



Issue 38

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# Reach

*Newsletter of the Vedanta Centres of Australia*

<http://peterpans.com.au/>

## SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

### **Sri Ramakrishna: On Renunciation through Discrimination**

“God cannot be seen so long as there is the slightest taint of desire. Therefore have your minor desires satisfied, and renounce the major ones through right reasoning and discrimination.”

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; (Kolkata: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2013), 19.

### **Sri Sarada Devi: On Control of the Mind**

“My child, this mind is just like a wild elephant. It races with the wind. Therefore one should discriminate all the time. One should work hard for the realization of God.”

Source: *Teachings of Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1982), 28

### **Swami Vivekananda: On Concentration**

“Concentration of the powers of the mind is our only instrument to help us see God. If you know one soul (your own), you know all souls, past, present and to come. The will concentrates the mind; certain things excite and control the will, such as reason, love, devotion, breathing etc. The concentrated mind is a lamp that shows us every corner of the soul.”

Source: *Teachings of Swami Vivekananda* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2006), 43.

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**W**e welcome you all to the Vedanta Movement in Australia, as epitomized in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, and invite you to involve yourselves and actively participate in the propagation of the Universal Message of Vedanta.

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## 1. NEWS FROM AUSTRALIAN CENTRES — 15 AUGUST TO 31 DECEMBER 2016

### ADELAIDE

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#### Daily Activities:

- The Centre is open every evening from 6:45pm for *aratrikam* starting at 7:00pm which is undertaken by the local devotees.

#### Regular Activities:

- Swami Sridharananda visited the Centre and delivered discourses on the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā* for three days in September and October respectively. A dedicated group of devotees attended his talks, which are recorded.
- Reading of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, including discussion on relevant points, was held on the first and third Sunday of the month.
- Some devotees have been providing community based support for meeting the educational needs of children from under-privileged backgrounds on a weekly basis at the Centre.

#### Other Activities:

- The Annual General Meeting of the Adelaide Chapter was held on Saturday, 10 September 2016, from 2:00pm at 506 Glynburn Road Burnside SA 5066.



Swami Yogatmananda, Swami Sunishthananda and devotees from the Adelaide Chapter

- Swami Yogatmananda, Minister in Charge, Vedanta Society of Providence, USA, visited the Centre on Sunday, 6 November 2016. He delivered a discourse on *Means of Devotion* and interacted with the local devotees.
- Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, West Bengal, India, visited the Centre from 27-30 November 2016. A reception was held on Sunday, 27 November from 7:45pm. He delivered a lecture and interacted with the local devotees.

### BRISBANE

12 Greenwood Street, Springfield Lakes, QLD 4300

Email: [info@vedantabrisbane.org](mailto:info@vedantabrisbane.org)

Contact: Swami Atmeshananda (07) 3818 9986

URL: <http://vedantabrisbane.org>

#### Daily Activities:

- Meditation and the chanting of hymns were conducted between 6.15 am and 7.15 am.
- *Vesper service (aratrikam)*, *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were held between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm.
- Members were encouraged to visit the Centre and discuss topics concerning spiritual life.

#### Regular Activities:

- Sunday mornings:- a) *Yoga class (8:30am—9:45 am)*. b) *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā Class (10:00 am—11:00 am)*. c) *Bala Sangha or children's classes (10:00 am—11:00 am)*.
- A discussion group met on the first Monday of the month at Sunnybank Hills (7:00 pm — 8:30 pm).
- Sanskrit classes were held every Tuesday in the evening (6:00 pm — 7:00 pm).
- Religious classes were held every Wednesday at West End Primary School for children (3:00 pm — 4:00 pm).
- Classes on *Meditation and Spiritual Life* (7:00 pm

— 8:00 pm at 134 Fleming Rd, Chapel Hill, QLD 4069) and the *Ramayana* (7:15 pm — 8:15 pm) were held on alternate Fridays.

- *Chanting of the Sri Ramanama Sankirtanam* was held fortnightly at the Centre on *ekadashi* days (7:30 pm — 8:15 pm).
- *Prayer meeting (satsangs)* were held on the first Saturday of every month.
- Devotees took turns in decorating and worshipping Sri Ramakrishna's image every week at the Sri Selva Vinayakar temple, South Maclean, Qld.
- Swami Atmeshananda conducted *Vivekachudamani* classes at Toowoomba on the first Thursday of every month.

### Other Activities:

- Swami Atmeshananda participated in the Australian National Hindu Conference— 'United Communities, United Australia' and delivered the inaugural message on 27 August 2016.
- Swami Atmeshananda on 28 August 2016 visited Townsville and inaugurated a newly purchased community hall managed by the Northern Queensland Hindu Council.
- The Annual Day Retreat of the Centre was conducted by Swami Sridharananda at the residence of Dr and Mrs. Majumdar on 3 September 2016. Sixty devotees participated.
- Swami Atmeshananda participated in the inaugural multi-faith prayer session on the occasion of the new session of the Queensland parliament at the Parliament house, Brisbane, on 11 September 2016.
- Swami Yogatmananda, Minister in charge, Vedanta Society of Providence, RI, USA, visited Brisbane between 7 and 9 November 2016. He addressed the devotees in Brisbane on two separate occasions.



*Swami Yogatmananda in Brisbane*



*His Excellency and Honourable Mr. Paul de Jersey, Governor of Queensland with Swami Atmeshananda, Maha Sinnathamby and others*

- Swami Atmeshananda was invited to the Government House, Queensland, where the Governor, His Excellency and Honourable Mr. Paul de Jersey and Mrs Kaye de Jersey hosted a reception for the Springfield community on 10 November 2016. The Governor addressed the guests and commended the efforts for creating an excellent community in Springfield.
- A reception in honour of Swami Suhitanandaji, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, was held on 7 December 2016. The General Secretary addressed the gathering. One hundred and sixty people attended the event.



*Swami Sridharananda, Swami Suhitananda and others in Brisbane*

- Swami Atmeshananda conducted a spiritual retreat for members of the Overseas Hindu Malayali Association at Bribie island, Qld, on 17 December 2016.

**Celebrations:**

- *Janmashtami* was celebrated on 25 August 2016 between 6:30 pm and 8:00 pm with worship, *pushpanjali*, *bhajans* and a talk on Sri Krishna's birth.
- Children of *Bala Sangha* celebrated *Janmashtami* at the *ashrama* on 28 August 2016 from 10:00 am to 11:00 am. with *bhajans*, narrations from the life of Sri Krishna and offerings to Sri Krishna
- *Sri Durga Saptashati (Chandi)* was chanted every day during *navaratri* celebrations in the mornings and *Mahishamardini stotram* was sung every evening between 2 October to 10 October 2016. Devotees participated in this daily event.
- The *Ashtami* (8th day) puja of the Divine Mother Durga was performed at the Toowoong senior citizens' club on 9 October

and *prasad* distribution on 20 December 2016 between 9:30 am and 1:00 pm. .

- Christmas Eve was celebrated with worship, singing of carols, readings from the Bible and partaking of the offerings.

