that she was as if speaking about her own 'dear child.'

Nivedita found herself now being accorded by the people of the country the same honour and status as a national leader, for by now the fact had become known throughout the country that she was a person having infinite love for India, that her knowledge and understanding of India's cultural heritage were almost without parallel, that she had come to India on a mission of service at great personal sacrifice that she had a vision for India's future that even the most daring among the Indian patriots did not have, and so on. The few free hours she ever had after teaching her pupils were now filled with reading, writing or meeting visitors. She frequently contributed articles to Indian journals on the burning topics of the day, telling the people in her characteristic manner never to lose heart

in the face of the problems which confronted them, but to attack them with courage and then work to reconstruct India in a fashion that she might be as great in the future as she was in the past. Nivedita's articles appearing in the leading journals of the day did much to rouse the patriotic fervour of the people and direct their attention to the tasks that lay before them to make this vision real.

While Nivedita wrote an endless flow of articles trying to instil into the minds of the people a sense of pride for the past of the country and hope for its future, she, who had been known to be an accomplished speaker even when she was in England, now brought into play all her oratorical powers in the service of the Indian cause. She was often requested to address public meetings with other national leaders to voice the grievances of the people and put forward their legitimate political demands. Nivedita always responded with alacrity, and as might be imagined, held her audiences enthralled. She travelled all over the country making speeches, and what distinguished her from other speakers was that while they often tended to underline India's shortcomings, she, on the other hand, endeavoured to focus attention on India's strong points even in the condition in which she was then.

Nivedita by now became such a powerful factor in Indian life that it was impossible to conceive of any progressive movement in the country without her being associated with it in some way or the other. She was in close touch with all the leading figures in public life then, who frequently visited her small house in Baghbazar to discuss with her the problems of the country. Not only statesmen, but also, men of letters, scientists, artists, university teachers, journalists, religious leaders, social reformers, research fellows, students—in

fact, men and women of all ranks and all professions visited her. To each one of them she gave encouragement, and where possible, active help and guidance also. Many of them later freely acknowledged that the success they achieved in their respective fields was largely due to her influence and encouragement. Even Rabindranath used to say that to none else did he owe so much as he did to Nivedita, though he also said that he had disagreements with her on many points. It is well-known that Sir J. C. Bose's achievements in the field of scientific research would have been difficult, if not impossible, but for Nivedita's encouragement and help. She wrote articles about him in British journals to draw the attention of the public in general and the world of science in particular to his work, fought against the prejudice which then prevailed against him in certain circles and cheered up his spirits when consistent opposition by a section of British scientists dejected him. What is more, she raised funds for him so that he could carry on his research without being too much inhibited by lack of finance, and even took him and his wife to her mother's home in the country for better care and rest when he fell ill. All this she did because she felt that Sir J. C. Bose could make significant contributions towards the progress of Indian science, and she, like her Master, being convinced that India's paramount need was science and technology, was anxious to do all she could to help him overcome his difficulties so that he could serve the cause of Indian science as well as she believed he was capable of.

It is perhaps not known to many that it was Nivedita who first introduced Havel to the meaning and significance of Indian art, and it might have been this which led Havel later to advise Abanindranath Tagore to use Indian techniques rather than Western in his

art, thus paving the way for the great revival which took place in Indian art during the first decades of the twentieth century. She was not only the most ardent champion of Indian art, but also its most enlightened critic. If in later years the Western intelligentsia showed interest in Indian art and acknowledged that it possessed a charm and grandeur not to be found in its counterpart elsewhere, it was largely because of her and Coomarswamy's interpretative writings on the subject.

In her anxiety to help India regain her lost status in the comity of nations, Nivedita was slowly drawn into politics, though originally it was not her intention, and it was not perhaps the intention of her Master either, that she should take any active part in politics. She then began to make speeches and write articles in which she made it abundantly clear that she was wholeheartedly for the immediate termination of the British rule in India. Although she did not share the aims and objects of the Congress, she tried to inject into it courage and vigour so that it might serve as an effective instrument not only to bring to a focus India's hopes and aspirations and give a sense of unity to the people inhabiting the sub-continent, but also transform them into a reality. In an appeal she issued on the eve of the Congress session held in Varanasi in 1905, she spelt out the aims of the Congress in the following words: 'It must animate its own members in the sense of nationality ...it must push forward to bring to light the mental sympathy that finds the vast family living between the Himalayas and Cape Comorin, between Manipur and the Persian Gulf.'

She helped and encouraged not only the Congress, but every other organisation in the country, no matter how little-known and how small in size, provided it appeared to her that it was helping the country's progress towards

its cherished goal. It has been said that her sympathy was not so much with organisations which employed peaceful and constitutional means as with organisations which used revolutionary tactics with a view to achieving their political goals. Some even go so far as to suggest that she was the brain behind such organisations, and it was she who procured the arms and ammunition which they used in carrying on their violent activities. Some of her biographers even claim that it was at her instance that Aurobindo had left Baroda and came over to Bengal to lead the revolutionaries of that part of the country.

In the absence of any conclusive evidence on the subject, it is difficult to prove or



Sister Nivedita's Samadhi, Darjeeling

disprove this, but it may be a safe bet to say that without herself being involved in any violent act, Nivedita perhaps would have no objection to violence being used for political ends.

What is important to note is that Nivedita was closely connected with every attempt which was being made then to take the country forward, be it political, social or intellectual. In some cases, she herself initiated the attempt, while in others she gave it strength, vigour or a new turn, to ensure that it might progress further and help the country. So great was her dynamism that anyone who came in contact with her felt inspired to work for his own improvement and also use whatever means he had at his command, in the service of the country. Her greatest contribution was that she taught the Indians to have faith in themselves, to believe that it was possible for them to achieve great things, and also that they were a distinct nation with much to be proud of. Commenting on her contributions she had made towards the awakening of India, Dr. Rashbehari Ghosh remarked, 'If the dry bones are beginning to stir, it is because Nivedita

breathed the breath of life into them... If we are conscious of a budding national life at the present day it is in no small measure due to the teaching of Sister Nivedita.'

