



SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

Sri Ramakrishna on Mind

The mind is everything. If the mind loses its liberty, you lose yours. If the mind is free, you are free too. The mind may be dipped in any colour, like a white cloth fresh from the wash.

Source: *The Message of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, p. 23

Sri Sarada Devi on Meditation

Can one get everything merely by meditating for a few days? Nothing will be of any avail unless Mahamaya clears the way.

Source: *The Message of Holy Mother*, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, p. 21

Swami Vivekananda on Harmony of Religions

The various religions that exist in the world, although they differ in the form of worship they take, are really one.

Source: *Thoughts of Power* by Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, p. 32.

Lao Tzu: On Daoism

Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like.

Source: https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/2622245.Lao_Tzu

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We 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.

1. NEWS FROM AUSTRALIAN CENTRES 11 JUNE 2019 TO 10 SEPTEMBER 2019

ADELAIDE

506 Glynburn Road, Burnside, SA 5066

Email: vedanta.adelaide@gmail.com

Contact: Dr Raman Sharma on (08) 8431 9775

Mrs Pathma Iswaran on (08) 8379 5336

URL: <http://vedantaadelaide.org>

Daily Activities

- The Centre functions from 6.30am-12.30pm and 4.00-8.00pm every day. The evening vesper service to Sri Ramakrishna is performed between 7.00-7.35pm followed by *bhajans*, devotional reading and meditation everyday.

Regular Activities

- On Sundays Swami Vireshananda has been informally interacting with the devotees and speaking on topics such as 'Humorous Stories for Noble Living - Tales and Parables of Sri Ramakrishna.
- On Tuesdays, Swami Vireshananda has been informally interacting with the devotees and discoursing on the *Bhagavatam – The Book on Love of God*.
- On Thursday mornings Swami Vireshananda has been informally interacting with the devotees and discoursing on *Vedanta for All* by Swami Satprakashananda.
- On Monday and Thursday evenings Swami Vireshananda has been informally interacting with the devotees and discoursing on Sankaracharya's *Vivekachudamani*.
- On Tuesday and Saturday mornings Swami Vireshananda has been informally interacting with the devotees and conducting a class on elementary Sanskrit and Bhagavad Gita chanting.
- Reading of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, including discussion on relevant points, was held on alternative Saturdays before the daily Vesper Service.
- Some devotees have been providing community-based support on a weekly basis at the Cen-

tre for meeting the educational needs of under privileged children .

Celebrations

- The three day annual festival of the Divine Mother Durga was celebrated on 5-7 October, 2019. The celebrations included chanting of *Durga Saptashati (Chandi Path)*, special *puja* on Ashtami day, *bhajans* (by Anjan Bhise/group, Soumya Anand/students, Priya Ghosal/students, Mayuresh Kulkarni/Tabla accompaniment, Amnon Shiloh, Raji Krishnamurthy/students), Vedic chanting by devotees led by Krishnamoorthy and talks by Dilip Chirmuley and Swami Vireshananda on "Divine Mother and the Importance of Durga Puja", Pushpanjali (offering of flowers to Divine Mother by devotees) and distribution of Prasada. Many devotees participated and enjoyed the three day festivities.



Durga Puja

- A special puja (ritualistic worship) on the occasion of Kali puja was performed on Sunday 27 October 2019. The program included *bhajans* by devotees/monks, *pushpanjali*



Kali puja

(offering of flowers to the Divine Mother by the devotees) and *prasad* distribution.

Other Activities

- A spiritual retreat on the theme “Practical Way of Developing Inner Peace and Bliss in Daily Life” was held on Saturday, 16 November 2019, at the Vedanta Centre of Adelaide, Burnside, SA 5066. Swami Sridharananda, Swami Vireshananda, Swami Manyananda and Swami Dhanyananda were present. The day-long retreat included chanting of Vedic mantras, *Shanti mantras*, *bhajans*, a question-answer session and reading of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Swami Sridharananda delivered a talk on “How to be at Peace with Ourselves and with the World” and answered questions of the participants on this topic. Swami Vireshananda delivered a talk on the topic “Raga and Dvesha (likes and dislikes) and their Impact on Daily Life”.