**Forthcoming Programmes:**

- The public celebration of Holy Mother's, Sri Sarada Devi's birthday and *Kalpataru* day will be celebrated on 1 January 2017 at Indooroopilly Senior Citizens' Club, Indooroopilly, Qld. .
- The birthday celebration of Swami Vivekananda will be observed on 19 January 2017.
- *Shivaratri puja* will be conducted on 24 February 2017 with the chanting of hymns, *bhajans* and *prasad* distribution .
- The birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna, will be held on 28 February 2017.

**Other News**

- The construction of the ashrama building at Springfield lakes will start by mid-2017. Detailed drawings for obtaining the building approval are nearing completion. Preparations for tenders is expected in mid-January 2017.

**CANBERRA**

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Contact: Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman 62587612 / 0433 593 860

**Regular Activities:**

- Swami Sridharananda conducted monthly classes on the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* at the Belconnen Community Centre, 2 Chandler Street, Belconnen, Canberra. The regular monthly talks will commence in January for the 2017 calendar year.

**MELBOURNE**

5-7 Angus Ave, Ringwood East, VIC 3135

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The Worship of the Divine Mother Durga



Worship of Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi

2016. Around 150 devotees participated.

- The birthday of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was celebrated with worship, *homam*, *bhajans*

**Daily Activities:**

- Vesper service (*aratrikam*) and reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm.

**Regular Activities:**

- Swami Sridharananda continued to deliver monthly discourses on the *Srimad Bhagavad-Gita* at the Centre from the Thursday to the Saturday of a prescheduled week

**Celebrations:**

- *Janmastami* was observed on 28 August 2016 from 10 am to 12 noon. The function included *bhajans*, chanting and a reading.
- *Durga puja* was commemorated on 15 October 2016. A large number of devotees and friends attended the function. The programme included formal worship which was conducted by Br. Sridhar and Br. Swatmachaitanya. Vedic chanting and *bhajans* were part of the function. Swami Sridharananda gave a talk entitled 'Divine Mother'. The programme was followed by *prasad* distribution.
- Holy Mother's birthday and Christmas Eve were celebrated on 24 December 2016 from 5pm to 9pm.

**Other Activities:**

- Swami Yogatmananda visited the Melbourne chapter from 4 to 6 November 2016. On 5 November 2016 he delivered a lecture on 'Work and its Secret'. A large number of devotees also participated in the question and answer session, which was followed by *prasad*.
- A public reception was organized to welcome Swami Suhitananda to Melbourne on 3 December 2016. A large number of devotees and friends attended the function, many of whom interacted with him. While he was in Melbourne between 30 November and 3 December he also visited a number of places of interest.

**Forthcoming Programmes:**

- Kalpataru day will be observed on 1 January 2017 from 5 pm to 9 pm.
- Swami Vivekananda's birthday will be celebrated on 21 January 2017.

**PERTH**

51 Golf View Street, Yokine, WA 6060

Email: [vedantaperth@gmail.com](mailto:vedantaperth@gmail.com)

Contact: Hiren Mukhopadhyay 0411 478 244

Parthiv Parekh 0430 511 699

**Daily Activities:**

- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm.

**Regular Activities:**

- *Satsangs* were conducted on the first Sunday of every month. The programme included chanting, *Gita dhyanam*, *bhajans*, readings and *prasad* distribution.
- Swami Sridharananda continued to deliver monthly discourses on the *Srimad Bhagavad-Gitā*.

**Other Activities:**

- Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, visited the Perth chapter between 23 November and 26 November 2016. He was warmly welcomed by Swami Sridharananda and others and garlanded by Dr Amrithalingam Sinnathamby. On Saturday, 25 November the General Secretary delivered an informative discourse on the various centres of the Ramakrishna Mission.
- A working bee session was held once a month.



Swamis Sridharananda, Suhitananda and others at the Perth Chapter

### Celebrations:

• Devotees of the Perth Chapter hosted a prayer meeting to commemorate Holy Mother's birthday and Christmas on 24 December 2016 for 11:00 am. The devotees sang *bhajans* to celebrate Holy Mother and Christmas carols to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. After the singing of religious hymns, devotees read from the lives of Holy Mother and Jesus Christ.



*The Shrine at the Perth Chapter*

### SYDNEY

2 Stewart Street, Ermington, NSW 2115

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### Daily Activities:

- The shrine was open from 6:30 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm seven days a week.
- Meditation from 6:30 am to 7:30 am and chanting from 7:30 am to 8:00 am.
- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were conducted from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The times change on special occasions.
- Counselling, interviews and discussions are also held.

### Regular Activities:

- Swami Sridharananda conducted his chapter-wise study of the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā* on Sundays between 9.30 am and 10.30 am.

- A *Class for Ladies* was held every Monday between 10.30 am and 12.30 pm. Swami Sunishthananda initiated discussion on *Meditation and Spiritual Life* and the *Katha Upanishad*.
- *Bala sangha classes* which include moral and spiritual lessons, drama and movement were conducted for children every Saturday between 4.45 pm and 6.45 pm during the school term.
- *Meditation sessions* were conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Sundays between 5.00 pm and 5.30 pm.
- Classes on *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* were conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Sundays between 5.30 pm and 6.15 pm.
- Parlour talks were conducted by Swami Sridharananda at 1/98 Condamine Street, Balgowlah, NSW 2093, near Manly Beach on Tuesdays between 7.30 pm and 8.30 pm.
- Classes on the *Katha Upanishad* were conducted by Swami Sunishthananda every Wednesday between 7.30 pm and 8.30 pm.
- Classes on the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* were conducted by Swami Sunishthananda every Friday between 7.30 pm and 8.30 pm.
- Sri Rāmanāma Sankirtanam was conducted on *ekadashi* days after the vesper service.
- Sanatan Satsang Sabha sang *Ram Katha*, once every month from September 2016.
- Devotees also received spiritual counselling and guidance.

### Other Activities:

- Dr Geoff Lee, State MP for Parramatta, while moving a motion in NSW Parliament to recognize the importance of Indian Independence Day, mentioned to the members of the Legislative Assembly the Vedanta Centre of Sydney, its office bearers, and its activities along with some other organizations. The proceedings are recorded in the NSW Legislative Assembly Hansard and Papers of 25 August 2016.
- Sanatan Satsang Sabha sang *bhajans* in honour of Sri Krishna on 23 and 24 August 2016 from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm in preparation for Krishna *Janmashtami*.
- Sangeetha Group sang Navaratri *bhajans* at the VCS on 4 and 8 October 2016.

- Adult Learners' Week was observed at the VCS on 7 September 2016 with a half day Seminar on 'Learning Towards a Qualitative Improvement of Human Personality'. The Adult Learners' Week is run every year by Adult Learning Australia and the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training to encourage lifelong learning. Australia's participation in the Adult Learners' Week began in 1997 after it signed the Hamburg Declara-



*Group Discussion during the Adult Learners' Week, 7 September 2016*

tion on Adult Learning. The UNESCO's General Conference in November 1999 approved the International Adult Learners' Week, in order to, among other things, learn from the experience of other countries and cultures. While the general theme of the Adult Learners' Week is lifelong learning, the particular theme of this year's (2016) Adult Learners' week is 'Learn Outside the Square'. Swamis Sridharananda, Sunishthananda and Mahabodhananda presented at the seminar. There were 41 people who attended.

