



REACH

Newsletter of the Vedanta Centres of Australia

Motto:

Atmano mokshartham
jagad hitaya cha,

“For one’s own
liberation and for the
welfare of the world.”

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Sayings and Teachings

Know the essence of the scriptures

“Too much study of the scriptures does more harm than good. The important thing is to know the essence of the scriptures. The essence of the *Gita* is what you get by repeating the word ten times. The word becomes reversed. It is then “*tyagi*”, which refers to renunciation. The essence of the *Gita* is: O, man, renounce everything and practise spiritual discipline for the realisation of God.”

--- Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna: A Biography in Pictures, Advaita Ashrama, Himalayas; page 63.

Way to Attain peace

“If you want peace do not see the faults of others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child. This whole world is your own.”

--- Sri Sarada Devi

Sri Sarada Devi: The Holy Mother: Life and Teachings by Swami Tapasyananda; Ramakrishna Math, Chennai.; page 73-4.

Shifting pendulum

“If a bad thing comes, what of that? The pendulum must swing back to the other side. But that is no better. The thing to do is to stop it.”*

“The more we come out and do good to others, the more our hearts will be purified, and God will be in them.”

--- Swami Vivekananda

Great sayings: The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. viii; Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata; page *280.



Vedanta Centre of Sydney (An Artist’s Impression—birds’ eye view)
2 Stewart Street, Ermington, NSW 2115.

FORTHCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Function	Centre	Date
Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda	Adelaide	Sunday, 3 February 2013
	Melbourne	Saturday, 9 February 2013
	Perth & Sydney	Sunday, 3 February 2013
	Auckland, NZ	Sunday, 3 February 2013
Maha Shiva-Ratri	Sydney	Sunday, 10 March 2013
Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna	Brisbane	Saturday, 9 March 2013
	Melbourne	Saturday, 16 March 2013
	Perth	Wednesday, 13 March 2013
	Sydney	Wednesday, 13 March 2013
	Auckland, NZ	Saturday, 16 March 2013
Sri Chaitanya Jayanti	Sydney	Wednesday, 27 March 2013
Ramanavami	Sydney	Friday, 19 April 2013
Sri Shankaracharya	Sydney	Thursday 26 April 2013
Buddha Purnima	Sydney	Saturday, 25 May 2013

Welcome

We welcome you all to the Ramakrishna - Vedanta Movement and invite you to attend our programmes and actively participate in the propagation of the Universal message of Vedanta as epitomized in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda.

News from and activities of the Vedanta Centres of Australia and New Zealand for the period from September 2012 to December 2012.

ADELAIDE CENTRE

Monthly activities:

a) Swami Sridharananda continued his three-days-a-month visit and delivered discourses on the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gītā* and *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* at the Dulwich Community Centre, 14 Union Street, Dulwich SA 5065. A dedicated group of devotees attends his talks which have also been recorded. Swami Chandrashekaranda visited the Centre from 13th to 15th of September and gave three talks on *Kena Upanishad*. For details of the programmes organized by the Adelaide Chapter please contact Dr. Raman Sharma 08- 8431 9775 or Mrs. Pathma Iswaran 08-8379 5336.

b) Every month on prescheduled Sundays the 'reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*' including discussion on relevant points was conducted at devotees' homes .

Other Activities:

a) The **Annual General Meeting**

was held on Saturday 22 September 2012 at 12:30 p.m. at the Dulwich Community Centre, 14 Union Street, Dulwich S.A. 5065.

b) The Adelaide Chapter organised a **Music Night** on the 3rd of November 2012 from 6:30 p.m. at the Burnside Community Centre, 401 Greenhill Road, Tasmore SA5065. In the first half of the programme M.C., Mrs Mallika Prasad welcomed the audience and after an invocation by Brahmacharis, a Veena recital was presented by Dr Malathi Nagarajan, a well-known Veena player in Sydney music circles. She played a number of pieces based on various spiritual themes. In the second half, Mrs Bharathi Subrahmanyam, a professional Carnatic vocalist from Adelaide sang a few raga based spiritual songs. Mr Kranthi Kiran and Mr Siva Senapathy from Sydney

accompanied the artists on Violin and Mrudanga respectively.

c) A day-long **Annual Spiritual Retreat** was held on Saturday, the 1st of December 2012 at the Monastery, 15 Cross Road, Urrbrae SA5064 for which Swami Sridharananda and Swami Atmeshananda were present. The retreat included chanting of Vedic mantras, guided meditations, Yoga Nidra, bhajans, a question-answer session and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and *the Gospel of Holy Mother*. Swami Sridharananda gave two talks on this year's theme "*The Spiritual Life*". In the first talk Swamiji highlighted the importance of meditation on a form or symbol of the Divine. In the second talk he explained the stages of spiritual progress. The retreat concluded with singing of *bhajans* and *ārati*.

BRISBANE CENTRE

Daily activities:

Morning worship, evening *ārati*, *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are the regular activities of the Centre at **181 Burbong Street, Chapel Hill, QLD 4073**, (Phone no. 07-3720 0228). A resident volunteer looks after the day-to-day activities at the Centre.

Monthly Activities:

a) Scripture **classes** at the Centre on the 1st Saturday and Sunday, and second Friday and Sunday of every month.
b) Prayer **meetings** on the 1st Friday of the month in Deception Bay, QLD.



Adelaide Centre— Annual Spiritual Retreat a group photo of participants.



Adelaide Centre—A Music Night— photos of (L to R) audience, Mr. Siva Senapathy, Dr. Malathi Nagarajan, Mrs. Bharathi Subrahmanyam and Mr. Kranthi Kiran.

C) **Discussion** groups on the 1st Monday and Tuesday of every month in Sunnybank Hills, QLD.

d) A **class** on the 1st Wednesday of every month at Springfield, QLD.

CANBERRA CENTRE

Swami Sridharananda conducted classes on the *Bhagavad-Gitā* twice a month at the Majura Community Centre in Canberra. The **AGM** was conducted on 18th of November 2012. Contacts: Mr. J. Venkataraman, Secretary - 02-6258 7612.

MELBOURNE CENTRE

Daily Activities:

Vesper service is held daily in the Centre at **5-7 Angus Avenue, Ringwood, Vic 3135** from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. It includes set hymns, scriptural readings and meditation and occasional devotional singing.

The **bookstall** made available literature on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, Vedanta philosophy, and other spiritual topics in print, audio, and visual media throughout the period. For further information please contact Mr. Suresh Ravinutala, Secretary, on 03-9803 6154 or Mr. Mohana Krishnan on 03-9801 6174.

Weekly/Monthly Activities:

a) Swami Sridharananda continued to deliver monthly **discourses** on the *Bhagavad-Gitā* from Thursday to Saturday of a prescheduled week at Monash University Clayton Campus of Law, Wellington Road (L. Theatre L4). The Thursday and Friday sessions were from 7:45 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. and the sessions on Saturdays were from 11 a.m. to 12 noon. The recordings of these discourses are available in Audio, Video and MP3 formats.

b) **Prayer Meetings** were conducted on the first Sunday of every month, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. which included prayer, recitation of sacred mantras, singing of *kirtan* and *bhajans*, followed by selected readings from the scriptures and discussions on them by the participants. The meetings concluded with an *ārati* and the distribution of *prasād*.

c) **Group studies** through the viewing of (i) the *Mundaka Upanishad* lecture series video is held on every Sunday from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. and

(ii) the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* lecture series video is held on every Friday from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

(iii) The *Bhagavad-Gitā* study group meets on alternate Sundays from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Other activities:

a) The Centre organised a **musical concert** along with Iyer brothers and Pichumani School of Carnatic Music on 11th of November 2012 in order to raise funds. The program included Layavinyasam (mridangam solo) by Chidambaram S Balashankar (from India) and Veena Duet by Iyer Brothers. Swami Sridharananda addressed the gathering.