Spiritual Retreat

BRISBANE

96 Vedanta Drive, (next to 2 Poppy Crescent),
Springfield Lakes, QLD 4300

Email: 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 on all days except Sundays when it is held from 8 am to 8:30 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 (8:30 am—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 during school term).
- A yoga class was conducted on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm.
- A discussion group met on the first Monday of the month at Sunnybank Hills (7:30 pm — 8:45 pm).
- A Vedic Chanting class is held on Wednesdays from 8:30 to 9:30 am.
- Religious classes for children conducted by volunteers were held every Wednesday at West End Primary School (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) 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.
- A class on the *Ashtavakra Gita* is conducted at 101 Sharpless Drive, Springfield Lakes, on a fixed day of the month.
- On the third Saturday of every month, a *satsang* was held at the Helensvale Community Centre in Gold Coast wherein chanting, *bhajans* and study of *Bhagavad Gita* were undertaken.
- Yoga, meditation and bushwalking were held on the third weekend of every month at Vedanta Precinct, Vedanta Drive, Springfield Lakes.

- The Centre started a seniors' *Satsang programme* to be held on the 1st Sunday of every month for about two hours (4.30 to 6.30 p.m) beginning from 1st September 2019. Seniors in the community are encouraged to meet, pray, learn simple physical exercises, read from scriptural texts and spend time in communicating with each other during this session.

Other Activities

- A day-long Yoga retreat was held on 22 September 2019 at the Centre. Apart from physical yoga lessons, talks on mind control and question and answer sessions were held.



Yoga Retreat

- Mrs. Malathi Nagarajan conducted a Veena recital at the Centre on 29 September 2019.



Mrs. Malathi Nagarajan's Veena recital

- A music concert was held on 8 October 2019 at the Centre. Sri Dhananjay Hegde, a renowned classical music expert from Mumbai, India, pre-

- presented devotional songs on the Divine Mother.
- Swami Atmешananda was invited to deliver a lecture on 'Practical Spirituality According to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda' at the Theosophical Society, Brisbane Lodge on 16 October 2019.



Talk at the Theosophical Society, Brisbane

- The BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha invited Swami Atmешananda to participate in the annual Annakut ceremony on Diwali at the Queensland Parliament on 21 October 2019.
- Swami Atmешananda participated at the Queensland Faith Communities Council's Annual General Meeting on invitation, on 21 October 2019.
- The Centre set up a book stall at the Federation of Indian Communities Queensland's Diwali celebration on 25 October 2019.
- Swami Atmешananda was invited to participate at the Queensland Premier's reception for organization leaders in Brisbane on 28 October 2019 held at the Queensland Parliament.
- The Annual General Meeting of the Centre was held on 10 November 2019.
- On the occasion of Guru Nanak's 550th birthday celebrations, Swami Atmешananda was invited by the Brisbane Sikh Temple, Eight Mile Plains to visit and participate in their prayers on 14 November 2019.
- Senator Paul Scarr, Federal MP for Queensland, visited our Centre on Tuesday 19 November 2019 and familiarized himself with organization and the activities that we are conducting. He also interacted with the members of the Centre
- Bala Sanskar Kendra invited Swami Atmешananda as guest of honour to participate in its Annual Concert programme on 30 November 2019.



Senator Paul Scarr with Swami Atmeshananda and



At the Bala Sankar Kendra Annual Programme

- Swami Suhitananda, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, visited Brisbane from the 1 to 2 December 2019. A reception was held for Swamiji on 1 December 2019. He was accompanied by Swamis Tadananda, Chandrakantananda and Sevatananda.

Celebrations

- Sri Durga Ashtami puja was performed on Sunday, 6 October 2019 at the Centre. Sri Sri Chandī (Durga Saptashati) was chanted on all the three days of the Durga Puja from 4 to 7 October 2019. A large number of devotees participated in the puja programme. On the occasion of Vijayadashami (8th October), Shanti jal (sprinkling of sanctified water for universal peace) was performed.

Forthcoming Programmes

- Sri Saradadevi's Birthday Puja on 18 December



Durga Puja Programme at Brisbane

2019. The Public Celebration 21 December 2019.

- Christmas eve on 24 December 2019.
- Kalpataru Day on 1 January 2020.
- Swami Vivekananda's Birthday on 18 January 2020.
- Shivaratri on 22 February.
- Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday Puja on 25 February 2020.
- Multifaith Programme on 1 March 2020.