- Sonam Kalra, who was in Australia as part of **Confluence: Festival of India in Australia**, performed at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney on



*Sonam Kalra and the Sufi Gospel Project perform at the VCS on 14 September 2016*

14 September 2016. Sonam's Sufi Gospel Project' attempts to blend the many voices of faith, through poetry, prayer and music to create one universal voice. That universal voice is one of acceptance, equality and oneness. The Vedanta Centre of Sydney thanks Sonam and the members of her troupe, the organizers of Confluence and Geeta Kirpalani for orchestrating the concert. Approximately hundred people attended.

- The 5th International Conference on *Yoga: Science of Infinite Possibilities* was held from 1-3 October 2016 at the Western Sydney University, Parramatta South Campus.
- Swami Yogatmananda, Minister in Charge, Vedanta Society of Providence visited Australia from 1 to 10 November 2016. On 2 November he delivered a discourse at the VCS on 'Measuring Spiritual Progress'.



*Swami Yogatmananda at the VCS on 10 November 2016*

- The General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Suhitananda, on his first visit to Australia, stayed at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 3 December to 7 December 2016. On Sunday, 4 De-



*(L to R) Mrs K. Ramakrishna, Sw. Suhitananda, Sw. Sridharananda and Mr. B. Ramakrishna*

ember he delivered a discourse at the VCS when 200 people attended. On Monday 5 December he visited the Koala Park in Castle Hills and Blue Mountains, on 6 December the Nan Tien Buddhist temple and on Wednesday 7 December went on a harbour cruise.

### Celebrations:

- *Krishna Janmashtami* was celebrated at the VCS on 25 August 2016. The programme began at 6:15 pm and ended at 9:30 pm and included *aratrikam* and *bhajans* by Sanatan Satsang Sabha. There were 130 who attended the programme and partook of *prasad*.



*Krishna Janmashtami at the VCS on 25 August 2016*

- *Sri Sri Durga Puja* was celebrated on 9 October 2016 at the VCS. The puja commenced at 8:45 am and ended with lunch *prasad*. The evening programme included *Kali Kirtan* from 5:30pm to 6:30 pm, followed by *aratrikam*, *stotras* by the members of the Bala Sangha and a musical programme on Mother Durga by the Temple of Arts called 'Anandamayee'. There were one thousand five hundred people who attended in the morning and evening.



*Sri Sri Durga Puja at the VCS on 9 October 2016*



*Sri Sri Durga Puja at the VCS on 9 October 2016*

- The birth anniversary of the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, was observed on 20 December 2016. The puja began at 8:45 am with *homa* and *pushpanjali*. There were 120 people who had *prasad* after the worship. The evening *aratrikam* was followed by a *bhajan* recital by Ms. Lakshmi Abhisek, a talk by Swami Sridharananda and *prasad* distribution. There were about 200 people who had *prasad* in the evening.



*Ms. Lakshmi Abhisek during Holy Mother's Birth Anniversary at the VCS*

- Christmas Eve was celebrated at the VCS on 24 December 2016. The evening *aratrikam* was followed by the worship of Christ and carols followed by a talk on Christ. Approximately eighty people attended.

### Forthcoming Programme:

- Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary will be celebrated on 19 January 2017.
- *Shivaratri* will be observed on 24 February 2017.
- Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary will be celebrated on 28 February 2017.

## 2. ARTICLES

### A. FEATURE ARTICLE:

#### Sri Ramakrishna on the Manifestation of Śakti the Divine Power

**T**he period of October has been observed as the most auspicious for the propitiation of the Divine Mother through the festivals of Navaratri and Diwali. These auspicious periods serve as a fitting context to give attention to Sri Ramakrishna's own propitiation of the Divine Mother. This is made evident through specific occasions that have been graced by Sri Ramakrishna as well as through his exchanges with devotees.

Underpinning Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual sadhana is his devotion and surrender to the Divine Mother in the form of Kālī. He became gradually enmeshed in the web of Her all-pervading presence. To the ignorant, She is, to be sure, the image of destruction but, strangely enough, Ramakrishna felt in Her breath the soothing touch of tender love and saw in Her the Seed of Immortality. Sri Ramakrishna referred to this Universal Mother as 'My Mother'. Sri Ramakrishna's teachings on the manifestation of Śakti as the Divine Power have been drawn from specific conversations the Master had shared with devotees, which were recorded by Mahendranath Gupta, otherwise referred to as M. Mahendranath Gupta arrived at Dakshineswar in February 1882. He belonged to the Brāhmo Samāj and was headmaster of the Vidyāsāgar High School at Syāmbāzār in Calcutta. Mahendranath recorded in his diary, Sri Ramakrishna's conversations with devotees. These are the first directly recorded words of Sri Ramakrishna which were originally published in Bengali. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna is a translation of this.

#### October 27, 1882

It was Friday, the day of the Lakshmi Puja; Keshab Chandra Sen had arranged a boat trip on the Ganges for Sri Ramakrishna.

About four o' clock in the afternoon the steamboat with Keshab and his Brāhmo followers cast anchor in the Ganges alongside the Kālī temple at Dakshineswar. The passengers saw in front of them the bathing – ghāt and the chāndni. To their left, in the temple compound, stood six temples of Śiva, and to their right another group of six Śiva temples. The white steeple of the Kālī temple, the treetops of the Panchavati, and the silhouette of pine trees stood high against the blue autumn sky. The gardens between the two nahabats were filled with fragrant flowers, and along the banks of the Ganges were rows of flowering plants. The blue



sky was reflected in the brown water of the river, the sacred Ganges, associated with the most traditions of Āryan civilisation. The outer world appeared soft and serene, and the hearts of the Brāhmo devotees were filled with peace. A small boat carried Sri Ramakrishna to the steamer. M. was among the passengers. As the boat came alongside the steamer, all

rushed to the railing to have a view of Sri Ramakrishna. Keshab became anxious to get him safely on board. With great difficulty the Master was brought back to consciousness of the world and taken to a cabin in the steamer. Inside the cabin there were a few chairs and a table. He was made to sit on one of the chairs, Keshab and Vijay occupying the others. Some devotees were also seated, most of them on the floor, while many others had to stand outside. They peered eagerly through the door and windows. Sri Ramakrishna again went into deep Samadhi and became totally unconscious of the outer world. The Brahmo devotees looked wistfully at the Master. Gradually he came back to sense consciousness, but the divine intoxication still lingered. He said to himself in a whisper, "Mother, why have You



Keshab Chandra Sen

brought me here? They are hedged around and not free. Can I free them?"