Until the day she passed away in 1911, the most dominant thought in her mind was how best to serve India so that she with her multitudes might progress in all directions. She, for her part, thought no price too high to pay to make this possible. This idea of helping India to rise on her feet again, so completely possessed her that even though her iron constitution had given way due to sustained spells of overwork and malnutrition and she had become a physical wreck, she drove herself to continue her toils till she succumbed, almost without warning, in 1911, at the comparatively young age of forty-four.

Her last words were, 'The frail boat is sinking but I shall yet see the sun rise.' The sun had indeed risen on India, thanks to her sacrifice which was comparable only to that of her own Master and to sacrifice of her other hero, Dadhichi, who, as the legends say, had sacrificed his life so that others might live in freedom and peace. * *(Concluded.)*

.....

A Benediction

The mother's heart, the hero's will
 The sweetness of the southern breeze,
 The sacred charm and strength that dwell
 On Aryan altars, flaming, free;
 All these be yours, and many more
 No ancient soul could dream before—
 Be thou to India's future son
 The mistress, servant, friend in one.

—by Swami Vivekananda to Sister Nivedita

Ramakrishna Mission Nivedita Educational and Cultural Centre, Darjeeling

I Will Protect Them

SWAMI SUDARSHANANANDA

In the Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna promises, 'Whoever, being devoted to me solely, engage themselves always in contemplation and worship of Me—to such ever-steadfast devotees, I carry what they lack and preserve what they already have.'

After Sri Ramakrishna left his mortal frame in August, 1886, his young disciples who had renounced the world had to rearrange their life. Filled with intense dispassion, Swami Brahmananda and some other disciples left for tapasya (austerities) depending entirely on Sri Ramakrishna's grace.

Once, Swami Brahmananda and Swami Turiyananda were staying at Ayodhya, the birth place of Sri Ramachandra. Though there was a famine in the area, Swami Turiyananda was able to collect some food everyday. On an *Ekadasi* day, which is traditionally observed with a complete or partial fast and prayers, Swami Turiyananda found it difficult to get alms. He received only some boiled arum roots. Arum roots can produce severe soreness in the throat. As soon as the swamis ate this food, their throats began to sting and burn. Deeply saddened to see the plight of Swami Brahmananda, Swami Turiyananda quickly went out in search of some sour fruit, which is useful in countering this allergy. Wandering here and there he at last reached a lemon grove where some farmers were enjoying a smoke. When he begged for a lemon, the farmers told him that the trees were in bloom and lemons were out of season. As he was walking away Swami Turiyananda noticed one ripe lemon

on a tree. He went back to the farmers and requested them to give him this lemon. The surprised farmers gladly agreed and replied, 'There were no fruits here; but if there is one now it is meant especially for you.'

By the time Swami Turiyananda returned with the lemon, Swami Brahmananda's tongue and throat were swollen. Both the swamis quickly ate some lemon pieces and found relief. Arum roots and one lemon was their food for that day. After prayers and meditation they lay down to sleep. But how to sleep on an empty stomach and a still itching throat! Highly annoyed, Swami Brahmananda complained to Sri Ramakrishna as if he were physically present, 'You made us all leave home. Why did you do it if you cannot provide us a little food? All right – tomorrow morning if we get some *khichuri* (rice and lentils cooked together) and *chutney* (spicy side dish), I will believe you are with us.'

The next morning the swamis went to the Sarayu river for bath. When they returned to the bank after bathing, they found a Ramayat sadhu (a sadhu who worships God as Rama) looking about him as if in search of someone. When his eyes fell upon the swamis, he saluted them and said: 'Swamis, both of you have fasted since yesterday, observing Ekadasi, haven't you? Please come with me to Rama's cottage and have something to eat.'

The Swamis looked at each other. It was not the custom to eat at dawn after observing Ekadasi. 'Are you going to make us break the fast so early?' they asked the sadhu. 'I

☞ The author is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order serving at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kothar in Orissa.

have just offered Rama some *khichuri*,' he explained, 'and I wish you to take some of the offered food.' Thus entreating, the sadhu took them to his cottage, which was just a small hut built of straw. He asked the swamis to sit down, spread two leaves and placed on these *khichuri*, pickled tamarind and lemon. This was the offered food. While they were enjoying the meal, the sadhu said, 'How fortunate I am! It is now twenty four years since I started worshipping Rama. Day after day I have prayed, 'Lord, please speak to me. Let me have at least a kindly glance from you.' Finally He showed his grace today.' With these words the sadhu burst into tears.

He then explained, 'Last night I was resting when I felt someone with very gentle hands shake me and wake me up. He said: "Hello! Wake up! I am hungry. Cook some *khichuri* and offer it to me. Tomorrow early morning you will find two of my devotees taking bath in the river. Bring them here and feed them."' Then the sadhu looked towards the altar where he kept the images of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana and continued, 'I clearly saw that it had been Rama's hands which woke me up, and it was he who spoke these words. So I got up quickly, prepared the food, and called you. It is all because of your kindness that I have had the good fortune of being blessed by the Lord.' The swamis were greatly moved by what the sadhu told them. They thanked him and while returning, Swami Brahmananda told Swami Turiyananda how he had complained to Sri Ramakrishna the previous night.

There is another instance where this truth is strongly demonstrated. That is in the life of Swami Vivekananda. On a scorching summer afternoon Swamiji was travelling in a train. He was suffering from intense thirst; but he did not have money to even purchase

drinking water from the water-bearers. A trader travelling in the same compartment purchased water and taunted Swamiji for being a vagabond sanyasi without caring to earn money. When they alighted at Tari Ghat station, the trader sat down to eat nice food and continued to mock Swamiji who sat with a parched throat and empty stomach.

Just then a person appeared on the platform carrying food, water and a sitting mat. After hurriedly arranging the things, he called out to Swamiji, 'Babaji, babaji, I have brought food for you.' Greatly surprised, Swamiji replied, 'I am afraid you are making a mistake, my friend, perhaps you are taking me for somebody else. I do not remember having ever met you.' But the man cried out 'No, no, no. You are the very Babaji I have seen.' He then explained, 'I am a sweetmeat vendor. After finishing my worship and lunch, I was having my noon nap. And I dreamt that Sri Ramji was pointing you out to me and telling me that He was pained to see you without food from the day before, and that I should instantly prepare some puris and curry, and bring them to you at the railway station, with some sweetmeats, nice cold water, and a mat for you to sit on. I woke up, but thinking it was only a dream I turned on my side and slept again. But Sri Ramji came again and actually pushed me saying "Go soon, go soon." I immediately got up and prepared all the things. I ran here direct and recognized you at once from a distance. Now do come and have your meal at once. You must be very hungry.' Deeply touched by the experience, Swamiji thanked the man and had the divinely ordained meal.