CANBERRA

17 Bean Crescent, Mckellar, ACT 2617

Email: vedacanberra@gmail.com

Contact: Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman 6258 7612 / 0433 593 860

Regular Activities

- Regular monthly Gita classes conducted by Swami Sridharananda. Are expected to resume in February 2020 at the Quakers Friends Meeting House, Corner of Bent and Condamine Streets, Turner, ACT 2612.

MELBOURNE

5-7 Angus Ave, Ringwood East, VIC 3135

Email: vedanta.melb@gmail.com

Contact: Swami Sunishthananda (03) 8684 9594

URL <http://www.vedantamelbourne.org>

Regular Activities

- The shrine was open from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm seven days a week.
- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and meditation were conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm daily.
- Rama Nama Sankirtanam on Ekadasi Days

Swami Sunishthananda conducts:

- A class on Sundays from 10:00 am to 11:30 am on the *Katha Upanishad* followed by an interactive session and guided meditation.
- Chanting and guided meditation followed by a class on *Meditation and Spiritual Life* on Wednesdays from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm.
- Guided meditation followed by a class on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* on Thursdays from 7:30 pm to 8:45 pm.

Other Activities

- A children's holiday program was organized from Monday, 23 September 2019 to Wednesday, 25 September 2019 at Vedanta Centre premises in which 24 children of the age group 5 – 13 years were registered.
- A Yoga Workshop was organized in collaboration with Vasudeva Kriya Yoga on Saturday, 12 October 2019. Shri. Rajendra Yenkanamoole, the founder of Vasudeva Kriya Yoga conducted the Yoga Workshop session.
- Swami Sunishthananda represented the Hindu Faith at the Interfaith Panel Discussion on the topic "What makes life Happy?" organized by Maroondah Interfaith Network at Karuna Centre (Arnold Janssen Spirituality Centre, Boronia), on Saturday, 19 October 2019.
- Swami Sunishthananda participated as a representative of Hindu Faith in the focus group



Children's Holiday Programme



Yoga Workshop

discussion on social cohesion held on Monday, 28 October 2019 at 11 am in the Regional Office of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

- The Annual General Meeting was organized on Saturday, 2 November 2019 at 11.00 am.
- Swami Sunishthananda participated in a Humanity walk on Saturday, 9 November 2019 organized by The Sikh Council of Victoria to celebrate 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Sahib Ji.
- A one day 'Spiritual Retreat' was conducted on Sunday, 24 November 2019 for a comprehensive study of the Isha Upanishad in which 21 persons participated.
- Swami Sridharananda visited the Centre from 27 November 2019 to 29 November 2019. On the evening of Thursday, 28 November 2019, he delivered a talk on the topic "Bhakti Yoga as Enunciated in Bhagavad Gita" after evening vesper service.
- Swami Suhitananda, Vice President, Rama-

krishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, visited the centre from 7 December 2019 to 9 December 2019. On the morning of Sunday, 8 October 2019 at 11 am, he delivered a talk on the topic, "Ideal Way of Living as Exemplified by Holy Mother". After the talk he met and blessed the devotees which was followed by sharing of prasadam.



Swamis Suhitananda, Sunishthananda and Chandrakantananda and others in Melbourne



Durga Puja

- Children's Holiday Program: 20 Jan 2020 to 22 Jan 2020
- Saraswati Puja: Sunday, 2 February 2020
- Shiva Ratri: Friday, 21 February 2020
- Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday: Sunday, 1 March 2020
- Spiritual Retreat: 7 – 9 March 2020

PERTH

51 Golf View Street, Yorkine, WA 6060

Email: vedantaperth@gmail.com

Contact: Sumita Chetty (04) 38928136

Parthiv Parekh 0430 511 699

Celebrations

- On the morning of Sunday, 6 October 2019, Sri Sri Durga Ashtami was celebrated in the Vedanta Centre premises. The programme included puja, *homa*, offerings, *bhajans* and sharing of *prasad*.
- On the evening of Sunday, 27 October 2019, Sri Sri Kali Puja was celebrated in the Vedanta Centre premises. The programme included puja, offerings, and *bhajans* and sharing of *prasad*.