PERTH CENTRE

Daily Activities:

The Centre located at **51 Golf View Street, Yokine W.A. 6060** holds vesper service daily at 7 p.m. with *ārati*, readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and meditation. The Centre maintains a small bookstall and a library. Contacts: Mr. Hiren Mukhopadhyay, Secretary - 0411 478 244, Mr. Parthiv Parekh, Asstt. Secretary - 0430 511 699.

Monthly Activities:

a) Swami Sridharananda visited the Centre every month from Thursday to Saturday on a prescheduled week and conducted discourses on *Bhagavad Gitā*. A good number of devotees attended the discourses.

b) Monthly *satsang*, which includes the singing of *bhajans* and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and other inspiring books, was conducted on the first Sunday of every month from 11 a.m.

c) **Revision** session on *Bhagavat Gita* was started in August 2012. An audio recording of the talk on Gita of the previous month was played to revise and refresh the audience's memory.

Celebrations:

a) **Christmas Eve** was celebrated on 24th December 2012 after the *ārati* followed by the worship of Christ, singing of Christmas Carol and bhajans, reading from Bible and discussion on Ramakrishna and Christ - by Hans Torwesten.

SYDNEY CENTRE

Daily Activities:

Daily worship including chanting and meditation is held every morning from 6:45 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. at 2 Stewart Street, Ermington. The vesper service starts in the evening at 7 p.m. and this includes devotional singing, reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and meditation.

Counselling, interviews and discussions with devotees are also conducted on a daily basis. The library is available to devotees for reference and research. The Centre maintains a **bookstall** which has a range of books on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, Vedanta, Yoga, and other spiritual literature. Devotional songs, discourses on the *Bhagavad Gitā*, the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, *Mundaka Upanisad*, and other topics are also available in various media.

Weekly/ Monthly Activities:

The Centre conducted the following activities in Sydney:

a) Swami Sridharananda conducted **classes** on the *Bhagavad-Gitā* every Sunday morning from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Centre.

b) **Classes** on *Bhagavad Gitā* were also conducted by Swami Sridharananda at 1/11 Boyle Street, Balgowlah, NSW 2093 **Manly Beach** on Tuesdays from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

c) Some devotees availed **spiritual counselling** and guidance. The Swamis also visited the homes of devotees when required.

d) **Meditation** sessions were held at the Centre on Sundays from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.

e) **Sanskrit language** classes were held on Saturdays and Sundays for various levels of adult students.

f) **Bala Sangha** Classes on **moral and spiritual lessons and drama and movement** were conducted for children every Saturday from 4:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. at the Centre during the academic term.

g) On an average 26 children participated in the three-day long **holiday camp** conducted at the Centre from the 25th to the 27th of September 2012.

h) Classes on **moral and spiritual lessons** were also conducted for children at Eastwood Public School on Wednesdays from 9:45 a.m. to 10:30

a.m. during the academic term.

i) The Centre provided **English Language tutoring** on Tuesdays from 5:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. during the school term.

j) **Rāmanām Sankirtana** was sung on *Ekadashi* days after the vesper service.

k) A **class** for ladies on *Meditation and Spiritual Life* was conducted on selected Mondays twice a month from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

l) An **AGM** was conducted on 9th of September 2012.

m) Swamis Sridharananda and Atmешananda attended the Inaugural **Interfaith Conference** organized by the Deepavali Festival Committee of NSW at the Parliament House of NSW. Swami Sridharananda gave a talk on 'Unity in Diversity'.

Celebrations:

a) **Durga Puja** was celebrated on 22nd of October 2012 on *Mahastami* (the eighth day of lunar calendar). The Puja started at 8:30 a.m. and concluded at 1:30 p.m. Recitation of *Sri Chandi saptasati*, mantras and singing of *bhajans* were performed.

In the evening the programme started at 5 p.m. and concluded at 8:30 p.m. *Prasad* was distributed both at noon and evening.

b) **Christmas Eve** was celebrated on 24th December 2012 after the *ārati*.

Overseas Visit:

Swami Sridharananda visited New Zealand from the 17th to the 21st of October 2012.

AUCKLAND CENTRE

Daily activities:

A vesper service is held daily from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Centre at 27 Arawa Street, New Lynn, Auckland. It includes the singing of hymns and readings from the *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* followed by meditation.

Monthly and annual activities:

a) On the second Sunday of every month *satsang* programmes, which include singing of *bhajans*, discourse on the *Ramayana*, readings and discussion on the lives of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and meditation were conducted from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

b) On the last Sunday of every month **reading** and discussion on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the life and teachings of Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda were conducted in addition to the above. Music and chanting classes were also held on these days.

c) Swami Sridharananda conducted classes on **Bhagavad Gita** on 18th, 19th and 20th of October from 7:45 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Celebrations:

a) **Durga Puja** was celebrated on 21st of October 2012. The programme started at 11 a.m. with *Bhajans* by Ira Sondhi and other devotees. Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj talked about Devi Mahatmyam on this occasion. After meditation, *Arati* and *Pushpanjali*, the program ended at 1 pm. *Prasadam* was distributed at the end of the programme.

b) **Christmas Eve** was celebrated on 24th of December 2012 after *ārati* and ended at 9 p.m. *Bhajans*, talk and reading on Jesus Christ were the highlights of this celebration.



Sydney Centre— (Above) Durga Puja Celebration.

Auckland, NZ Centre— (Above) Durga Puja Celebration.

Sri Sarada Devi: Mother of all

Jayrambati

Jayrambati Village, the playground of Mother Lakshmi, is in Bankura District. Jayrambati was lush green and sparsely populated. In Bankura, many villages were quite often affected by famine and malaria. However, the people of Jayrambati were not wanting in food and simple clothing. On the northern side of the village there is an open field. In that ground, the peasants cultivated grains, sugar cane, pulses and various vegetables. When you cross this land, you come across the river Amodar of crystal clear water. Even when other rivers of West Bengal go almost dry in summer, this small river still flows, since, compared to its size, the river is deep. Sri Ma Sarada Devi, during her childhood days, would come to the river for a bath in 'her Ganga' accompanied by her younger brothers. Centred round Jayrambati, there are a good many villages, which have the blessed association of either Sri Ramakrishna or Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and some both of them. Anur, Shyambazar, Sihore and Koalpara are such important places.

Between 1909-1919, in the course of her visit to Calcutta or return via Vishnupur, the Holy Mother would stay at Koalpara for at least a few hours and sometimes even for one or two days. Koalpara to the Mother was almost like her 'drawing room.' Even though Jayrambati was not big in size, and there were no aristocrats living there, people still got along with joy and merriment. Whenever possible, they would make arrangements for folk dramas and music. Even today, people of the village can be seen enjoying the sankirtan during the occasion of Durga Puja, Kali Puja and Shitala Puja. There is a temple of Lord Dharma by the name Yatra-Sidhi-Rai in Jayrambati. The other deity of Jayrambati is the well-known Simhavahini. Durga Devi, enshrined in three small images, accepts the worship of devotees in fulfilment of their vows.