Yogaksema is a wonderful word in Sanskrit. God assumes full responsibility for the welfare of the devotees when they renounce their ego and surrender to His Will. *



THE ORDER ON THE MARCH

News & Notes from Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

❧ Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj ❧

Jammu centre conducted special worship, devotional music and a lecture on 24 September which were attended by about 120 devotees.

❧ Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita ❧

Chennai Math held a drama on Sister Nivedita and released a DVD containing a *hari-katha* on her on 11 September.

Hyderabad centre conducted a special lecture on 9 September which was attended by about 600 teachers.

Jalpaiguri centre held a public meeting on 4 September at Farabari in Jalpaiguri district which was attended by 550 people.

Kadapa centre held a workshop for teachers from 9 to 11 September in which 70 teachers participated.

Port Blair centre held a youth convention on 28 August in which about 100 students took part.

Vadodara centre conducted a youth convention on 18 September which was attended by 100 youths.



Programme in Kadapa Centre

❧ News of Branch Centres (in India) ❧

The headmistress of the primary school of **Chengalpattu** centre has received *Dr Radhakrishnan Best Teacher Award* from the Govt of Tamil Nadu. The award comprising a medal, a citation and a cash prize of Rs. 10,000 was handed over to her on 5 September, the Teachers' Day.

On 11 September, Swami Gautamanandaji inaugurated the new community welfare centre building constructed by **Chennai Math** at Meyyur village in Tiruvallur district, as a part of its rural development activities there.

Sri V Shanmuganathan, Governor of Meghalaya, visited **Coimbatore Mission** centre on 20 September and gave away prizes to the students who had won the cultural competitions organized by the centre.

Sri Ram Naik, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, inaugurated the newly constructed Nivedita Nurses' Hostel building at **Vrindaban** centre on 24 September.

Swami Prabhanandaji declared open the newly built Sister Nivedita Cultural Hall at **Baranagar Mission** Ashrama on 24 September.

The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) of **Agartala** centre has received ISO 9001:2015 certificate for a period of three years.

❁ Free Eye Camps ❁

16 centres conducted free eye camps in which patients were tested/given spectacles/operated: Bankura centre treated 520, operated 120 patients; Chennai Math treated 82, operated 22; Delhi treated 102, operated 17; Ghatshila treated 154, operated 59; Halasuru treated 368, operated 156; Kamarpukur treated 603, operated 63; Khetri 270, operated 97; Lucknow treated 2826, operated 286; Madurai treated 273, operated 49; Mayavati treated 346, operated 103; Medinipur treated 106, operated 11; Porbandar treated 42, operated 16; Puri Mission treated 320; Rajamahendravaram treated 269, operated 33; Rajkot treated 536, operated 95; Salem treated 171, operated 27, and Seva Pratishthan treated 139, operated 11 patients.

❁ Values Education and Youth Programmes ❁

Bengaluru Math held two spiritual retreats, one for college girls and another for college boys, on 11 and 18 September in which altogether 1550 students participated.

Delhi centre conducted 41 values education workshops in different parts of India for school teachers and principals from July to September which were attended by 2882 people in all.

Madurai Math conducted a personality development camp on 10 September in which 282 students from a college in Madurai took part.

Mangaluru centre conducted three values education seminars on 1, 2 and 3 September for postgraduate students, college lecturers and engineering students respectively. In all, about 1250 people participated in the seminars.

Salem Ashrama conducted three values education programmes at three colleges in and around Salem in September which were attended by 579 students in all.

Vadodara centre held eight values education programmes at different educational institutions in Gujarat in August and September in which altogether 1545 students participated. Another programme for parents of students was held at a school in Vadodara on 20 August which was attended by 150 people.

❁ Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign) ❁

Chepauk railway station in Chennai was cleaned on 22 September by 100 students and staff of **Chennai Students' Home** polytechnic. The students also campaigned for cleanliness.

Coimbatore Mission centre conducted five cleaning programmes in September in which a number of students cleaned premises of government offices, a hospital and a public road.

About 400 students, staff and monastic members of **Narottam Nagar** centre took part in cleanliness drives on 28 and 30 August and 3 September by cleaning residential areas near the centre.

Rahara centre held speeches, competitions and cultural programmes on cleanliness from 8 to 13 August in which about 2800 students and staff of the centre's different institutions participated.

Vadodara centre conducted a public meeting on 28 September in which about 100 people took a pledge for a clean India. Besides, films on cleanliness were screened in the meeting.



*Felicitation for Corporation Sweepers,
Vadodara Centre*

❧ News of Branch Centres (Outside India) ❧

The General Secretary declared open the new dining-hall extension at **Durban** (South Africa) centre on 9 September. On 11 September, he unveiled the newly installed statue of Swamiji at the centre and also inaugurated the centre's platinum jubilee and Sister Nivedita's 150th birth anniversary celebrations.

❧ Relief Work: A Brief Report as on 1 October 2016 ❧

1. Flood Relief:

(A) India: (i) **Assam:** In the wake of devastating floods caused by incessant rains and breach of riverbanks in Dhemaji district, **Itanagar** centre distributed 7600 kg rice, 1900 kg *dal* (lentils), 380 kg edible oil, 190 kg *gur* (molasses), 380 kg salt, 3800 matchboxes, 760 bars of soap, 380 kg detergent powder, 760 packets of candles, 760 mats and 380 utensil sets (each set containing 4 plates, 4 cups and 4 tumblers) on 11 September among 380 affected families in Kabu Chapori Sele village in Jonai sub-division.

(ii) Bihar:

(a) Chapra centre distributed 1200 kg *chira* (rice flakes) and 250 kg *gur* among 426 flood-affected families in Revelganj and Sadar blocks in Saran district from 31 August to 6 September.