Forthcoming Programmes

- Holy Mother's Birthday: Sunday, 22 December 2019
- Christmas Eve: Tuesday, 24 December 2019
- Kalpataru Day: Wednesday, 1 January 2020
- Swami Vivekananda's Birthday: Sunday, 19 January 2020

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

- *Satsangas* were conducted on a Sunday of every month. The programme included chanting, *Gita dhyanam*, *bhajans*, readings and *prasad* distribution. The *Satsangas* were held on 20 October and 17 November 2019.
- Swami Sridharananda has been unable to travel to Perth. His recordings of the *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gitā* have been played at the Vedanta Centre on 31 October, 1 and 2 November 2019 and 5, 6, 7 December 2019.



Perth Devotees

Other Activities

- A working bee session was held once every month.
- The Vedanta Multipurpose hall is used about 5 days a week by the organization called Prana Yoga, which is led by an acclaimed yoga teacher who is a member of Yoga Australia.

SYDNEY

2 Stewart Street, Ermington, NSW 2115

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Contact: (02) 8197 7351

URL: www.vedantaaustralia.org

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 7:00 am and chanting from 7:00 am to 7:30 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.

Regular Activities

- Swami Sridharananda conducted his chapter-wise study of the *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā*, on Sundays between 9:30 am and 10:30 am.
- Swami Sridharananda conducted a class on the *Mundaka Upanishad* on Mondays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm.

- A class for mothers was held every Monday between 11:00 am and 12:30 pm. Swami Mahabodhananda initiated discussion on *Meditation and Spiritual Life*.
- Swami Mahabodhananda conducted a class on *What Religion is in the Words of Swami Vivekananda* on Fridays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
- *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.
- *Sri Rāmanāma Sankirtanam* was conducted on *ekadashi* days after the vesper service.
- Devotees also received spiritual counselling and guidance.
- 'Yoga for Everybody' was conducted by qualified Yoga Teachers on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

Celebrations

- *Mahalaya*, which is the beginning of the fortnight celebrating the decent of the Mother of the Universe from the Himalayas, was observed at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney on 29 September 2019. There were a group of devotees who narrated the folk lore and sang the songs related to the Mother of the Universe, Durga.



The Mahalaya Function

- The *ashtami* day of the Durga puja was celebrated on Sunday, 6 October 2019. The morning session included special worship, homa, chanting of the *Lalita Sahasranama*, *bhajans* by devotees, *pushpanjali* and *prasad* distribution. The evening session included Kali kirtan, *aratrikam*, *bhajans* by devotees, offerings, *pushpanjali* and *prasad* distribution. There was a total of

about 1500 people who partook of Prasad in the afternoon and evening.



The Worship on the Durga Puja Ashtami



Swami Swatmaramananda in Sydney

1. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DEVOTEES AND FRIENDS

Outside

Forgetting, we seek it here,
we seek it there – the fugitive joy
we long to wear
about the naked psyche self.
Outside, outside with eager hands,
we seek our joy in foreign lands
marred by time and circumstance,
where fleeting joys are lost-
always lost-
to time and impermanence.

In wondrous trance
we take no heed,
ever seeking things that cannot feed
the haunting hunger that grows worse
the more it's fed with the curse
of the worldly brevity of things outside
waxing and waning with time's tide.
Yet the inconstant world seems but a toy,
when beyond it blooms
the Causeless Joy.



The Crowds on the Durga Puja Ashtami

Other Activities

- Swami Swatmaramananda from the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, Johannesburg visited Sydney from 10 to 13 December 2019 and 22 to 23 December 2019. He addressed the audience on Wednesday, 11 December 2019 on Ramakrishna's Education and on 23 December 2019 he sang some songs and addressed the audience on Tears of Ramakrishna.

2. FEATURE ARTICLES

A. Daoism

Daoism (or Taoism) is a system of philosophy and religion that arose in China about 2,500 years ago. The founder, Lao-tzu (or Laozi), lived at the same time as another highly influential Chinese philosopher, Confucius. While Confucianism is largely concerned with morals and duty, Daoism is more mystical and carefree. Both systems of thought have helped shape Chinese culture.