Sri Sarada Devi
(1853 -1920)

Above all this, at the birthplace of the Holy Mother, one can see the milk white dome and the insignia of 'Ma' atop the brick temple, built by the Ramakrishna Order, from quite a distance. It reminds everyone that Jayrambati is a 'maha-pitha'. People come in large numbers, even from distant places, to touch the sacred earth of Jayrambati and become blessed. Jayrambati has become an abode of bliss to the devotees.

Mother

To call the Supreme cause of the world as Mother and to see Mother in everybody, is the ideal of this age as shown by Sri Ramakrishna in his own life. But to see Motherliness in ordinary day-to-day life, we want such a Mother whom, everybody without any hesitation could call as Mother. By taking refuge in her, one can forget the miseries of life completely. The following instances clearly reveal Sri Sarada Devi as an embodiment of motherliness.

Mother of the Master's Disciples

One day at Jayrambati, Swami Vishweshwarananda was at the point of carrying away his plate after a meal when the Mother stopped him and took it away herself. The monk protested, "Why should you carry it? I shall do it." But the Mother said

sweetly and persuasively, "What indeed have I done for you? A child even soils its mother's lap and does so many other things. You are rare jewels to be sought for by gods." The other women who lived with the Mother never did such a thing; on the contrary they argued, "You are born in a Brahmin family, and are a guru to boost, while these are your disciples. Why do you remove their leavings? That may bring evil on them." The Mother answered in her own artless manner, "Well, I am their mother. If a mother shouldn't do it all for her children's sake, who else should?"

In fact, the relationship between the Mother and her sons seemed divinely regulated, and its expression was truly wonderful. She would not call her sons by their monastic names, saying by way of explanation, "It's just because I am the mother, it hurts me to call them by their Sannyasa names." Sannyasa means separation from all, including parents; and the Mother could not entertain that idea even in thought. Noticing this, Swami Vishweshwarananda once asked her, "How do you look upon us?" "As Narayana", replied the Mother. "We are your sons," argued the inquirer, "If you consider us as Narayana, you can no longer think of us as your sons." "I look upon you as Narayana, and as sons also," said the Mother. In this synthesis, the Mother's conception of sonship consists in a fusion of the human and the divine, and also we see in her concept of motherhood a harmonisation of the finite and the infinite.

A devotee asked one day, "I call you mother; but I want to know if you are my mother as a matter of fact." "If I am not your real mother," answered the Mother, "what else am I? I am really the mother." "You may say so," argued the unconvinced devotee, "but I don't fully understand. Why don't I have the same genuine feeling of motherhood towards you, as I have spontaneously toward my own mother?" The Mother first deplored saying, "Alas, what a pity!" And then

she added, "The same entity is the parent of all, my child, the same has taken shape as fathers and mothers." It is perhaps sad that the truth did not dawn on the devotee, but that was no reason why her own universal Motherhood should not be as clear as daylight to herself. The Mother that was in her, 'the divinity that manifests itself as mothers among all beings' satisfied in the forms of the finite mothers the cravings for love in the heart of the finite beings. This infinite and all-embracing Motherhood of hers spoke so sweetly through every word, every movement and every act, that a mere touch of it melted the hardest heart.

When any devotee came to the Mother, she removed his hesitancy in the twinkling of an eye— so powerful was her motherly affection. Brahmachari Rasbehari lost his mother in his childhood, and not being used to call anyone mother, he felt shy in uttering the word. One day, as the Mother wanted to send a message through him to a cousin she wanted to be sure of his having grasped her meaning and asked him, 'Will you repeat what you will say?' Rashbehari replied, 'She has directed me to say such and such things.' 'You will say, "The Mother has directed," said she and laid sufficient emphasis on the word 'Mother' to impress it permanently on his mind.

As Mother of all

Radhu had a pet cat for which the Mother provided half a pound of milk every day. She lay quietly and fearlessly at the Mother's feet; and even if for silencing others' complaints she feigned to drive it away with a stick, the cat took shelter, between her feet. So the Mother had to throw away the stick and smile, and the others too had to follow suit. Cats are given to stealing. But this did not annoy the Mother who said, "To steal is their nature, my boy; who will feed them fondly?" But Brahmachari Jnan declared a war against the cat. One day, when he flung her away, the Mother looked pale with pain. Beating the cat was also a common occurrence. In spite of this dislike, the family of this cat thrived through the care bestowed on it by Radhu and

the Mother. And then came the time for the Mother's departure to Calcutta. The Mother called the Brahmachari to her and said, "Jnan, you should cook rice for the cats, so that they may not have to go to other houses; for then people will abuse us, my boy." She added, "Look here, Jnan, don't beat the cats; for even in them, am I." That was enough; the Brahmachari could not lift his hand against the cats after that. And he went so far as to arrange for a regular supply of fish for them, although he himself was a strict vegetarian!

In one sense she was the Mother of all the devotees, and in another she herself was all; her infinite Motherhood left none outside its all-comprehensive grasp. Brahmachari Rashbihari asked her one-day, "Are you the Mother of all?" "Yes," replied the Mother. "Even of those lower creatures?" pressed the inquirer. "Yes," answered the Mother.

One day a calf was restlessly bleating, which made everyone infer that it had some pain in the stomach. The calf went on making an uneasy noise, which made everybody try various remedies, but without any success. The bleating brought also the Mother there; and she sat by the calf holding it in both arms and softly pressing its naval and patting it, as though it were her own child. A little later it calmed down and all returned to their respective places.

In the Mother's house there was a talking parrot (Maina) named Gangaram. The Mother herself daily washed the bird, gave it water and food, cleaned its cage, moved it from place to place and talked with it tenderly. Every morning and evening she went to him and said, "Dear Gangaram, do talk!" The bird articulated, 'Hare Krishna, Hare Rama, Krishna, Krishna, Rama, Rama.' Hearing the names of the Brahmacharis from the Mother, Gangaram learned them well enough. And now and then it shrieked out, 'Mother, O Mother.' The Mother immediately responded with, "Here I am, my son, here I am," and she went to it with gram and water, for the bird's call meant that it was hungry.

Mother's infinite love and compassion

But the mother in her was not satisfied even with so many children. She was often heard calling in a low tone, "Come to me here, my children." When Swami Vishweshwarananda reached Jayrambati, the Mother said eagerly, "So you have come, how fine!" I have been calling you the last few days as when calling Rajen I have been uttering your name." The Mother was careful never to show her emotion; and that is why this anxiety could often find only partial expression. Yet the little that came out revealed a world of hidden feeling.

As Swami Maheshwarananda was returning to the Belur Math from the 'Udbodhan', the Mother gave him a rupee to be handed over to Swami Premananda, and said, "This is to be spent for the Master's worship, and for offering *tulasi* (holy basil) leaves for the welfare of Sarat, in his name." Swami Saradananda was then down with fever.

The Mother once heard from Sri Prabhakar Mukherji of Arambagh that his son was suffering from measles. When the devotee was returning home from Jayrambati the Mother gave him a rupee, saying, "Offer worship to Shitala at Kamapukur on your way." That was meant for invoking the goddess's grace for the boy.