(b) Patna centre distributed 2610 kg *chira*, 1400 kg *gur*, 1548 kg *sattu* (gram flour), 1500 kg salt, 600 litres of fruit juice, 6292 matchboxes and 7800 candles among 1548 families in Maner and Fatuwa blocks in Patna district from 29 to 31 August.

(iii) Madhya Pradesh: **Allahabad** centre distributed 2025 kg *atta* (flour), 162 kg *dal*, 830 kg potatoes, 162 kg salt, 162 *saris*, 162 *dhotis*, 162 *chaddars*, 162 blankets, 1220 bamboos and 83 plastic sheets among 83 flood-affected families of 5 villages in Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh, on 22 and 23 September.

(iv) Telangana: **Hyderabad** centre served cooked food and distributed bread, biscuits, milk, etc to nearly 1000 affected people in Banjara Hills, Lalapet and Begumpet areas of Hyderabad from 24 to 26 September.

(B) Bangladesh: **Jessore** centre distributed 8000 kg rice, 3200 kg potatoes, 670 kg *chira*, 540 packets of mosquito-coils, 540 packets of detergent powder, etc among 1800 flood-affected families in Manirampur, Keshabpur and Abhaynagar Upazilas in Jessore district from 1 to 4 September.

2. Cyclone Relief

(A) India: Andhra Pradesh: The devastating cyclone on 12 September and subsequent downpour caused severe water inundation in some districts of the state. On 15 and 16 September, **Vijayawada** centre distributed 250 kg rice, 100 kg red gram, 50 kg sugar, 25 kg tamarind, 50 litres of edible oil, 50 kg flour, 100 towels, 100 *dupats* (rugs), 100 *saris* with blouses and 50 utensil sets (each set containing 2 plates, 2 tumblers, a pot and a ladle) among 50 affected families of Macherla village in Guntur district.





(B) Fiji: Continuing its relief work among the people affected by Winston Cyclone, **Fiji** centre distributed 5764 packets of agricultural seeds (12 varieties), 166 rolls of fishing lines, 2000 water containers (of 20 litres size), 110 computers and various other relief materials to thousands of affected families from June to September. During the same period the centre also provided medical assistance to 3974 affected people.

3. Fire Relief: Assam: From 27 to 29 August, **Karimganj** centre distributed 21 *saris*, 51 *dhotis*, 14 packets of biscuits, 21 utensil sets and 55 blankets among 41 families affected by an accidental fire at Charbazar area in Karimganj district.

4. Distress Relief: The following centres distributed various items, shown against their names, to needy people:

(a) **Asansol:** 75 *saris* and 25 *lungis* on 18 September.

(b) **Coimbatore Mission:** 2804 shirts, 167 T-shirts, 2493 tops, 4281 pants and 19 flat- knits from 26 July to 27 August.

(c) **Cooch Behar:** 332 *dhotis*, 54 *saris*, 25 kg milk powder and 25 kg cornflakes on 14 and 21 August.

(d) **Jalpaiguri:** 400 *saris* and 400 plates on 25 September.

(e) **Koyilandy:** 3404 shirts and 1702 pants from 7 to 22 June.

(f) **Manasadwip:** 4887 shirts and 2064 pants from 30 July to 15 September.

(g) **Narottam Nagar:** 50 bicycles on 4 September.

(h) **Rajarhat Bishnupur:** 266 *saris*, 59 *dhotis* and 43 *lungis* from 1 to 7 July.

(i) **Sarisha:** 850 shirts and 619 pants from 31 July to 31 August.

(j) **Shillong:** 101 shirts, 515 pants, 100 T-shirts, 141 sweaters, 96 jackets, 1251 tops and 381 ladies garments from 8 July to 26 September.

5. Drought Rehabilitation: Maharashtra: A formal programme was held on 18 September to mark the successful completion of the water conservation project taken up by **Pune** centre at Shiur village in Ahmednagar district a couple of months ago. The project, which involved dredging of 2.5 km stretch of the river Kanadi, will help in mitigating the problem of water scarcity faced by the village.

6. Flood Rehabilitation: Tamil Nadu: Chennai Students' Home handed over 14 newly built low-cost houses to poor flood-affected families of Kanchivoyal village in Thiruvallur district on 24 September.

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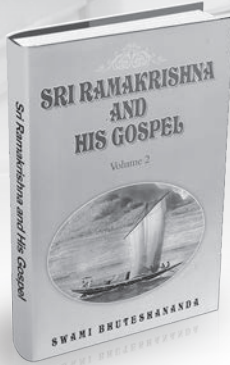
Go, all of you, wherever there is an outbreak of plague or famine, or wherever the people are in distress, and mitigate their sufferings. At the most you may die in the attempt — what of that? ... Die you must,. . . it is better to die with a great ideal in life.

—The Complete Works of
Swami Vivekananda, 5.383



Book Reviews

FOR REVIEW IN THE VEDANTA KESARI,
PUBLISHERS NEED TO SEND US TWO COPIES OF THEIR LATEST PUBLICATION.



SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND HIS GOSPEL VOL 2

by **Swami Bhuteshananda**.
Trans by **Swami Vimohananda and Dharitri Kumar Das Gupta**.

Published by Advaita Ashrama, 5, Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata - 700 014. E-mail: mail@advaitaashrama.org, 2007, Hardbound, pp.552, Rs.125

Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, the 12th President of the Ramakrishna Order, conducted weekly Bengali classes on the "Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita" (The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna) for nearly a decade. These classes were transcribed in Bengali and brought out in book form in seven volumes. These have been translated into English and published in three volumes.

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna has an almost stenographic record of various conversations with Sri Ramakrishna. It also gives vivid descriptions of the environment and people, which brings the scene to life in the mental eye of the reader. This, combined with the lively and illuminating words of Sri Ramakrishna makes the book exceptional.

To fully grasp the context and spirit of the conversations in the Gospel, it is necessary for the reader to have some knowledge of the social conditions of that time, some background about the people involved in the conversation, some insight into the philosophy or spiritual practice being discussed, scriptural references to the teachings, etc. These are very beautifully fulfilled by Swami Bhuteshanandaji in these books.