Introduction

The philosophy of Daoism teaches that the most important thing in life is to find the Dao. The Dao is not easy to define. It can mean the unchanging reality that is the source and end of all things. A Daoist does not fear death, because life and death are merely part of an eternal process of transformation.

In the writings of Lao-tzu, 'Dao' also is translated as 'the Way', meaning the way to think and act throughout life. Followers are taught that aggressive action always defeats itself. They are told to act instead in harmony with the natural course of things. Often this means taking no action at all. A Daoist king would not make his subjects admire his achievements, but instead would make them think they achieved everything themselves.

Daoism admires water, which is soft and yielding but wears down rocks. Daoism also teaches that power and wealth are not to be desired because they keep people from searching for their original natures. The 'uncarved block' is regarded as superior to the block that has been fashioned by people into something they can use, since the carving changes the original nature of the block.

Little is known about the facts of Lao-tzu's life, and it is not clear that he ever existed. Supposedly he lived in the 6th century BC and was slightly older than Confucius. According to legend, the two great philosophers once had a meeting. Just before he mysteriously departed from his country, never to return, Lao-tzu is said to have written a short book called the *Daodejing* (or *Tao-te ching*; 'Classic of the Way of Power'). He intended the book as advice for kings on the right way to rule. Some scholars believe the book was actually written by many authors over time.

Several hundred years after its founding, the philosophy of Daoism became a religious movement. Lao-tzu and other authors became known as people who had revealed sacred truths. Followers strove to achieve endless life through diet, breath control, meditation and magic. Religious Daoism recognised a large number of gods that were present in the human body and in the universe. Followers of the religion built temples and monasteries.

Organised Daoism remains strong in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. In China there are not many religious Daoists, but many Chinese people be-

lieve in gods and spirits that affect all parts of daily life. These beliefs belong to a tradition that was drawn partly from Daoism.

In Chinese the word *dao* means "way," indicating a way of thought or life. There have been several such ways in China's long history, including Confucianism and Buddhism. Daoism (also spelled Taoism) is a philosophical and religious tradition that developed in China in ancient times under the influence of ideas credited to a man named Laozi. Like Confucianism, it has deeply influenced Chinese culture. Daoism began as a complex system of philosophical thought. In later centuries it also emerged as a communal religion and was integrated into popular folk religion as well.

The fundamental text of Daoism is the *Daodejing* (Classic of the Way of Power), traditionally attributed to Laozi. It was written sometime between the 8th and 3rd century BC. Another important Daoist work is the *Zhuangzi*, which is named after the sage who wrote the core of the text, in about the late 4th century BC.

Daoist philosophy speaks of a universal Dao, which is nameless and unknowable, the essen-

tial unifying element of all that is. Everything is basically one despite the appearance of differences. Matters of good and evil and of true or false, as well as differing opinions, can only arise when people lose sight of the oneness and think that their private beliefs are absolutely true. This can be likened to a person looking out a small window and thinking he sees the whole world, when all he sees is one small portion of it. Because all is one, life and death are not in opposition to one another but are only two aspects of a single reality. The life of the individual comes from the one and goes back into it.

The goal of life for a Daoist is to cultivate a mystical relationship to the Dao and to act only in harmony with it. Civilization is considered a degradation of the natural order, and the ideal is the return to an original purity. Adherents therefore avoid dispersing their energies through the pursuit of wealth, power, or knowledge. By shunning such distractions, Daoists are able to strengthen the life force within themselves. The longer an adherent lives, the more of a sage the person is presumed to have become. Eventually the hope is to become immortal.

Religious Daoism emphasizes moral teachings and collective ceremonies. Good moral conduct is rewarded with health and long life, while bad conduct results in disease, death, and suffering in the afterlife. There is an array of gods who are administrators of the universe, of which they are a part. From these gods come revelations of



Laozi, the Founder of Daoism

sacred texts. Daoist priests perform exorcisms and complex rituals in the communities they serve.