In fact, in her words and manner there was such a genuineness and cordiality that a newcomer felt at once drawn to her. The number of devotees was swelling. They came to the Udbodhan at all hours of the day; their tastes differed and needs varied. The Mother had no rest. The outspoken Golap-Ma criticised her saying, "What's this that has come upon you, Mother? You put forward your feet to anyone who approaches you and calls you Mother!" The Mother pleaded, "How can I help it, Golap? I can't contain myself when one draws near me and calls me Mother." This affection of the Mother was not confined to devotees alone; it transcended the limits of all social and family barriers and submerged everybody in its resistless tidal rush.

The villagers, too, had a share of this overflowing love. Once, after the Mother's recovery from an illness, some people wanted to sacrifice a goat before Simhavahini; but the Mother offered *rasagollas* (sweetened cottage-cheese balls) worth some rupees. In the afternoon, no sooner was the bell rung twice from the Mother's house, than the villagers flocked to the place and sat in rows on either side of the road. The monks served the *rasagollas* to them and the Mother looked on with a sweet smile.

The devotees had evidence of her motherly heart in every little detail of life, so much so, that they found no difference between her and their own mothers. At the very first contact she became acquainted with each one's taste and tended to him or her accordingly.

And she fulfilled one's desire before one could make it known. The Mother was at her meal when a certain monk arrived at Jayrambati. It was his cherished idea to have the Mother's *prasada*, left from the Mother's own plate. But such was her habit that she sat for her meal after feeding all her sons. Hence the monk had not got any opportunity so far. This time, as soon as he arrived, the Mother sent him some light refreshment and tobacco, for she knew that he smoked, and when she had finished her meal, she called him in and said, "Sit down, my son. I have eaten from those leaves." She had used *sal* leaves and all the eatables were arranged properly on the leaves.

The Mother treated all her sons with equal tenderness. Once a direct disciple of the Master was so offended with the conduct of a certain devotee that he requested the Mother not to allow him to get anywhere near her. But she replied, "If my son wallows in the dust or mud, it is I who have to wipe all the dirt off from his body and take him to my lap."

Swami Vivekananda had driven out a servant for stealing. The man was poor and his family depended on him. He approached the Mother at the 'Udbodhan' for shelter. The

Mother kept him there and fed him. That very afternoon, when Swami Premananda happened to visit her, she said, "Look here, Baburam, this man is very poor. He was impelled by his poverty to do as he did. Should Naren on that score scold him and drive him out? The world is full of misery. You are monks who realise very little of it. Take him back." Swami Premananda tried to impress on her that this would displease Swami Vivekananda. The Mother then said with some emphasis, "I say, take him." As Swami Premananda entered the Math compound at dusk, Swami Vivekananda burst out, "Look at Baburam's thoughtlessness; he has brought that fellow again!" Swami Premananda then explained everything, which silenced the great Swami Vivekananda.

The Mother's infinite love transcended all limitations of caste and colour, merit and demerit, in fact, of all conditions in life. Anyone that took refuge in her, was treated kindly, helped with medicines and other necessities, and filled with sympathy. She consciously ignored people's frailties and foibles, and asked others also to do the same. The result was that even criminals behaved decently and sometimes changed their habits.

"To err is human, but how few know how to lead an erring man?"

One day, a 'mulberry-robber' brought some plantains to the Mother and said, "Mother, here are some plantains for the Master; will you accept them?" The Holy Mother stretched out her hands for acceptance and said, "Certainly I will, my dear; hand them over. Why should I not, since you have brought them for the Master?" A woman devotee who hailed from a neighbouring village and happened to be there, was taken aback by this strange behaviour of the Mother, and she said warningly, "These are thieves, you know. Why should his things be offered to the Master?" The Mother, apparently unperturbed by the interference, deposited the fruits in the store and ordered some fried rice and sweets for the man. When he had gone, she turned to the

woman and administered a stern rebuke, "I know who is good and who is not." Her mission was to uplift the spiritually fallen and she used to say, "To err is human, but how few know how to lead an erring man?"

Amzad was one of those 'mulberry-robbers' who had a hand in erecting the mud walls of the Mother's house. One day the Mother seated him on her veranda for his meal. Nalini Devi served him, but owing to caste prejudices she stood at a distance on the courtyard and tossed the food onto the man's leaf-plate. This displeased the Mother who said, "Can one have any relish for food if it is served in such a fashion? If you cannot serve him properly, I shall do it." When Amzad had finished his meal, the Mother cleansed the place herself. At this, Nalini Devi loudly denounced the act saying, "O dear aunt, you lose your caste thereby." But the Mother cut her short, "Amzad is as truly my son as my Sarat (Saradananda) is."

Once the Mother was down with fever, and many visited her in her sick bed. One day, at about nine or ten o'clock, the Brahmachari on attendance saw a Mohammedan of dark appearance, emaciated body, ragged clothes, and sad looks, tottering into Mother's compound with the help of a staff. The Mother was inside, lying on a cot in her room, and a thin screen of plaited bamboo slips covered the veranda, so that the cot was not easily visible. The man tiptoed to look over the screen. Suddenly the Mother's eyes turned in that direction, and she accosted him in a low endearing voice, "Is that you, dear Amzad? Come in." With beaming eyes and a happy countenance Amzad stepped on to the veranda and standing on one side of the door thrust in his head to enter into an intimate conversation on matters of everyday life. Finding the Mother and her son thus engaged, the Brahmachari went about his own duties.

Not long after, the Brahmachari was called in to offer food to the Master. In the Mother's room, under the Master's seat, was kept some Ganges water that had to be poured into a

small ceremonial vessel; with this water the food in the kitchen had to be sanctified for being offered to the Master. The Brahmachari came to take the water but was in a dilemma finding the Mohammedan standing in the only doorway. He could not be told to move away, lest this should offend the Mother. At the same time, to pass closely by a Mohammedan, with the holy water in hand militated against caste prejudices and conventions ingrained from childhood in this Brahmachari who was a Brahmin by birth. He hesitated for a moment and then decided to carry out his duty without minding the man's presence, depending on the Mother to dissuade him if there was anything wrong in his decision. He took the holy water and stepped out. After the offering he returned with it and placed it where it was. Amzad was all this while at his post. The Mother noticed everything but said nothing. As Amzad was leaving in the evening, the Brahmachari noticed that the man's face was lit up with a happy smile, and he was altogether a changed person. He had bathed and rubbed oil over his rough skin; then he had had a full meal; and then chewed betel and areca nut as he walked home. In his hand was a phial of indigenous medicine and in his bag were many titbits. The Mother told the Brahmachari, "Amzad's brain has become heated as a result of taking stimulants. He has no sleep at night. I had a phial of Narayana oil, which I have given him. By using it his brain will be cooled; it is a very efficacious oil." Amzad soon recovered from his illness and was always at the Mother's service. But in spite of this divine affection of the Mother Amzad could not free himself wholly from the habit of thieving and robbing; and so the people of Jayrambati were afraid of him, though, as a matter of fact, that village remained free from the attention of those 'mulberry robbers', evidently through Amzad's good office. Often enough he was in jail, when his wife would run for help to the Mother who would give her whatever lay at hand. The love was heartily reciprocated by Amzad. Once after his release from jail, he found on returning home a number of

gourds hanging down from his thatch. He plucked some of them and proceeded to Jayrambati. The Mother, delighted to see him, said, "I have been anxious because of your long absence. Where were you?" Unmindful of his explanation of being arrested on a charge of cattle-lifting, the Mother said with a sigh, "Ah me! I have been really worried."