Sri Ramakrishna was gradually becoming conscious of the outside world and continued thus to engage with the devotees. The Master stated, "But you should remember that the heart of the devotee is the abode of God. He dwells, no doubt, in all beings, but he especially manifests Himself in the heart of the devotee. A landlord may at one time or another visit all parts of his estate, but people say he is generally to be found in a particular drawing-room. The heart of the devotee is the drawing room of God." The steamer had been going toward Calcutta; but the passengers, with their eyes fixed on the Master and their ears given to his nectar-like words, were oblivious of its motions. Dakshineswar, with its temples and gardens, was left behind. The paddles of the boat churned the waters of the Ganges with a murmuring sound. But the devotees were

indifferent to all this. Spell-bound, they looked on a great Yogi, his eyes sparkling with joy - a man who had renounced all for God and who knew nothing but God. Unceasing words of wisdom flowed from his lips.

The Master stated thus:

The jñānis who adhere to the non-dualistic philosophy of Vedānta, say that the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, the universe itself and all its living beings, are the manifestations of Śakti, the Divine Power [otherwise known as Maya in the Vedānta Philosophy]. If you reason it out, you will realise that all these are as illusory as a dream. Brahman alone is the Reality, and all else is unreal. Even this very Śakti is unsubstantial, like a dream.

But even though you reason all your life, unless you are established in Samādhi, you cannot go beyond the jurisdiction of Śakti. Even when you say, 'I am meditating', or 'I am contemplating', still you are moving in the realm of Śakti, within Its power.

Thus Brahman and Śakti are identical. If you accept the one, you must accept the other. It is like fire and its power to burn. If you see the fire, you must recognise its power to burn also. You cannot think of fire without its power to burn, nor can you think of the power to burn without fire. You cannot conceive of the sun's rays without the sun, nor can you conceive of the sun without its rays.

What is milk like? Oh, you say, it is something white. You cannot think of the milk without its

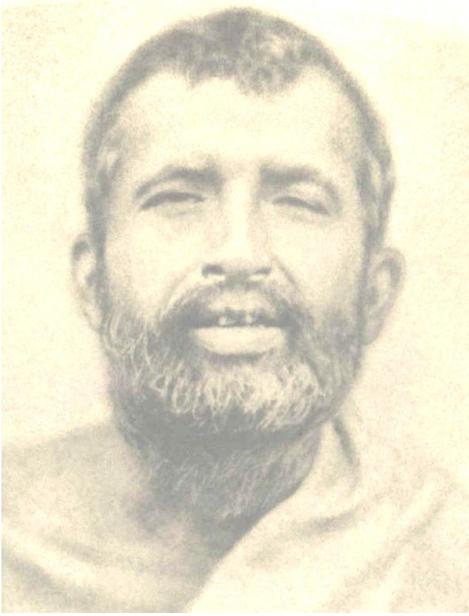
whiteness, and again, you cannot think of the whiteness without the milk.

Thus one cannot think of Brahman without Śakti, or of Śakti without Brahman. One cannot think of the Absolute without the Relative, or of the Relative without the Absolute.

The Primordial Power is ever at play. She is creating, preserving, and destroying in play, as it were. This Power is called Kāli. Kāli is verily Brahman, and Brahman is verily Kāli. It is one and the same Reality. When we think of It as inactive, that is to say, not engaged in the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, then we call It Brahman. But when It engages in these activities, then we call It Kāli or Śakti. The Reality is one and the same; the difference is in name and form.

It is like water, called in different languages by different names, such as 'pani', 'jal', and so forth. There are three or four ghāts on a lake. The Hindus who drink water at one place, call it 'jal'. The Mussalmān at another place call it 'pani'. And the English at the third place call it 'water'. All three denote one and the same thing, the difference being in the name only. In the same way, some address Reality as 'Allāh', some as 'God', some as 'Brahman', some as Kāli, and others by such names as 'Rāma', 'Jesus', 'Durga', 'Hari'.

Keshab henceforth posed a question to Sri Ramakrishna to describe how many ways Kāli, the Divine Mother, sports in this world. Sri Ramakrishna responded thus:



Oh. She plays in different ways. It is She alone who is known as Mahā- Kāli, Nitya- Kāli, Śmaśāna-Kali, Rakshā- Kāli, and Syāmā- Kāli. Mahā- Kāli and Rakshā- Kāli are mentioned in the Tantra philosophy. When there were neither the creation, nor the sun, the moon, the planets, and the earth, and when darkness was enveloped in darkness, then the Mother, the Formless One, Mahā- Kāli, the Great Power, was one with Mahā- Kāli, the Absolute.

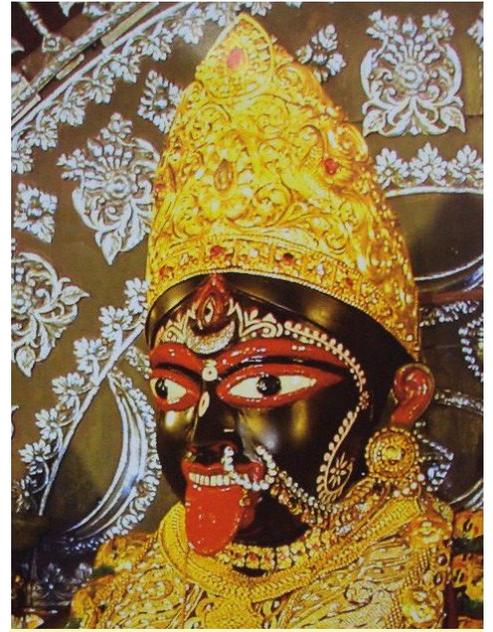
Syāmā- Kāli has a somewhat tender aspect and is worshipped in the Hindu households. She is the dispenser of boons and the Dispeller of fear. People worship Rakshā- Kāli, the Protectress, in times of epidemic, famine, earthquake, drought, and flood. Śmaśāna-Kali is the embodiment of the power of destruction. She resides in the cremation ground, surrounded by corpses, jackals, and terrible female spirits. From Her mouth flows a stream of blood, from Her neck hangs a garland of human heads, and around Her

waist is a girdle made of human hands.

After the destruction of the universe, at the end of a great cycle, the Divine Mother garners the seeds for the next creation. She is like the elderly mistress of the house, who has a hotchpotch-pot in which she keeps different articles for household use. House wives have pots like that, where they keep 'sea-foam', blue pills, small bundles of seeds of cucumber, pumpkin and gourd, and so on. They take them out when they want them. In the same way, after the destruction of the universe, my Divine Mother, the Embodiment of Brahman, gathers together the seeds for the next creation. After the creation the Primal Power dwells in the universe itself. She brings forth this phenomenal world and then pervades it. In the Vedas creation is likened to the spider and its web. The spider brings the web out of itself and then remains in it. God is the container of the universe and also what is contained in it.

Is Kāli, my Divine Mother, of a black complexion? She appears black because She is viewed from a distance; but when intimately known She is no longer so. The sky appears blue at a distance; but look at it close by and you will find that it has no colour. The water of the ocean looks blue at a distance, but when you go near and take it in your hand, you find that it is colourless.

The Master became intoxicated with divine love and sang thus:



*Bhavatarini Kali*

Is Kāli, my Mother, really black?  
The Naked One, of blackest hue,  
Lights the Lotus of the heart...