In the more folk-oriented form of Daoism, the religion is part of the everyday lives of the people. The gods are intimately connected with each individual's life as bringers of calamities or givers of bountiful gifts. Each object of daily life has its presiding spirit that must be consulted and appeased.

All types of Daoism have in common the quest for harmony with the universe. They emphasize the individual's and the group's need for unity through mysticism, magic, and ceremony.

Daoism, also spelled Taoism, indigenous religio-philosophical tradition that has shaped Chinese life for more than 2,000 years. In the broadest sense, a Daoist attitude toward life can be seen in the accepting and yielding, the joyful and carefree

sides of the Chinese character, an attitude that offsets and complements the moral and duty-conscious, austere and purposeful character ascribed to Confucianism. Daoism is also characterized by a positive, active attitude toward the occult and the metaphysical (theories on the nature of reality), whereas the agnostic, pragmatic Confucian tradition considers these issues of only marginal importance, although the reality of such issues is, by most Confucians, not denied.

More strictly defined, Daoism includes: the ideas and attitudes peculiar to the *Laozi* (or *Daodejing*; "Classic of the Way of Power"), the *Zhuangzi*, the *Liezi*, and related writings; the Daoist religion, which is concerned with the ritual worship of the Dao; and those who identify themselves as Daoists.

Daoist thought permeates Chinese culture, including many

aspects not usually considered Daoist. In Chinese religion, the Daoist tradition—often serving as a link between the Confucian tradition and folk tradition—has generally been more popular and spontaneous than the official (Confucian) state cult and less diffuse and shapeless than folk religion.

Daoist philosophy and religion have found their way into all Asian cultures influenced by China, especially those of Vietnam, Japan, and Korea. Various religious practices reminiscent of Daoism in such areas of Chinese cultural influence indicate early contacts with Chinese travelers and immigrants that have yet to be elucidated.

Both Western Sinologists and Chinese scholars themselves have distinguished—since Han times (206 BCE–220 CE)—between a Daoist philosophy of the great mystics and their commentators (*daojia*) and a later Daoist religion (*daojiao*). This theory—no longer considered valid—was based on the view that the “ancient Daoism” of the mystics antedated the “later Neo-Daoist superstitions” that were misinterpretations of the mystics’ metaphorical images. The mystics, however, should be viewed against the background of the religious practices existing in their own times. Their ecstasies, for example, were closely related to the trances and spirit journeys of the early magicians and shamans (religious personages with healing and psychic transformation powers). Not only are the authors of the *Daodejing*, the *Zhuangzi* (book of “Master

Chuang”), and the *Liezi* (book of “Master Lie”) not the actual and central founders of an earlier “pure” Daoism later degraded into superstitious practices but they can even be considered somewhat on the margin of older Daoist traditions. Therefore, because there has been a nearly continuous mutual influence between Daoists of different social classes—philosophers, ascetics, alchemists, and the priests of popular cults—the distinction between philosophical and religious Daoism in this article is made simply for the sake of descriptive convenience.

There is also a tendency among scholars today to draw a less rigid line between what is called Daoist and what is called Confucian. The two traditions share many of the same ideas about man, society, the ruler, heaven, and the universe—ideas that were not created by either school but that stem from a tradition prior to either Confucius or Laozi.

Viewed from this common tradition, orthodox Confucianism limited its field of interest to the creation of a moral and political system that fashioned society and the Chinese empire; whereas Daoism, inside the same worldview, represented more personal and metaphysical pre-occupations.

In the case of Buddhism—a third tradition that influenced China—fundamental concepts such as the nonexistence of the individual ego and the illusory nature of the physical world are diametrically opposed to Daoism. In terms of overt individual and collective practices, howev-

er, competition between these two religions for influence among the people—a competition in which Confucianism had no need to participate because it had state patronage—resulted in mutual borrowings, numerous superficial similarities, and essentially Chinese developments inside Buddhism, such as the Chan (Japanese Zen) sect. In folk religion, since Song times (960–1279), Daoist and Buddhist elements have coexisted without clear distinctions in the minds of the worshippers.