The Mother knew this man's character well enough, and she also knew it to be her duty to protect her household and her village from people of his trade. But the method she adopted consciously through the promptings of her motherly heart was not only unique but also effective. It won the robber's heart and brought for her a result that even mightier people with ampler resources would have failed to achieve. She did not rely on arms or manpower but on the power of love which softened the hardest criminal and which brooked no interference from caste, prejudice, or fear.

Devotees came with diverse demands, and the Mother, with her resourceful ministrations and never-failing love, satisfied all these capricious children. Their childish whims were mostly in evidence at Jayrambati, where the Mother freed herself from all the unnatural restrictions of a cultured urban society, and the devotees found her more readily accessible than at the 'Udbodhan' where a strict vigilance was enforced. Many devotees, therefore, kept themselves informed of the Mother's movements and flocked to her village when she happened to be there.

Noticing Bibhutibhushan Ghosh eating lustily at the Mother's house at Jayrambati, his mother Rohinibala remarked, 'Bibhuti seems to eat her heartily; but at my place he eats only this much (indicating a small quantity with the fingers).' The Mother at once protested, 'Don't you be casting an evil eye on my son! I am a beggar; whatever I offer to my sons, they eat with avidity.'

According to Hinduism, Shakti is the potency of Brahman and inseparable from It, like fire and its

power to burn. This potency is unable to function by itself. Brahman, which is Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss, by Its mere presence impregnates Shakti, as it were. Thus names and forms are evolved.

Sri Ramakrishna knew Holy Mother's nature. He spoke of her as the bestower of wisdom, as his Shakti. Hence she is regarded as the Supreme Goddess or Great Power, a special manifestation of the Divine Energy. Once a devotee said that after her no one would worship the minor goddesses of the Hindu religion. She replied, "Why, they are parts of me." Conscious of her divine nature, she kindled the sparks of spirituality in her disciples, accepted their worship, and gave them assurance of liberation.

(To be continued in the next edition of Reach)

Sources:

1. *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* by Swami Gambhirananda; Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, pages 359-394.
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Will Find You

*I will find You!
I will never stop searching!
Let me stretch out my neck towards you.
I will put my head into your beautiful noose.
Pull your rope tight, tighter ...
Let it squeeze all the breath from me.
Draw me to yourself, close closer!
It's not enough; it has never been enough!
Let all the breath from me suffuse out ...
May my body crumble and turn to dust, blow away,
And all the light inside escape and mingle into yours.
My light and your light ever merged.*

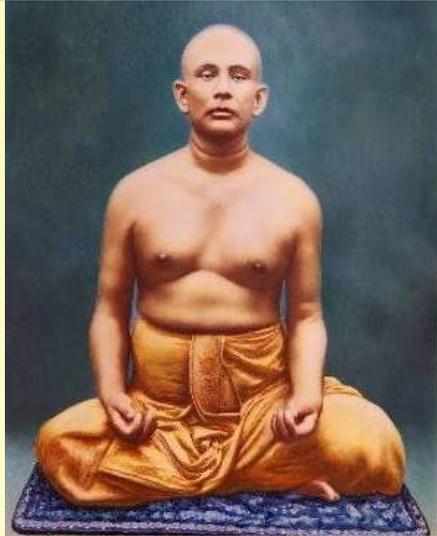
*--- A devotee of
Vedanta Centre of Sydney
- Perth Chapter.*

Early life of Swami Turiyananda

Hari Nath Chatterjee was born in north Calcutta in 1863. His family belonged to the Brahmin caste; and Hari, from an early age, was drawn to the Brahmin ideal of orthodoxy and asceticism. He would bathe three times a day, recite the whole of the Gita before dawn, sleep on the floor, spending most of the night in meditation and eat only the simplest food. He took so much physical exercise that his elders would warn him not to strain himself but he was determined to harden his body to endure the severest austerities. Although he was so orthodox in most respects, he was quite without sectarian narrowness, and hence, when he went to a school run by Christian missionaries he would always attend the classes on the Bible. Every kind of religious book fascinated him.

First glimpse of Sri Ramakrishna

When Hari was fourteen years old, he had his first glimpse of Sri Ramakrishna. Hearing that Ramakrishna was to visit a house in the neighbourhood, Hari went with several other boys to see this already famous *paramahansa* (a title of honour given to a monk who is regarded as a great knower of Brahman). A carriage drove up, with Ramakrishna and his nephew Hriday in it. Hriday got out first. Hriday then helped Ramakrishna to alight, and the boy watching in the crowd noted that he was 'very thin. He had a shirt on his body and his wearing-cloth was securely tied over his waist...he was completely unconscious of outer world, and it seemed as if someone quite drunk was being taken out of the carriage. But when he got down, what a wonderful sight! There was an indescribable radiance in his face. I thought, "I have heard from the Scriptures about the great sage Sukadeva. Is he the same Sukadeva?" By that time, many others joined them and took them to the second floor of the house. I followed them.



Swami Turiyananda (1863 -1921)
(One who enjoys the bliss of the Fourth State of consciousness, Samadhi)

When the Paramahansa became a little conscious of the outer world, he opened his eyes and saw a large picture of Mother Kali on the wall. He immediately saluted her and started to sing in a soul-bewitching manner...It is impossible to describe the extraordinary feeling this song aroused in everybody. After that, the Paramahansa spoke on many spiritual matters.'

Hari's second encounter with Ramakrishna did not take place until two or three years later, probably in 1880. He went to Dakshineswar with some friends. Ramakrishna singled him out at once as a future disciple, and asked him to visit him on weekdays, when fewer people were around.

One day, Hari asked Ramakrishna, 'Sir, how can we free ourselves completely from lust?' and was told that his attitude was wrong. Lust is only one manifestation of the vital force. To try to destroy this force is futile. To condemn it as evil is absurd. It should be redirected towards God. On another occasion, Hari told Ramakrishna that he had a horror of women, and that he could not bear to have them near him. "You talk like a fool! Looking down upon

women! Why?" said Ramakrishna, "You must never look down on women, they are the manifestations of the Divine Mother. Bow down before them with reverence. That's the only way to avoid becoming sensually ensnared by them. If you hate them, you will fall into the snare."

In the company of Sri Ramakrishna

One day, the Master said to Harinath, "What is there in the scriptures? They are like sheets of paper with a shopping list on them. The list is useful only to check off the items once purchased. When you have done that, the list is thrown away. So you should check your knowledge, your devotion, and consult the scriptures to see whether they agree. It is said, 'When you have knowledge of the Absolute, the scriptures are worth only a straw.' " A few days later, Sri Ramakrishna went to Balaram's house at Calcutta and sent for Harinath. The Master greeted him cordially and continued his talk to the devotees: "Nothing can be achieved - neither knowledge, nor devotion, nor vision - without God's grace. Well, is it an easy matter to realise that lust and gold are unreal and to have the firm conviction that the world is eternally non-existent? Is it possible without His compassion? Can a man have that conviction through his own effort? A man is after all a tiny creature, with very limited powers. What an infinitesimal part of truth can he grasp by himself?" While talking about God's grace, the Master went into ecstasy.

Harinath felt as if these words had been directed to him, for he had been straining every nerve to attain illumination by his own efforts. After a short while, the Master regained his normal consciousness and began to sing a song based on the *Uttara Rama Charitam*, where Hanuman tells the sons of Rama:

"O Kusa and Lava, why are you so proud?
If I had not let myself be captured,
Could you have captured me?"