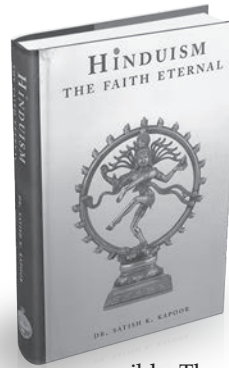
The flow of the narration follows the flow of the Gospel. So there is a repetition of topics, like in the Gospel. However, every time the same topic is dealt with, it is fresh and the reader gets additional insight, like in the Gospel. The flow is fluid and spontaneous. Not every word in the Gospel is

discussed. Thus, this is not a commentary on the Gospel. Only the topic being discussed, with some important quotations from the Gospel, is explained. However, the flow of topics is maintained. The explanations are very deep and comprehensive.

Swami Bhuteshanandaji brings in incidents from the lives of various people, whom he has met, to explain the discussions in the Gospel. This helps the reader to see how the topics in the Gospel are applicable to today's life. He also brings in quotations from Gita, Upanishads, Bhagavata, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Chandi and other Hindu scriptures and stotras to match with the ideas discussed by Sri Ramakrishna. This has the great value of bringing in the scriptural authority for the teachings in the Gospel.

Reading this book is very helpful to have a deeper understanding of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.

GOKULMUTHU.N, BANGALORE



HINDUISM THE FAITH ETERNAL by **Dr. Satish K. Kapoor**.

Published by Advaita Ashrama, 5, Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata - 700 014. E-mail: mail@advaitaashrama.org, Hardbound, pp.528, xxi, Rs.360.

Swami Shuddhidananda and Satish K. Kapoor have done the nearly impossible. They have in one affordable volume introduced The Faith Eternal in all its heteroglossic majesty to the English speaking world.

The genius of the author, Satish K. Kapoor, is evident through two examples. In pp185-86, Kapoor traces the origins of Kauai Aadheenam. This is no small feat. It is very difficult to clearly contextualize Hindu movements of such importance within two pages. In page 188 Kapoor mentions

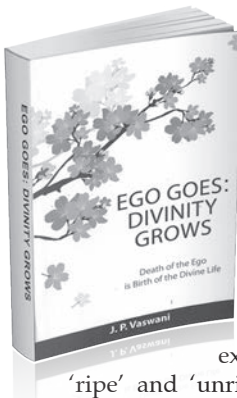
the Aghoris and comments rightly that "Majority of them [Aghoris] do not trace their lineage to any of the four hierarchical orders among the Hindus and are outside the *varna* system." Satish Kapoor does not miss commenting on any aspect of the *sanatana dharma*. Kapoor's research on women is worthy of being made part of women's studies curricula the world over. After all, Hinduism's truths are self-evident and thus, universal. This is the passage which both law-framers in our country and patriarchal satraps would do well to memorize (sic): 'Female foeticide was not in vogue in ancient India. . . The girl. . . was invested with the sacred thread. . . the girl could choose to be a life-long student of the sacred texts [and remain single or choose to marry].' (334)

It is doubtful whether Wendy Doniger will ever cite this single-volume self-contained encyclopedia, but both the author and the editor show their cosmopolitanism by citing Doniger for the status of women in ancient India (339).

Hinduism: the Faith Eternal should be gifted to fanatics, especially those who hate women and humanity in general. Musa Cerantonio will do well to read this book.

Swami Shuddhidananda has fulfilled his mandate well as an editor. The annotated references at the end of each chapter; the thoughtfully selected appendices, the glossary and the select bibliography at the end of the book are meticulously done. Not a single diacritical mark is wrongly used or missed.

PROF SUBHASIS CHATTOPADHYAY, KOLKATA



EGO GOES: DIVINITY GROWS

by J. P. Vaswani.

Published by Gita Publishing House, 10, Sadhu Vaswani Path, Pune - 411 001. E-mail: gph@sadhuvaswani.org Pages 136. Paperback. Price not mentioned.

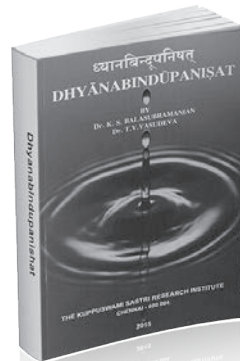
Sri Ramakrishna explains two states of ego, the 'ripe' and 'unripe'. Sankaracharya retained the 'ego of knowledge' and Chaitanyadeva, the 'ego of devotion'.

'Ego Goes: Divinity Grows' by Dada Vaswani is a study of the most common malady, the human

ego. The revered author has analysed the subject from various angles and his wisdom will serve as a useful lesson to the present generation. Ego, defined as the opinion one has about him/herself, needs to be handled with utmost care. After explaining with anecdotes and stories the book helps to realize that unrestrained ego will not let Divinity in.

Attention is drawn to our 'obsession with the physical body' that keeps us in bondage. The ego acts like a behemoth preventing rational thinking, '... like a cataract that blocks the inner vision'. The guru becomes the surgeon to remove the block. Often '... the sense of separation, the sense of exclusion and isolation, is what makes the ego a negative force'. The remedy is to realise that we are 'an intrinsic part of a larger whole. . .' Learn to 'Be in the world but not of the world'. The selflessness of Urmila in Ramayana, taking over her husband's nidra for fourteen years to enable him to serve Rama and Sita uninterrupted, is remarkable. She was also a symbol of humility.

P. S. SUNDARAM, MUMBAI



DHYANABINDUPANISHAT

by Dr. K.S. Bala-subramanian and Dr.T.V. Vasudeva.

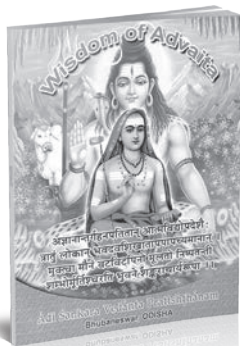
Published by The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, No.84, Thiru Vi. Ka. Road, Mylapore, Chennai - 600 004. E-mail: ksrinst@gmail.com, 2015, paperback, pp.60 + x Rs. 50.