The Master continued thus:

Bondage and liberation are both of Her making. By Her Māyā worldly people become entangled in 'woman and gold', and again, through Her grace, they attain liberation. She is called the Saviour, and the Remover of the bondage that binds one to the world.

Thus the Master sang the following song in his melodious voice:

In the world's busy market place, O Syāmā, Thou art flying kites;

High up they soar on the wind of hope, held fast by Māyā's strings.

Their frames are human skeletons, their sails of the three gunas made;

But all their curious workmanship is merely for ornament.



Upon the kite-strings Thou hast rubbed the mānjā-paste of worldliness

So as to make each straining strand all the more sharp and strong.

Out of a hundred thousand kites, at best but one or two break free; and Thou dost laugh and clap Thy hands, O Mother, watching them!

On favouring winds, says Rām-prasād, the kites set loose will speedily

Be borne away to the Infinite, across the sea of the world.

Sri Ramakrishna continued:

The Divine Mother is always playful and sportive. This universe is Her play. She is self-willed and must always have Her own way. She is full of bliss. She gives freedom to one out of a hundred thousand.

A Brahma devotee asked Sri Ramakrishna that if the Divine Mother can give freedom to all, then why has She kept us bound in the world. The Master responded by stating thus:

That is her will. She wants to continue playing with Her cre-

ated beings. In a game of hide-and-seek the running about soon stops if in the beginning all the players touch the 'granny'. If all touch her, then how can the game go on? That displeases her. Her pleasure is in continuing the game. Therefore the poet said, 'Out of a hundred thousand kites, at best but one or two break free; and Thou dost laugh and clap Thy hands, O Mother, watching them!' It is as if the Divine Mother said to the human mind in confidence, with a sign from Her eye, 'Go and enjoy the world'. How can one blame the mind? The mind can disentangle itself from worldliness if, through her Grace, She makes it turn towards Herself. Only then does it become devoted to the Lotus Feet of the Divine Mother.

Whereupon Sri Ramakrishna, taking upon himself, as it were, the agonies of all householders, sang a song complaining to the Divine Mother:

Mother, this is the grief that sorely grieves my heart

That even with Thee for Mother, and thou I am wide awake,

There should be robbery in my house.

Many and many a time I vow to call on Thee,

Yet when the time for prayer comes round, I have forgotten.

Now I see it is all Thy trick.

As Thou hast never given, so Thou receives naught;

Am I to blame for this, O Mother? Hadst Thou but given,

Surely then Thou hadst received;

Out of Thine own gifts I should have given to Thee.

Glory and shame, bitter and sweet, are Thine alone;

This world is nothing but Thy play.

Then why, O Blissful One, dost Thou cause a rift in it?

Say Rām-prasād: Thou hast bestowed on me this mind,

And with a knowing wink of Thine eye

Bidden it, at the same time, to go and enjoy the world.

And so I wander here forlorn through Thy creation,

Blasted, as it were, by someone's evil glance,

Taking the bitter for the sweet,

Taking the unreal for the Real.

The Master continued that men are deluded through Her Māyā and have thus become attached to the world.

A Brahma devotee posed a question to Sri Ramakrishna about whether we can still realise God without complete renunciation. Sri Ramakrishna advised thus:

Of course you can! Why should you renounce everything? You are all right as you are, following the middle path-like molasses partly solid and partly liquid...there is nothing wrong in your being in the world. But you must direct your mind toward God; otherwise you will not succeed. Do your duty with one hand and with the other hold to God. After the duty is over, you will hold to God with both hands.

It is all a question of the mind. Bondage and liberation are of the mind alone. The mind will take the colour you dye it with. It is like white clothes just returned from the laundry. If you dip them in red dye they will be red. If you dip them in blue or green, they will be blue or green. They will take only the colour you dip them in, whatever it may be. Haven't you noticed that, if you read a little English, you at once begin to utter English words? Then you put on boots and whistle a tune, and so on. It all goes together. Or, if a scholar studies Sanskrit, he will at once rattle off Sanskrit verses. If you are in bad company, then you will talk and think like your companions. On the other hand, when you are in the company of devotees, you will think and talk only of God.

The mind is everything. A man has his wife on one side and his daughter on the other. He shows his affection to them in different ways. But his mind is one and the same.



Bondage is the mind, and freedom is also the mind. A man is free if he constantly thinks: 'I am a free soul. How can I be bound whether I live in the world or in the forest? I am a child of God, the king of kings. Who can bind

me? If bitten by a snake, a man may get rid of its venom by saying emphatically, 'There is no poison in me.' In the same way, by repeating with grit and determination, 'I am not bound, I am free', one really becomes so, one really becomes free.

Once someone gave me a book for Christmas. I asked him to read it to me. It talked about nothing but sin. One should have such burning faith in God that one can say, 'What? I have repeated the name of God, and can sin still cling to me? How can I be a sinner any more? How can I be in bondage anymore? If a man repeats the name of God, his mind, body and everything become pure.

Sri Ramakrishna became intoxicated with divine love and sang:

If only I can pass away repeating Durgā's name,

How canst Thou then, O Blessed One,

Withhold from me deliverance,

Wretched though I may be?...

Then Sri Ramakrishna said:

To my Divine Mother I prayed only for pure love. I offered flowers at Her lotus feet and prayed to her: 'Mother, here is Thy virtue, here is Thy vice. Take them both and grant me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy knowledge, here is Thy ignorance. Take them both and grant me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy purity, here is Thy impurity. Take them both, Mother and grant me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy dharma, here is Thy adharma. Take them both, Mother, and grant me only pure love for

Thee.

Sri Ramakrishna then sang a song by Rāmprasād:

Come, let us go for a walk, O mind, to Kāli, the wish-fulfilling tree,

And there beneath It gather the four fruits of life.

Of your two wives, Dispassion and worldliness,

Bring along Dispassion only, on your way to the tree,

And ask Her son Discrimination about the Truth

When will you learn to lie, O mind, in the abode of blessedness,

With cleanliness and defilement on either side of you?

Only when you have found the way

To keep these wives contentedly under a single roof,

Will you behold the matchless form of Mother Syāmā.

Ego and Ignorance, your parents, instantly banish from your sight;

And should Delusion seek to drag you to its hole,

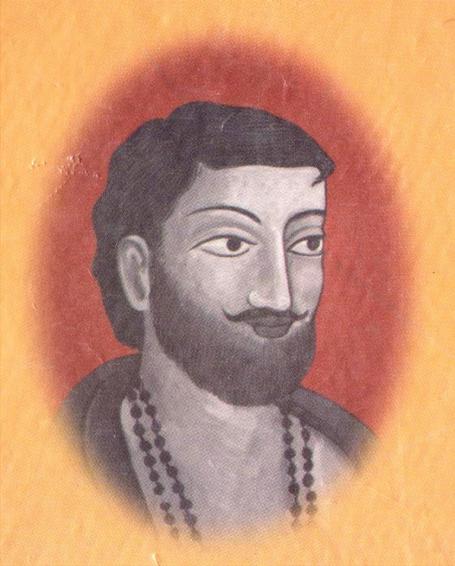
Manfully cling to the pillar of Patience.