While Ramakrishna sang, tears rolled

down his face, literally wetting the ground. Harinath later remarked, "I was deeply moved. That very day the Master deeply imprinted on my mind the fact that one cannot attain God through self-effort, by performing sadhana. Only if God reveals Himself is it possible to attain Him."

Sri Ramakrishna's teaching

Once Harinath said to the Master that his goal was to attain nirvana (liberation) in this very life. For this the Master reproached him, "Those who seek Nirvana are selfish and small-minded. They are full of fear. They are like those Parcheesi players who are always eager to reach home. An amateur player, once he sends his piece home, doesn't like to bring it out again. Such players are unskilled. But an adept player is never afraid of coming out again, if by doing so he gets the opportunity to capture an opponent. Then he rolls the right number and returns home once more. It seems that whenever he rolls the dice, the right number comes up for him. So do not fear. Play without any fear." Harinath asked with wonder, "Does it actually happen?" "Of course it happens," replied the Master. "By Mother's Grace, everything takes place."

Days with the Master

Sri Ramakrishna's life was his message. Harinath later recalled his days with the Master:

Ah, those days at Dakshineswar were like heaven itself! From morning till one o'clock in the afternoon everyone would be busy picking flowers and making other preparations for worship until the poor were fed. In the meantime Sri Ramakrishna would discuss spiritual subjects, and the devotees would listen to him with rapt attention. Even his fun and jokes were related to God. There was no other topic. Everything culminated in his Samadhi [transcendental state of consciousness].

After lunch, Sri Ramakrishna would rest for a short period and again would speak on spiritual matters. At vesper time he would go to the temple of Mother Kali and fan Her a little. He would become God-intoxicated there and would return to his room reeling in a state of ecstasy.

He used to ask those of us who were practising spiritual disciplines under his guidance, "Tell me, do you feel divine inebriation when you meditate in the mornings and evenings?" At night Sri Ramakrishna slept very little. He used to get up and wake those who were sleeping in his room, saying, "Don't sleep too much! Wake up and meditate!" Again he would lie down a short while, and then rise before dawn and chant the name of the Lord in his inimitable sweet voice. The disciples would sit and meditate in their own way. Now and then the Master would go to them and correct their posture.

An hour of congregational singing in the company of the Master would fill us with such exuberant joy that we would feel transported.

Living with Sri Ramakrishna

To live with Sri Ramakrishna was a great education. He taught his disciples to attain perfection in Samadhi as well as in service. Harinath later recalled:

One day at Dakshineswar the Master said to me, "Go to the Panchavati. Some devotees had a picnic there. See if they have left anything behind. If you find anything, bring it here." I went and found an umbrella in one place, a knife in another, and some other articles. I gathered them and took them to the Master. The knife had been borrowed from him. I was just placing it on the shelf when he said, "Where are you putting it? No, not there! Put it underneath this small bedstead. That is where it belongs. You must put everything in its proper place. Suppose I need the knife during the night. If you put it anywhere you please, I will have to go around the room in the dark, stretching out my arms in search of it, wondering where you put it. Is such a service a service? No! You do things as you like and thereby only cause trouble. If you want to serve properly, you should completely forget yourself."

As Sri Ramakrishna tested his disciples, so the disciples verified the genuineness of their guru. One day Harinath arrived at Dakshineswar when the Master was having his dinner. He saw that a number of bowls containing various cooked

items were placed before him. Harinath thought that this kind of luxurious eating was unbecoming to a holy man. The Master said at once, "Well, the tendency of my mind is always towards the Infinite. It is by such rajasic devices that I hold it down to the lower planes. Otherwise I could not talk with you." Harinath was dumbfounded. Another time, at Balaram's house, Sri Ramakrishna was illustrating his teachings with some very apt tales. Harinath was surprised at the spontaneity with which these stories cropped up in his talk, and he asked, "Sir, do you prepare your similes before you go out?" The Master replied, "No. Mother is always present. Wherever I am, Mother supplies me with ideas."

The training of the young disciples

After attaining illumination, Sri Ramakrishna waited for his disciples nearly twenty-five years. During the last few years of his life, when his young disciples joined him, the Master poured all his spiritual treasures into them and bound them with love. He hastened to train his disciples so that they could carry his message to the world. Once he said to Harinath, "I want to see you quite often, for I know you are dear to the Lord. Otherwise why should I spend my time on you? You cannot give me anything worth even a cent; and when I go to your house, you can't even spread a torn mat for me to sit on. Yet I love you so much. Don't forget to come here, because here you will get everything that is needed for your spiritual life. If you can find opportunities for God-realization elsewhere, you may go there. What I want is that you should realise God—that you should transcend the misery of the world and enjoy divine bliss; that you should attain Him in this life. The Divine Mother tells me that only if you come here, you will realise God without any effort. That is why I ask you to see me so often." Saying these words, Sri Ramakrishna was overcome with emotion and began to shed tears.

Since he was visiting Dakshineswar frequently, Harinath came to know other young disciples of the Master. He was very close to Narendra. Their approaches to spiritual life were by

no means identical, yet Narendra appreciated Harinath's renunciation, scriptural knowledge, and brahminical orthodoxy. One day both were walking to Calcutta from Dakshineswar. On the way, Narendra said to Harinath, "Tell me something." "What shall I tell you?" replied Harinath. Then Harinath quoted a verse from Shiva Mahimnah Stotram: "If the Goddess of learning were to write eternally, having the largest branch of the celestial tree for Her pen, the whole earth for Her paper, the blue mountain for Her ink, and the ocean for Her ink-pot, even then, O Lord, Thy attributes could not be fully described." Then Narendra shared his understanding of Sri Ramakrishna, "He is LOVE personified." Harinath thus discovered that they had identical views about the Master.

On 14th July 1885, Harinath met Sri Ramakrishna at Balaram's house in Calcutta. The Master said to him, "You see, in one form He is the Absolute and in another He is the Relative. What does Vedanta teach? Brahmin alone is real. And the world is illusory. Isn't that so? But as long as God keeps the 'ego of a devotee' in a man, the relative is also real. When He completely effaces the ego, then what *is* remains. That cannot be described by the tongue. ... As long as a man analyses with the mind, he cannot reach the Absolute. Atman cannot be realised through this mind; Atman is realised through Atman alone. Pure mind, Pure Buddhi, Pure Atman—all these are one and the same."

"Just think how many things you need to perceive an object. You need eyes; you need light; you need mind. You cannot perceive the object if you leave out any one of these three. As long as the mind functions, how can you say that the universe and the 'I' do not exist? When the mind is annihilated, when it stops deliberating pro and con, then one goes into Samadhi, one attains the knowledge of Brahman." Thus the Master taught Harinath the intricate aspects of Vedanta.

Wandering and Austerity

Sri Ramakrishna passed away at the Cossipore Garden House on 16th

August 1886. The disciples then moved to Baranagore and founded the Ramakrishna Monastery there. In the early part of 1887, they took their monastic vows under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda. Harinath became Swami Turiyananda.

In 1889 Turiyananda left the Baranagore Monastery and went to Rishikesh, where the ascetics live at the foothills of the Himalayas. In the summer of 1890, he and Swami Saradananda went to Gangotri, the source of the Ganges; from there they visited Kedarnath, in the Himalayas, the famous place sacred to Lord Shiva. It was a difficult journey.