The book mainly focuses on 'dhyana' (meditation) and the other essential features associated with it. A transliteration of the Sanskrit texts in Roman script has been provided for the benefit of those who are keen in knowing the text through the script. The text commences with the greatness of Meditation on Brahman, the Highest Reality, which act alone can alleviate all afflictions accrued in this world. 'Bindu' means a 'drop' or a 'point', but in Saiva and Sakta traditions it represents 'sakti' or consciousness. The subtle and all-pervasive nature of Brahman is described and yoga of meditation enables the aspirant to realize that Ultimate Self which transcends human comprehension otherwise.

The nature of Pranava(AUM) syllables have been identified with the imperishable Brahman. The appropriate Veda, deity, colour and quality connected with each letter has been crisply stated. The rule for meditation on the pranava with pranayama, meditation on Brahman with attributes, meditation on the Trinity, meditation in the heart and its benefits, merging of the prana with the abode of Brahman the six-limbed yoga, the four asanas, the abode of yoni, the nature of four chakras, the ten vayus, prana, etc., jiva under the control of prana and apana, the union of prana and apana during yoga, ajapahamsa vidya, piercing the entrance to moksha through awakening of kundalini, awakening of kundalini through celibacy, the three bandhas, practice of khecarimudra, the attainment of vajroli through the practice of khecari, attaining jivanmukti through the knowledge of the two-fold bindu, practice of mahamudra, realization of self in the heart and the self-realization through nadanusandhana are the headings under which this work vividly presents all the relevant factors and methodology related to yoga.

This work may be labelled as a compendium on yoga which helps to unite the human self with the Supreme Self through meditation. In this venture the readers are benefited in knowing much about metaphysical truths, psychological phenomena, moral observances and obligations, religious significance and mystical realization. On the whole, this work will certainly serve as a guideline to the practitioners of yoga both theoretically and practically.

PROF. R. GOPALAKRISHNAN, CHENNAI



WISDOM OF ADVAITA, SHANKARA JAYANTI VOLUME

*Published by Adi Shankara
Vedanta Pratishthanam,
Bhubaneswar, Plot No.
1505, Mahatab Road,
Bhubaneswar - 751 002,
Odisha. E-mail: adishankara-
vedantapratisthanam@
gmail.com 2013, paperback,
pp.136, Rs.125.*

The present volume is a collection of articles by renowned scholars on the philosophy

of Advaita Vedanta as propounded by Sri Adi Sankaracharya, to whom we are indebted for the revival of Vedic religion.

The Introduction to the volume gives a basic idea of spiritual life as presented by Sri Sankara in his melodious hymn 'Bhaja Govindam' also called Moha-mudgara, where the Acharya tries to destroy the darkness of ignorance by igniting the fire of discrimination and dispassion. Dr. S. Bhuvaneshwari has presented a scholarly translation of Sri Adi Sankaracharya's Manishapanchakam along with Sadasivendra Yogi's commentary Tatparyadipika, also giving the background of Acharya Sankara's encounter with the Chandala. Radha Raghunathan gives a lucid commentary on Sri Sankara's Nirvana Satkam with reference to Acharya's philosophy based on various bhashyas. Dr. N. Usha Devi presents a short account of Acharya Sankara's philosophical concepts of Brahman, Maya, Mukti, etc. as a reflexive thinking on the Vedic credence. Dr. V. Vasanthakumari explains Sri Sankara's perspective of Sruti as Sabdapramana. Sri G. R. Patil gives a rare account of Sri Sukadeva with reference to the Mahabharata and a translation of Sukashtakam. Dr. Mahesh Hampiholi gives a brief account on Sri Totakacharya's Sruti-sarasamuddharana, which is an unique treatise on Advaita Vedanta by a direct disciple of Acharya Sankara. Prof. T. Diwakar Rao discusses Sri Sankara's philosophy of Action and Inaction, while Prof. Ravindra Kumar and Prof. T.S. Krishnamurthy give the essence of Sri Sankara's teachings. Dr. Bhaskar Roy Barman delineates the concept of man in Indian thought with reference to the Vedas, Upanishads and various schools of philosophy. Dr. V. Nithyanantha Bhat examines the relevance of Vedic Vision in the modern world in the fields of Science, Environmental Crisis, Education, Management, etc. with reference to Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ranganathananda, who were the champions of modern Practical Vedanta.

All these well-drafted articles are a treat for both the student of Advaita Vedanta as well as a devotee who seeks Vedic Wisdom as propounded by Sri Adi Sankaracharya. In its present format the volume looks like a souvenir, but it has the potential it can be presented in a standard book-format in a future edition.

SWAMI SHANTACHITTANANDA, ADVAITA ASHRAMA, KOLKATA





Ramakrishna Sarada Ashrama, Devaprayag

An Appeal

The incessant rain in Uttarakhand has brought about destruction on a large scale this year. However, with the grace of Sri Sri Thakur and Sri Maa the ashrama has been spared from any damage. Meanwhile in this ancient land of pilgrimage this ashrama carved out in Sri Sri Thakur's name has found a place in the hearts of many devotees. Lovers of pilgrimages, the Himalayan people, have accepted this new place of worship (established in 2014) dedicated to Thakur Maa Swamiji with love, respect and devotion. Therefore, taking the future into consideration the need is to earmark the sliding zones and build strong retaining walls. For this purpose, the estimated cost will be approximately 30 lakh rupees. We appeal to all devotees to please donate generously towards this venture. May Thakur Maa Swamiji shower their choicest blessings on each one of you. This is my heartfelt prayer.

Yours in the lord
Swami Sarvatmananda
Secretary

Communication

Ramakrishna Sarada Ashrama, Dak Banglow Road, PO Devaprayag Tehri Garhwal
Uttarakhand. Pin- 249301 Phone - 09410520939, 9897452084

E-mail id: rmksarada@gmail.com

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NEW RELEASES

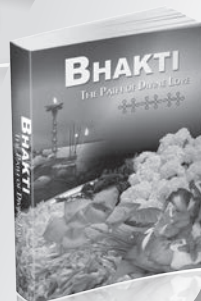
Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai - 600 004

Email: mail@chennaiamath.org

Bhakti – The Path of Divine Love

Pages: 512 Rs.140/- Postage: Rs.30/-for single copy.

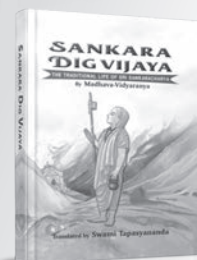
Originally published as the annual number of The Vedanta Kesari, the book explores the rich tradition of Bhakti and different forms of its practice and how one can cultivate it in life.