Tie to the post of Unconcern the goats of Vice and Virtue,

Killing them with the sword of Knowledge if they rebel.

With the children of Worldliness, your first wife, plead from a goodly distance,

And, if they will not listen, drown them in Wisdom's sea.



*Ramprasad Sen*

Says Rāmprasād: If you do as I say,

You can submit a good account,  
O mind, to the King of Death,

And I shall be well pleased with  
you and call you my darling.

### Thursday, August 24, 1882

Mahendranath Gupta, otherwise known as M. was engaged in a discussion with Sri Ramakrishna



*Mahendranath Gupta*

when M. based on what the Master had said, thought, 'But why should God make us run about?' Immediately Sri Ramakrishna said:

It is His will that we should run about a little. Then it is great fun.

God has created the world in play, as it were. This is called Mahāmāyā, the Great Illusion. Therefore one must take refuge in the Divine Mother, the Cosmic Power Itself. It is She who has bound us with the shackles of illusion. The realisation of God is possible only when those shackles are severed.

The Master continued:

One must propitiate the Divine Mother, the Primal Energy, in order to obtain God's Grace. God Himself is Mahāmāyā, who deludes the world with her illusion and conjures up the magic of creation, preservation, and destruction. She has spread this veil of ignorance before our eyes. We can go into the inner chamber only when She lets us pass through the door. Living outside, we see only outer objects, but not the Eternal Being. Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. Therefore it is stated in the Purāna that deities like Brahmā praised Mahāmāyā for the destruction of the demons Madhu and Kaitabha.

Śakti alone is the root of the universe. That Primal Energy has two aspects: vidyā and avidyā. Avidyā deludes. Avidyā conjures up 'woman and gold', which casts the spell. Vidyā begets devotion, kindness, wisdom, and love, which lead one to God. This avidyā must be propitiated, and that is the purpose of the rites of Śakti worship.

The devotee assumes various attitudes towards Śakti in order to propitiate Her: the attitude of a handmaid, a 'hero', or a child. A hero's attitude is to please Her.

The worship of Śakti is extremely

difficult. It is no joke. I passed two years as the handmaid and companion of the Divine Mother. But my natural attitude has always been that of a child towards its mother.

### Conclusion

Once Sri Ramakrishna, on his way to the Kāli temple joined by M, a pundit and some devotees, sang thus:

Is Kāli, my Mother, really black?

The Naked One, of blackest hue,

Lights the Lotus of the heart...

As he was going through the courtyard, Sri Ramakrishna quoted to the pundit from a song, 'Lighting the lamp of knowledge in the chamber of your heart, Behold the face of the Mother, Brahman's Embodiment.' They came to the temple. Sri Ramakrishna saluted the Divine Mother, touching the ground with his forehead. Red hibiscus flowers and vilwa leaves adorned the Mother's feet. Her three eyes radiated love for Her devotees. Two of Her hands were raised as if to give them boons and reassurance; the other two hands held symbols of death. She was clothed in a sari of Benares silk and was decked with ornaments. Referring to the image, one of the devotees remarked, 'I heard it was made by the sculptor Nabin.' The Master answered, 'Yes, I know. But to me She is the Embodiment of Spirit.'

### Source:

Swami Nikhilananda (Tr.) *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math), vol. 1 pp.12; 50; 117, 127,132-135, vol. 2 734, 924.

## 2. ARTICLES

### DIRECT DISCIPLES:

#### The Legacy of Swami Vivekananda (Continued from the September 2016 issue)

*To spread his message Sri Ramakrishna needed a strong instrument. With his frail body and delicate limbs he could not make great journeys across wide spaces. And such an instrument was found in Narendranath Dutta, his beloved Naren, later known to the world as Swami Vivekananda. Even before meeting Narendranath, the Master had seen him in a vision as a sage, immersed in the meditation of the Absolute, who at Sri Ramakrishna's request had agreed to take human birth to assist him in his work. Swami Vivekananda lived for thirty-nine and a half years, of which nearly ten years alone were devoted to works of public significance. He took the world by storm at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, and since then spent himself unsparingly in spreading the message of Vedanta. Hence the legacy of Swami Vivekananda is both in the spheres of service and salvation of the soul. This concluding article gives attention to the final period in Swami Vivekananda's earthly life.*

#### "I shall never see forty"

Vivekananda returned to Belur Math on 7 March 1902. He had accomplished his mission and knew his end was near. Swamiji began to withdraw himself, delegating the responsibility of the monastery to his brother disciples.

Miss MacLeod wrote in her memoirs, "One day in April [1902] he said, 'I have nothing in the world. I haven't a penny to myself. I have given away everything that has ever been given to me.' I said, 'Swami, I will give you fifty dollars a month as long as you live.' He thought a minute and then said, 'Can I live on that?' 'Yes, O yes,' I said, 'but perhaps you cannot have cream.' I gave him then two hundred dollars, but before the four months were passed he had gone.

"At Belur Math one day, while Sister Nivedita was distributing prizes for some athletics, I was standing in Swamiji's bedroom at the Math, at the window, watching, and he said to me, 'I shall never see forty.' 'But



Swami, Buddha did not do his great work until between forty and eighty.' But he said, 'I delivered my message and I must go.' I asked, 'Why go?' and he said, 'The shadow of a big tree will not let the smaller trees grow up. I must go to make room.'"

Sometimes Swamiji was in an exalted mood. Bodhananda, a disciple of Vivekananda, recalled:

Once Swamiji said that he would do the worship of Sri Ramakrishna that day. So all of us went to watch Swamiji do it. First, in the usual way he took his seat as worshipper and meditated. We meditated too. After a

pretty long time we sensed that someone was moving around us. I opened my eyes to see who it was. It was Swamiji. Taking the tray of flowers meant to be offered to Sri Ramakrishna, he got up. But instead of placing them before the Lord, he came to us, and touching the flowers with sandal paste, placed one on the head of each disciple.

Considered from the ordinary traditional standpoint, this was an anti-traditional act. Generally after the worship service, the left-over flowers are set aside to be thrown away. But instead of doing this, Swamiji approached the altar and offered what remained in the tray before the picture of Sri Ramakrishna. He also carried out the usual rites. Then he indicated that the time had come for food offering; so we all got up to leave the room. It is a custom in India that during the food offering no one should be in the shrine except the worshipper. We heard from outside Swamiji saying, addressing Sri Ramakrishna, "Friend, please eat!" Then he came out of the shrine and closed the door. His eyes



*Old Shrine, Belur Math*

were bloodshot with emotion.

Bodhananda later explained the significance of Swamiji's worship thus:

Actually Swamiji did not worship the disciples. In placing a flower on the head of each one of us, he really offered the flower at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna in each disciple. Thereby he awakened His presence in us. That presence took different aspects in everyone. Some were devotional; others had the jnana [knowledge] aspect predominate. By his act of worship, Swamiji awakened the Divine in us. The remaining flowers were not in anyway defiled. The same divine presence, which Swamiji saw in the photograph of Sri Ramakrishna on the altar, he also saw in his disciples; and at the altar he offered the remaining flowers. Lastly, Swamiji's relation to his Chosen Deity was that of a friend. That is why, in offering the food, he addressed Sri Ramakrishna by that term.