Turiyananda then decided to practise sadhana alone at Rajpur. Here he met Swami Vivekananda and some other brother disciples; then they all went to Rishikesh. In Rishikesh Swamiji became very sick. Turiyananda nursed him and prayed to the Master for his life. Then they went to Meerut and stayed for six weeks until Swamiji recovered fully. When Swamiji left for Delhi alone, Turiyananda and Brahmananda made a pilgrimage to Jwalamukhi in the Kangra valley which is one of the fifty-one holy shrines of the Divine Mother, although it does not have any image of the goddess.

In Bombay they again met Vivekananda, who was then getting ready to go to America to represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. Every evening many people would come to Swamiji to listen to his spiritual discourses. However, one evening Swamiji was not well, so he asked Turiyananda to speak to the devotees. When the talk was over, Swamiji said to Turiyananda, "Why did you talk to these householders about fiery renunciation? You may be a monk, but they have families. You ought to have told them something that would be useful to them. They will be terrified to hear such things, and their minds will be disturbed." Turiyananda apologised saying, "I thought that you were listening, so I spoke about something inspiring." He then realised that one should keep one's audience in mind before one speaks.

From Bombay, Turiyananda and

Brahmananda went to mount Abu, Pushkar, Jaipur, and Vrindaban. In Vrindaban they practised severe austerities for six months. According to the India custom, a monk begs for his food from door to door. Turiyananda had to beg from nearly thirty houses to get one meal. One day he thought, "What am I doing? I am a vagabond. Everybody is working, producing something, whereas I am doing nothing." He was hungry and exhausted, and fell asleep under a tree in the Keshi ghat of Vrindaban. There he had a vision: He saw himself outside of his body, and he was looking at himself while he slept. He saw his body expanding and expanding, until there was no end to it. The body became so large that it covered the entire world. Then he addressed himself, "Oh, you are not a vagabond. You are one with the universe. You are the all-pervading Atman." So thinking, he jumped up and felt happy. His despondency was at an end.

Once Turiyananda said, "Though I travelled much, I also studied much along the way. At Vrindaban I studied a great deal of the devotional scriptures. It is not good to wander much if you do not at the same time continue your spiritual effort."

Towards the end of 1893, Turiyananda and Brahmananda heard about Swamiji's success in America. In 1894 they left Vrindaban to visit Lucknow and Ayodhya, and in 1895, they returned to the monastery, which had been moved to Alambazar. They received many inspiring letters that Swamiji wrote from America, asking his brother disciples to organise the Ramakrishna Order. He suggested that Turiyananda gives classes on the scriptures to the monastics in the mornings and evenings, which he agreed to do. In 1896 Turiyananda took the responsibility of performing worship when Ramakrishnananda was sick. But Turiyananda's natural trend of mind was always pulling him back to a life of austerity and wandering; after a stay of a little over a year, he left the monastery.

Turiyananda first went to Allahabad, the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna. Then he travelled towards Narmada, a favourite place of

hermits, on foot via Chitrakut, Rewa, and Jabbalpur. He carried no money, lived on alms, and slept wherever he could. Later Turiyananda said, "One night in Ujjain, I was sleeping under a tree. A storm came, and suddenly someone touched me. I got up and at once a branch fell on the spot where I had slept." Sri Ramakrishna had saved his life. He then visited the holy places in West India. He found that the mountain region of Girnar had an atmosphere conducive to meditation, so he settled down there in a cave.

After some months Turiyananda travelled to Uttarkashi via Delhi, Hardwar, and Rishikesh. In this Himalayan region, he became ill and this grew worse. Finally he thought it wise to consult a doctor and started towards a village to find one. On the way he suddenly remembered a verse that is applicable to a holy man if he falls ill: "For the sick monk, the medicine is the Ganges water and Lord Narayana is the doctor." He felt ashamed to seek an ordinary doctor; it was as if he almost lost faith in God. Instead of going to the doctor, he went to the riverside. He sipped a little Ganges water, repeated the Lord's name, and returned to the cottage. Sure enough, soon after that he was cured.

Turiyananda later recalled, "I lived happily in the Garhwals Hills, totally forgot the existence of the world, and aimed only at God-realization... Oh, those days are coming to my mind. While I lived at Srinigar ghat, I used to rise very early and bathe. Then I would sit in meditation and afterwards read. At eleven, I would rise and procure some food in an hour. Then I would again begin meditation and Japam. And thus I spent everyday. It was there that I committed eight Upanishads to memory. I would meditate on every verse I read, and what an indescribable joy it was! I used to read the commentary of Shankara and the gloss of Jnanananda. And much further light used to come through meditation."

Vedanta says that a knower of Brahmin becomes fearless. Fear originates from duality. Because an illumined soul experiences the non-dual Brahman, he can never fear

anyone. Once while in the Himalaya region, Turiyananda was living in a thatched hut that had a broken door. One night he heard the villagers cry, "Tiger! Tiger!" He immediately put some bricks behind the door to protect himself. Just then he remembered a passage from the Taittiriya Upanishad that declares that even at the command of Brahman the god of death does his duty like a slave. His awareness of the Atman awakened, and defeated the body idea. He kicked the piles of brick away from the entrance, and sat for meditation. Fortunately, the tiger did not show up.

It is very helpful for spiritual aspirants to hear about the struggles and experiences of the mystics directly from them. Some mystics are reticent; fortunately, Turiyananda was very frank about himself. He said, "Formerly my nerves were very fine, and I had great powers of explaining things. Whenever anyone asked me a question, I could see everything from its origin to its outer expression-I could see from what motive he speaks and why. And there was a flood of light in a single word of mine."

Towards the latter part of 1896, Turiyananda returned to Calcutta. Not long after, Vivekananda returned from the West, and founded the Ramakrishna Mission on 1st May 1897. In 1898, a plot of land was purchased at Belur on the bank of the Ganges for the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order. After the inauguration of the monastery, Swamiji made some basic rules for the monks. One rule was that every monk was supposed to come for meditation at 4 a.m.

One morning Turiyananda was ill and could not attend the meditation. Later, he told Swamiji that he was feverish and had a cold. Swamiji scolded him, "Shame! Shame! Still you are concerned about your body!" Turiyananda was one of the most austere monks among the disciples of the Master. He kept quiet. Then Vivekananda calmly explained, "Do you know why I scold you all? You are the children of Sri Ramakrishna. People will learn by observing your lives. It hurts me when I see anything short of the ideal. If they find any

laxity in you, they will become all the more lax themselves. As the Master used to say, 'If I do sixteen parts, you will do one-sixteenth.' Similarly if you do one-sixteenth, they will do one sixteenth of the one sixteenth. If you do not do that one part even, where will they stand?'"

Turiyananda travelled to various places in India with Vivekananda. Once, in Darjeeling, Swamiji said to Turiyananda, "Brother Hari, I have made a new path and opened it to all. Up till now it was thought that liberation could be attained only by meditation, repetition of God's names, scriptural discussion and so forth. Now young men and women will attain liberation by doing the Lord's work."

However, the path of action is not for everybody. Turiyananda wanted to pass his days in spiritual disciplines. But Vivekananda intervened, "Brother, can't you see I have been laying down my life, inch by inch, in fulfilling the mission of the Master, till I am on the verge of death? Can you merely stand looking on and not come to my help by relieving me of a part of this great burden?"

Turiyananda could not refuse his leader's entreaties.

(To be continued in the next edition of Reach.)

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"Know then, that thou art He, and model your whole life accordingly, and he who knows this and models his life accordingly, will no more grovel in darkness."