Sankara Dig Vijaya

Pages: 408 Rs.250/- Postage: Rs.60/-for single copy.

The book is an English translation of Madhava-Vidyaranya's traditional life of Sri Sankaracharya. It also has a profound and penetrating exposition of some of the moot points in Advaita metaphysics. It is translated by Swami Tapasyananda who was a Vice President of the Ramakrishna Order.



Sri Ramakrishna: Story for Children

Pages: 28 Rs. 45/- Postage: Rs.30/-for single copy.

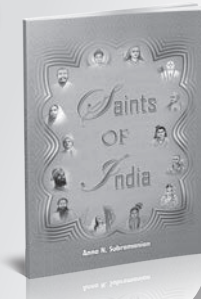
With colourful drawings and a simple and lucid English, the book presents the life of Sri Ramakrishna for young readers.



Saints Of India

Pages: 208 Rs. 65/- Postage: Rs.30/-for single copy.

The book is a compilation of talks given to college students by Sri 'Anna' N.Subramanian. He was a householder-disciple of Swami Shivananda and served for many years in the Ramakrishna Mission educational institutions in Chennai.





RAMAKRISHNA ADVAITA ASHRAMA

D-45/6, LUXA, VARANASI -221010 (0542) 2393975 ,

E-mail: varanasi.advaita@rkmm.org

A Branch of Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, Howrah 711202

An Appeal

Situated in the holiest of the holy city of Lord Vishwanath, Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama Varanasi is one of the oldest branch centres of the Ramakrishna Order. Swami Shivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, started this ashrama on 4 July 1902 at the bidding of Swami Vivekananda. This ashrama has been sanctified by the holy visit of Sri Maa Saradadevi, Swami Brahmananda, Swami Saradananda and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Here is the first temple of Sri Ramakrishna wherein his first image is daily worshipped with food offering. Regular scriptural classes and discourses are held every day, and all the important religious festivals are celebrated. The Ashrama is also the home for senior and retired monks. The learned monks also go out for preaching. There is also a Public Library with 17000 books.

The main building of the Ashrama is 125 years old. The other buildings added later are 85 years old. The old temple and buildings need urgent repairs. The Library requires replacement of many old books and an up-gradation for which a scheme has been chalked out.

Uninterrupted economic power supply is essential for any institution. Solar power generation is well recognized universally for regular power supply and will reduce the increasing financial burden on the ashrama. We therefore have planned to install a 30 kw solar power generation set on the roof top of the ashrama building.

The estimated cost for the above activities is as follows:

1.	Fitting an electric lift	Rs. 15,00,000.00
2.	Purchase of New books and furniture in library	Rs. 10,00,000.00
3.	Repair and renovation of temple and buildings	Rs.25,00,000.00
4.	30 KW Solar electricity Generating System	Rs.30,00,000.00
5.	Corpus fund for maintenance of old retired monks	Rs.50,00,000.00
6.	Corpus Fund for maintenance of temple	Rs.30,00,000.00
	Total	Rs.1,60,00000.00

We earnestly request all devotees, friends and well-wishes, philanthropic organizations and corporate houses to kindly help financially in this extremely important task of upgrading and repair of the Ashrama.

All donations to Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission are exempt from income tax u/s 80 G of income tax act. 1961. Remittance may be addressed to and cheques drawn in favour of **Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Varanasi**. Your donation may be E-deposited in the name of

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Yours in the Lord,
Swami Vishwatmananda
Adhyaksha



YOUNG INDIA, ARISE !

Youth Convention - Tamilnadu - 2016

25, 26, 27 November 2016
(Fri, Sat, Sun)

RETAIN THIS FOR YOUR REFERENCE

For youth of 16 TO 30 YEARS OF AGE, GIRLS/LADIES AND BOYS/MEN

Conducted by the **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya** (a branch-centre of the Ramakrishna Mission, HQ, Belur Math, Bengal)
SRKV Post, Periyanaickenpalayam, Coimbatore 641 020. Ph: 0422-269 2676, 9944941427, e-mail: ycsrkvcbe20@gmail.com, web: www.srkv.org

Purpose: To bring back the Indian Youth to the center of national consciousness such self-sacrificing role-models and heroes as Swami Vivekananda and others, present and past.

Tentative Camp Routine

a.m.

- 5:00 : Rising, bathing etc.
- 6:00 to 9:00 : Devotional songs, meditation, yoga, breakfast
- 9:00 to 12:30 : Two talks, questions-answers, with tea-break

p.m.

- 02:00 to 04:45 : Paper-presentation by delegates, interactive session, question-answers
- 05:00 to 06:00 : Sports/games
- 06:00 to 08:00 : Video screening, meditation, dinner
- 08:00 to 09:30 : Cultural programme

SAMPLE TOPICS FOR TALKS, PAPER PRESENTATION OR DISCUSSION

- ♦ Women's Empowerment and Development.
- ♦ Sister Nivedita and Bharathiyar from the great lineage of Swami Vivekananda.
- ♦ Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramanujachariyar.
- ♦ Values we get from Indian Epics.
- ♦ Will Power.
- ♦ Success Mantras for Youth Leadership
- ♦ Challenges before the youth and social transformation.
- ♦ Youth power for world peace.
- ♦ Swami Vivekananda and Education for Human Excellence.
- ♦ Personality Development according to Swami Vivekananda.
- ♦ Harnessing the Amazing Power of the Mind.
- ♦ Youth as Global Citizens.
- ♦ A Comprehensive life sketch of Swami Vivekananda.
- ♦ Be and Make.

Interested youth should send by **10 November 2016** a copy of their paper they wish to present (in English & Tamil) on any of the proposed or related topics. The presentation should be of only 5 minutes duration.

The selection of papers will be based on clarity, originality, relevance and practicability.

The decision of the selection committee will be final.