Another day, touching the casket

of Sri Ramakrishna's relics, Swami Vivekananda asked himself, "Does the Master really reside here? I must test it." Then he prayed, "Master, if you are truly present here, bring here the Maharaja of Gwalior [who was then visiting Calcutta] within three days." The next day Vivekananda left for Calcutta on some business. However, when he returned later that afternoon, he was told that the Maharaja of Gwalior had stopped there earlier. He had been passing by the Grand Trunk Road near the monastery in his car and had sent his younger brother to see if the swami was in. Swami Vivekananda was not there, the maharaja had gone away disappointed.

When Swamiji heard this news, he remembered his test. He immediately rushed to the shrine, and holding the urn of the relics on his head, repeatedly said, "Master, You are true! You are true! You are true!" At that time Swami Premananda entered the shrine for meditation, and he was bewildered. Later Swamiji told Premananda and the monks about his test, and all marvelled at this proof of the master's presence in the shrine.

One day Swamiji came downstairs and sat on the canvas cot under the mango tree in the courtyard, facing west, as he often did. The monks around him were busy with their activities. One was sweeping the courtyard with a broom. Swami Premananda was climbing the steps to the shrine after his bath. Suddenly Vivekananda's eyes became radiant. Surcharged with spiritual fervour, he said to a disciple, "Where will you go to seek



*Swami Premananda*

Brahman? He is immanent in all beings. Here, here is the visible Brahman! Shame on those who, neglecting the visible Brahman, set their minds on other things! Here is the visible Brahman before you as tangible as the fruit in one's hand! Can't you see? Here – here – here is Brahman!" These words struck the people around him like an electric shock. For about fifteen minutes no one could move or function. Premananda went into ecstasy; others experienced an indescribable peace and joy. At last Vivekananda said to Premananda, "Now go to worship," and all were released. The disciples were amazed to witness the spiritual power of Vivekananda.

Swamiji explained this phenomenon on another occasion. "He who has realised the Atman becomes a house of great power. From him as the centre, and within a certain radius, emanates a spiritual force, and all those who come within this circle become animated with his ideas and are overwhelmed by them.

Thus without much religious striving they inherit the results of his wonderful spirituality. This is grace."

On 15 May 1902, Swamiji wrote to Miss MacLeod, "I am somewhat better, but of course far from what I expected. A great idea of quiet has come upon me. I am going to retire for good-no more work for me." His brother



*Swami Bodhananda*

disciples were worried by his contemplative mood. They remembered the Master's forecast that Naren would merge forever into samadhi as soon as his mission was over, and that he would refuse to live in his physical body once he realised who he was. A few days before his passing away, one of his boyhood friends came to Vivekananda and asked for some financial help. Swamiji asked Bodhananda to give his friend two rupees from his wallet. Bodhananda checked his wallet and said that if the friend was given two rupees there would not be much left. Immediately Swamiji said, "Do you think I

care for that? Give him two rupees plus a little more." Then he continued, "In a room, if one window is open and the corresponding window is closed, there is no ventilation; so let it go by one window and it will come by the other."

A week before the end, Vivekananda asked Shuddhananda to bring him the Bengali almanac. Swamiji turned several pages and then kept it in his room. He was seen several times on subsequent days studying the almanac intently, as if looking for something auspicious. It did not strike anyone what his intention might be; only after his death did they realise that he was selecting an auspicious day for his departure as Sri Ramakrishna had done.

Three days before his passing away, while walking on the spacious lawn of the monastery with Premananda, Swamiji said to him, pointing to a particular spot on the bank of the Ganges, "When I give up the body, cremate it there." Today on that very spot stands a temple in his honour.

Sister Nivedita left a vivid account that includes many significant facts in connection with Vivekananda's passing away and his foreknowledge of it:

When June closed... he knew well enough that the end was near. "I am making ready for death!" he said to one who was with him, on the Wednesday before he died. "A great tapasya [austerity] and meditation has come upon me, I am making ready for death."

Once in Kashmir, after an attack



*Sister Nivedita*

of illness, I had seen him lift a couple of pebbles, saying, "Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as *that* – and the stones struck one another in his hand – for I *have* touched the feet of God!"

Did we not remember, moreover, the story of the great nirvikalpa samadhi of his youth, and know, when it was over, his Master had said, "This is your mango. Look! I lock it in my box. You shall taste it once more, when your work is finished!"

It was on the last Sunday before the end that he said to one of his disciples, "You know, the work is always my weak point! When I think that might have come to an end, I am all undone!"

On Wednesday [2 July] of the same week, the day being Ekadashi [the eleventh day of the moon, which orthodox Hindus observe by fasting], and himself keeping the fast in all strictness, he insisted on serving the morning [noon] meal to the same disciple [Nivedita]. Each dish as it

was offered – boiled seeds of the jackfruit, boiled potatoes, plain rice, and ice-cold milk – formed the subject of playful chat; and, finally, to end the meal, he himself poured the water over the hands, and dried them with a towel.

“It is I who should do these things for you, Swamiji! Not you for me!” was the protest naturally offered. But his answer was startling in its solemnity – “Jesus washed the feet of his disciples.” Something checked the answer – “But that was the last time!” – as it rose to the lips, and the words remained unuttered.

On his last day, Friday, 4 July 1902, Vivekananda got up very early in the morning as usual and went to the shrine for meditation. He was not sick at all. During breakfast he was in a jovial mood, teasing Premananda and recalling many events of olden times. He had fruit, milk and tea. A fresh shad fish from the Ganges was bought from a fisherman, and it was shown to him. Shad fish is a delicacy for Bengalis. Seeing the fish, Swamiji in fun said to a novice from East Bengal, “Don’t you worship the first shad of the season in your part of the country? Let me see how you do that.’

At 8.00 a.m. he again entered the shrine for meditation. When at 9.30 a.m. Premananda entered the shrine to perform the daily worship, Swamiji asked him to carry his *asana* (carpet) to the Master’s bedroom, which was adjacent to the shrine, and shut all the doors and windows. Swamiji dusted the Master’s bed with his own hands, and again sat for

meditation. Never before had he performed such meditation in the monastery. What transpired there, no one knows. He finished his meditation at 11.00a.m. , and then began to sing a song about Kali in his sweet voice which the monks heard from downstairs. The words to the song are:

Is Kali, my Mother, really black?

The Naked One, though black  
She seems,

Lights the Lotus of the heart.

Men call Her black, but yet my  
mind

Does not believe that She is so:

Now She is white, now, red,  
now, blue;

Now She appears as yellow, too.

I hardly know who Mother is,

Though I have pondered all my  
life:

Now Purusha, now Prakriti,

And now the Void, She seems to  
be.

To meditate on all these things

Confounds poor Kamalakanta’s  
wits.