--- Swami Vivekananda.

150th
Birth anniversary of
Swami Vivekananda
 1863 - 2013

My ideal, indeed,
 can be put into a few words,
 and that is: to preach unto mankind
 their divinity, and how to make it
 manifest in every movement of life.



Projects
Undertaken

Swami Vivekananda dedicated his life for the upliftment of people, so, to pay tribute to him on his sesquicentenary celebration the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission took up following 4 model projects (**Project A**) to serve the poor and needy in 150 places. Initially these projects were conceived for the duration of 4 years but later it was decided that these will be extended beyond the timeframe. Other programmes also will be organised to spread his life giving teachings (**Project B**).

Project A

(Financially supported by the Govt. of India)

1. Gadadhar Abhyudaya Prakalpa
 (Integrated Child Dev. Programme)

This project is for the upliftment of children of slums, roadsides, tribal belts, backward areas, and marginalized families. Most of these children are victims of ignorance, malnutrition, and various diseases and live in an unhygienic conditions.

The main objectives of this project is to:

1. inculcate a sense of cleanliness and hygiene in the children;
2. nourish the children for their physical development;
3. educate the school deprived children with special coaching;
4. instil moral and cultural values in them.

A total of **174 units** under this program have been started at different parts of our country. About

"May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum-total of all souls-- and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship."

"Feel, my children, feel; feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden; feel till the heart stops and the brain reels and you think you will go mad; then pour the soul out at the feet of the Lord, and then will come power, help and indomitable energy."

- - - Swami Vivekananda

17,400 needy children, selected from the city, slums, and villages, were benefited during the year 2011–12. They were provided with food supplements, medical care and education with the view of their **Physical, Educational, Mental and Spiritual development.**

2. Vivekananda Swasthya Pariseva Prakalpa (Health Service Programme)

The main objectives:

1. To eradicate malnutrition of children below 5, at least in the selected backward areas.
2. To provide regular health check-up to children, and pregnant and lactating mothers.
3. To provide health education, especially to womenfolk, and teach

them the basic principles of personal and environmental hygiene, child nutrition and care, etc.

4. To provide health and moral education to the children aged 5 to 12 years.
5. To provide a clean and hygienic environment especially in slums by cleaning up the narrow streets and lanes.
6. To ensure community participation in keeping the living quarters and environment clean and hygienic by creating in the minds of people a sense of collective responsibility and spirit of self-reliance.
7. To immunize the new-born babies.

In total **126 units** under this programme are functioning at different parts of our country. More than **12,600** undernourished beneficiaries selected from the city slums and villages were benefited under this project. They were provided with Health Care, Education, Hygiene & Environmental Care with Community Participation, Monitoring and Evaluation.

3. Sarada Palli Vikash Prakalpa

(Education & empowerment of women)

1. Motivating women to develop a positive mind to change their existing condition, to pin-point their problems and empowering them to solve the problems on their own, and also extending help if needed.
2. Providing non-formal education on a variety of subjects to enhance their self-confidence.
3. To instil in them a sense of health consciousness and hygiene, to develop the willingness to enjoy health

facilities provide, to create a hygienic environment in the family, proper sanitation systems, and to bring to their notice the usefulness of individual and family health hygiene.

4. Creating awareness and habit of healthy food, nutrition and the use of safe drinking water.

5. Making them aware about expenses towards addictions, ineffective medications, useless social obligations etc.

6. Increasing their means of income, discussing their present means of income, knowing their own preferences for generating more income, making a stock of their resources and helping them in utilizing them, providing monetary help when needed.

7. Organizing various means for increasing their income through both individualistic and group-based means. Providing training facilities if needed. Responsibility towards production and distribution has to be taken up by the individual member or the group concerned. Providing further opportunities and help in case of a loss, due to ill-fated circumstances.

4. Swami Akhandananda Seva Prakalpa (Poverty alleviation project)

1. To generate awareness among the target group about improving the quality of life and motivate them to identify their problems and solving them on their own, extending the aid required.

2. Providing non-formal education and various other instructions on a variety of subjects.

3. To generate awareness in them about health and hygiene.

4. Vocational training facilities provided to enable them to face economic challenges.

5. Steps are taken to impart the idea of resource management by reducing meaningless expenditure etc.

6. Providing start-up capital for starting ventures after completion of training.

7. Organizing Self-Help Groups with the targeted people and take all necessary steps for thrift and savings, bank linkage for deposit accounts as well as micro-finance, undertaking economic activities, marketing of products, holding awareness camps etc.



The Prime Minister of India Inaugurated the 150th birth ann. function on 12 Jan. 2011 at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi .



Indian Railways' tribute to Swamiji.

Project B

(Financially supported by the Devotees, and Generous people)

Celebrations

1. Opening ceremony in January 2013 at Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House, Kolkata.

2. Releasing a VCD highlighting the programmes from 2010 to 2014.

3. Celebration of National Youth Day in all educational institutions.

4. Celebration at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France.

5. Introducing Vivekananda Chair in a few Universities.

6. Introducing Vivekananda Awards, Medals, Mementos, etc.

7. Closing ceremony at Belur Math and Netaji Indoor Stadium, Kolkata, in 2014.

Publication & Publicity

1. Special Publications on Swami Vivekananda.

2. Bringing out Commemorative Volume and Souvenirs.

3. Classical Music competitions for school children.

4. Bringing out special supplements in newspapers in various languages.

5. Publication of subsidized books on Value Education for the Youth in English and Hindi.

Seminars and Conferences

1. Parliament of Religions during 2013-2014 in Kolkata, Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai.

2. Conference of Monks of the Ramakrishna Order in 2013.

3. Conference of Monks at Kankhal, Haridwar, in 2013, involving monks of different religious traditions and denominations.

4. Conference of Monks in south India in 2013 involving monks of various religious traditions and denominations.

5. Intra-Faith Dialogue among the Hindus (modern religious groups and traditional Hindu sects) in at least 4 states where Parliament of Religions will not be held.

6. Conference of devotees with the theme: Role of Devotees according to Swami Vivekananda.

Youth Service Programmes

1. All India Youth Convention on 'Vedantic Idea of Brotherhood'.

2. State level Youth Conventions.

3. Vivekananda Ratham: Processions tracing the footsteps of Swami Vivekananda.

4. Viveka Vahini, Jnana Vahini: Value Education in different regions through mobile units.

5. Youth Meets to understand and apply Swami Vivekananda's 'Philosophy of Service' in various fields.

Bhava Prachar Programmes

1. All India Conference of the Convenors of the Bhava Prachar Parishad.

2. Day-long State level meets of the representatives of the member Ashramas.

3. Re-enactment of Vivekananda's triumphant journey in the light of Lectures from Colombo to Almora.

4. District level day-long workshop on Youth Counselling.

5. Establishment of *Bhava Prachar Parishads* in some States.

Summarised from belurmath.org

Please visit it for details.

Some other websites:

<http://www.rkmdelhi.org/>

<http://rkmath.org/>

<http://vivekanandahouse.org/>

<http://shashwatabharata.in/>

Photo Feature :

The Vedanta Centre of Sydney

The Construction of the Vivekananda Memorial Multi-Purpose Community Facility at 2 Stewart Street, Ermington 2115.

We would earnestly request to generous people not to miss this opportunity to get actively involve in this noble venture. Any contribution towards the construction of this institution will be thankfully accepted and acknowledged.