- ♦ Camp: 100% residential
- ♦ Food: Vegetarian
- ♦ Accommodation: Simple and safe, Separate for men & women
- ♦ Languages of discussion: Tamil for the most part, and some in English
- ♦ Delegates must bring simple bedding consisting of bed-spread, bed-sheet, light warm clothing; a torch-light; and an umbrella, depending on the weather
- ♦ Dress-code: Dignified; traditional. No jeans or body-hugging dresses; Boys/Men: Pant-shirt (decent colours); Girls/Ladies: Saree/Salwar - Kameez, Churidar
- ♦ Use of any intoxicants (cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, etc.) or indecent behaviour will result in immediate expulsion of the culprit from the camp.

Fees : Rs.500/- per person, including food, accommodation and study material

To register yourself as a delegate, fees must be sent by Demand Draft or Money Order payable to

"Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya" at the following address:

Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Periyanaickenpalayam, Coimbatore - 641 020,

or paid in cash personally at the Vidyalaya's Youth Convention Office between 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon; 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Also pay thro' NEFT / RTGS: Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Indian Overseas Bank, Periyanaickenpalayam Branch,

Account No. 256101000015000, Account Type: SB, IFSC Code: IOBA 0002561

Please visit our website also to download the registration form.

Last date of receiving fees and filled in Registration Forms: 10.11.2016. Maximum number of delegates : About 1200 on first-come basis.

The Influence of Indian Thought on the Thought of the West

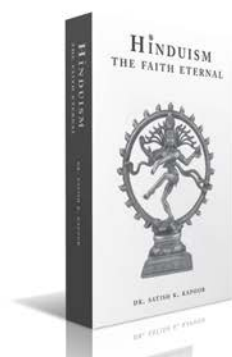
Swami Ashokananda

In one of his lectures delivered in India, Swami Vivekananda says: "Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard, and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world. Silent, unperceived, yet omnipotent in its effect, it has revolutionized the thought of the world, yet nobody knows when it did so."

This book discusses in brief the role India has played in shaping the global thought and culture, and also how the philosophy of the Upanishads has influenced Western thought.



Pages 63 | Price ₹ 25
Packing & Postage: ₹ 35



Pages 552 | Price ₹ 360
Packing & Postage: ₹ 60

Hinduism—The Faith Eternal

By Dr Satish Kapoor

This work attempts to explain the quintessential of Hinduism within the orbit of time and beyond it, involving an explication of the eternal values and principles which sustain existence. It mainly explores the dynamics of Hinduism in a religio-historical framework through the second millennium of the common era. It has four parts: 1) The Faith Eternal; 2) Hinduism During the Second Millennium; 3) Images and Impact; and 4) Perceptions and Perspectives. This is a scholarly work with copious notes and references, a rich glossary, and over 90 photographs in black and white.

Swami Vivekananda The ultimate Paradox Manager

By Asim Chaudhuri

The life of every human being is seen to be filled with paradoxes; and when it comes to the great world-impacting personalities like Swami Vivekananda, it becomes all the more conspicuous. Paradoxes or contradictions can prove to be quite exhausting for most of us to handle; and when we fail to handle it properly, it becomes the source of negative feelings of guilt, anxiety, a sense of moral deprivation, loss of self-esteem, and the like. How Swamiji managed the paradoxes or dissonances in his own life forms the main subject-matter of this book. The author looks at the paradoxes of Swamiji's life through the lens of Leon Festinger's "theory of cognitive dissonance"; and the result is a stimulating work that brings out the co-existing "light-and-shade" facets of Swamiji's multi-dimensional personality.



Pages: 214 | Price: ₹ 90
Packing & Postage: ₹ 40



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Phones: 91-33-22890898 / 22840210 / 22866483, Email: mail@advaitaashrama.org

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RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA

(Headquarters : Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, (Near Kolkata)
Dist. Howrah, West Bengal - 711 202)

Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass),
AURANGABAD - 431 010.

The Universal Temple of Bhagwan Shri Ramakrishna (Under Construction)

An earnest Appeal for generous donations

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Aurangabad located on Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass) is a branch center affiliated to Headquarters, Belur Math (near Kolkata). This ashrama is conducting various service activities in the field of health, education, child welfare, as well as spreading spiritual message of eternal religion as propounded by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

This ashrama has taken up a new project of erecting a temple of Shri Ramakrishna. The work was commenced in December 2009 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

The temple will be a unique and imposing monumental structure of its kind in entire Marathwada region in general and Aurangabad city in particular. It will add a cultural and spiritual dimension to the historical city of Aurangabad. It will be a great attraction and a place for worship, prayer, meditation and inspiration for the local people. It is also expected that the good number of general public visiting Aurangabad city as tourists for visiting world heritage sites such as Ellora & Ajanta and pilgrims for visiting Ghrishneshwar Jyotirling, Shirdi, Paithan etc. will include visit to the temple in their itinerary. It is aimed for the benefit of one and all without distinction of caste, creed, and nationality.

The estimated cost of the entire project is Rs. 20 Crores. So far Rs. 15.00 Crores have been spent through public contribution. The balance amount of Rs. 05.00 Crores is needed to complete the construction of the Temple.

We earnestly appeal to you to donate generously for this noble cause. Your support will indeed go a long way in our endeavor to erect this magnificent architectural edifice in the memory of Shri Ramakrishna who was the unique harmonizer of all the religions of the world and who dedicated his life to bring peace and welfare of mankind.

We value your help and co-operation immensely.

Temple Dimensions : Length: 156 ft. Breadth: 076 ft. Height: 100 ft.
Temple Construction Area : 18000 Sq.ft.
Garbhagriha : 24 ft. x 24 ft.
Temple Hall for Prayer and Meditation : 70 ft. x 40 ft. Seating Capacity - 450
Auditorium (Ground Floor) : 80 ft. x 57 ft. Seating Capacity - 500
The entire Temple will be built in Chunar sandstone and interior in Ambaji and Makarana marble. Ceiling of the Temple Hall will be done in Teak Wood
Estimated Cost : Rs. 20 Crores

Yours in the service of the Lord,

Vishnupadananda

(Swami Vishnupadananda)
Secretary



Model of the Proposed New Temple



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Swamiji's statue in
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We play our parts here—good or bad. When the dream is finished and we have left the stage, we will have a hearty laugh at all this—of this only I am sure. —**Swami Vivekananda in a letter to Sister Nivedita, CW, 6.436**

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Teach yourselves, teach everyone his/her real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.

—Swami Vivekananda

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