Descending the stairs of the shrine, he walked back and forth in the courtyard of the monastery. He appeared indrawn, as if travelling to a distant land. Suddenly Swamiji said to himself, “If there were another Vivekananda, then he would have understood what this Vivekananda has done! And yet – how many Vivekanandas shall be born in time.” Premananda, who was on the veranda of the chapel, overheard his statement. Never before had Swamiji spoken like this.

Then he expressed a desire to



worship Mother Kali at the monastery the following day: It was Saturday, and there was a new moon, a very auspicious time for Mother’s worship. Soon after, Ishwar Chandra Chakrabarty, Ramakrishnananda’s father and a devout worshipper of Mother, came to visit Vivekananda. Swamiji was delighted to see him and expressed his intention of worshipping Mother Kali. He asked Shuddhananda and Bodhananda to procure all the necessary articles for the ceremony.

After instructing the disciples to make preparations for the Kali worship, Swamiji asked Shuddhananda to bring the Shukla-Yajur Veda from the library. When it was brought, Swamiji asked him to read the mantram with the words *sushumnah suryarashmi*, with Mahidhara’s commentary on it. Listening to part of it, Swamiji remarked, “This interpretation of the passage does not appeal to my mind. Whatever may be the commentator’s interpretation of the word ‘sushumna’, the seed or the basis of what the Tantras, in



Swami Shuddhananda

later ages speak of as the sushumna nerve channel in the body, is contained here in this Vedic mantram. You, my disciples, should try to discover the true import of these mantras and make original reflections and commentaries on the scriptures."

At noon, Swamiji heartily enjoyed his lunch with the monks in the dining room. Because of his illness, he had generally taken his meals in his room. That day Swamiji relished various kinds of fish preparations, and told Premananda, "I was very hungry because of fasting on Ekadashi day. With great difficulty I skipped eating the cups and plates." Again, humorously, he said to his brother disciple in English, "Fish need water to swim, "; and then with a chuckle, "Please give me a glass of water." He talked a while and then went to his room to rest. After fifteen minutes he came out of his room and told Premananda, "Let us go and study. Day sleep is not good for a monk. Today I did not get any sleep. I got a little headache, because of a long meditation. I

see my brain is getting weak nowadays."

He went to the library and called the brahmacharins to attend the class on Sanskrit grammar. One who attended the class wrote, "The class lasted for nearly three hours [1.00p.m. to 4.00 p.m.]. But no monotony was felt. For he [Swamiji] would tell a witty story or make *bons mots* now and then to lighten his teaching, as he was wont to do. He, however, appeared a little tired after grammar class." Swamiji wanted each disciple to be original and not to follow him blindly. He said to the boys, "If any man ever imitates me, kick him out. Do not imitate me."

At 4.30p.m. Vivekananda drank some water and a cup of hot milk. Then he went for a walk with Premananda to Belur bazar, one mile away. He felt good and talked to his brother disciple on many interesting subjects. Seeing a garden on the way, he began to describe Mr Leggett's big and beautiful garden at Ridgely Manor, and how in America a few people are able to manage large gardens by using machinery. By the by, he said to Premananda, "Why would you imitate me? The Master would forbid one to imitate others. Don't be extravagant like me." He also mentioned his plan for establishing a Vedic college in the monastery. In order to have a clearer understanding of what Swamiji felt on the matter, Premananda asked, "What will be the good of studying the Vedas? Swamiji replied, "It will kill superstitions."

At 5.30p.m, he returned to the monastery from his walk. He sat

on a bench under the mango tree and said, "My health is so good today, which I have not felt for a long time." Swamiji talked to Premananda and other monks about the history of European civilisation and also colonial history. "India is immortal," he said, "if she persists in her search for God. But if she goes in for politics and social conflict, she will die."

At 6.30p.m. when he found that some monks were taking tea, he went to them and said, "Will you give me a cup of tea?" He enjoyed the tea with them. When the vesper bell was rung at 7.00p.m. he got up and went to his room upstairs. Bodhananda, who was Swamiji's secretary and kept his little bit of cash, reminisced, "I was standing by the stairway down on the ground floor. It was the month of July. In India the mosquitoes are so numerous and so dangerous that you get malaria from them, and no one can sleep in bed without the curtains. He had discovered that the curtains of some monks were torn, and his last command to me was, 'See that they all get new curtains.' " Even in his last moments Vivekananda showed his great love and concern for the monks!

Entering his room, Swamiji said to his attendant, "My body is very light today. I feel fine. Please give me my rosary." He sat facing the Ganges. Before he began his meditation, he asked his attendant to go to the other room, and instructed him, "Wait and meditate till I call you." After an hour, at 8.00p.m., the swami called his attendant and

asked him to fan his head. Swamiji asked him to open all the windows of his room, because he was feeling hot. Then, he laid himself down on his bed on the floor. He still had the rosary in his hand. After a while Swamiji said to him, "All right, no more need for fanning! It would be better if you give a little massage to my feet." Soon, he seemed to fall asleep, and an hour passed in this manner. Vivekananda was lying on his left side and the attendant was massaging his feet. He then moved and lay down on his back; shortly after that, he cried out like a baby cries for its mother. Towards the end, the attendant Brajendra noticed that Swamiji's right hand trembled a little, there was perspiration on his forehead, he breathed a deep breath, and his head rolled down by the pillow. There was silence for a minute or two, and again he breathed in the same manner; his body became still. It was 9.10p.m.

Brajendra thought that Swamiji was in samadhi, but he was scared and puzzled. He rushed downstairs and told Swami Advaitananda about Swamiji. Immediately the old swami went to Swamiji's room, placed his hand on his heart, and checked the pulse. There was no breathing. Then Advaitananda asked Bodhananda, who had just arrived and was cooking Swamiji's meal, to check the pulse. After doing this for a while, he stood up and cried aloud. Within a few minutes Premananda arrived and found Swamiji motionless. He, Nishcayananda,



*Swami Vivekananda's Temple, Belur Math at the place where his body was cremated*

and Ramakrishnananda's father began to chant 'Ramakrishna' loudly into Swamiji's ear, hoping that he would return from samadhi. Swamiji's eyes were fixed in the centre of his eyebrows, and his face had assumed a divine expression with a sweet smile. After a thorough examination, Dr. Majumdar found no sign of life; he still tried artificial respiration, but failed. "There was," said a brother disciple, "a little blood in his nostrils, about his mouth, and in his eyes." According to yoga scriptures, the life breath of an illumined yogi passes out through the opening on the top of the head, causing the blood to flow in the nostrils and the mouth. Vivekananda passed away at the age of thirty-nine years, five months, and twenty four days, fulfilling his own prophecy, "I shall never see forty."

In the beginning of his mission, Vivekananda had said, "I am a voice without a form," Towards the end, he said, "It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body – to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God."

### Source:

Swami Nikhilananda (Tr.) *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math), p. 56

Swami Tapasyananda, *Swami Vivekananda: His Life and Legacy* (South Africa: Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa), p. 147-8

Swami Chetanananda *God Lived With Them: Life Stories of Sixteen Monastic Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama), pp. 65-73