Basic concepts of Daoism

Certain concepts of ancient agrarian religion have dominated Chinese thought uninterruptedly from before the formation of the philosophic schools until the first radical break with tradition and the overthrow of dynastic rule at the beginning of the 20th century, and they are thus not specifically Daoist. The most important of these concepts are (1) the continuity between nature and human beings, or the interaction between the world and human society; (2) the rhythm of constant flux and transformation in the universe and the return or reversion of all things to the Dao from which they emerged; and (3) the worship of ancestors, the cult of heaven, and the divine nature of the sovereign.

Cosmology

What Laozi calls the “constant Dao” in reality is nameless. The name (*ming*) in ancient Chinese thought implied an evaluation assigning an object its place in a hierarchical universe. The Dao is outside these categories.

It is something formlessly fashioned, that existed before heaven and earth... Its name (ming) we do not know; Dao is the byname that we give it. Were I forced to say to what class of things it belongs I should call it Immense.

Dao is the “imperceptible, indiscernible,” about which nothing can be predicated but that latently contains the forms, entities, and forces of all particular phenomena: “It was from the Nameless that heaven and earth sprang; the Named is the mother that rears the Ten Thousand Things, each after its kind.” The Nameless (*wuming*) and the Named (*youming*), Nothing (*wu*) and Something (*you*), are interdependent and “grow out of one another.”

Nothing (*wu*) and Dao are not identical; *wu* and *you* are two aspects of the constant Dao: “in its mode of being Unseen, we will see its mysteries; in the mode of the Seen, we will see its boundaries.”

Nothing does not mean “Nothingness” but rather indeterminacy, the absence of perceptible qualities; in Laozi’s view it is superior to Something. It is the Void (that is, empty incipience) that harbours in itself all potentialities and without which even Something lacks its efficacy.

Emptiness realized in the mind of the Daoist who has freed himself from all obstructing notions and distracting passions makes the Dao act through him without obstacle. An essential characteristic that governs the Dao is spontaneity (*ziran*), the what-is-so-of-itself, the self-so, the unconditioned. The Dao, in turn, governs

the cosmos: “The ways of heaven are conditioned by those of the Dao, and the ways of Dao by the Self-so.”

This is the way of the sage who does not intervene but possesses the total power of spontaneous realization that is at work in the cosmos; of proper order in the world, “everyone, throughout the country, says ‘It happened of its own accord’ (*ziran*).”

The law of the Dao as natural order refers to the continuous reversion of everything to its starting point. Anything that develops extreme qualities will invariably revert to the opposite qualities: “Reversion is the movement of the Dao” (*Laozi*). Everything issues from the Dao and ineluctably returns to it; Undifferentiated Unity becomes multiplicity in the movement of the Dao. Life and death are contained in this continuing transformation from Nothing into Something and back to Nothing, but the underlying primordial unity is never lost.

For society, any reform means a type of return to the remote past; civilization is considered a degradation of the natural order, and the ideal is the return to an original purity. For the individual, wisdom is to conform to the rhythm of the cosmos. The Daoist mystics, however, not only adapt themselves ritually and physiologically to the alternations of nature but create a void inside themselves that permits them to return to nature’s origin. Laozi, in trance, “wandered freely in the origin of all things.” Thus, in ecstasy he escaped the rhythm of life and death by contemplating the ineluctable return: “Having attained perfect

emptiness, holding fast to stillness, I can watch the return of the ever active Ten Thousand Things.” The number 10,000 symbolizes totality.

Change and Transformation

All parts of the cosmos are attuned in a rhythmical pulsation. Nothing is static; all things are subjected to periodical mutations and transformations that represent the Chinese view of creation. Instead of being opposed with a static ideal, change itself is systematized and made intelligible, as in the theory of the Five Phases and in the 64 hexagrams of the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*), which are basic recurrent constellations in the general flux. An unchanging unity (the constant Dao) was seen as underlying the kaleidoscopic plurality.

Zhuangzi’s image for creation was that of the activity of the potter and the bronze caster: “to shape and to transform” (*zaohua*). These are two phases of the same process: the imperceptible Dao shapes the cosmos continuously out of primordial chaos; the perpetual transformation of the cosmos by the alternations of yin and yang, or complementary energies (seen as night and day or as winter and summer), is nothing but the external aspect of the same Dao. The shaping of the Ten Thousand Things by the Supreme Unity and their transformation by yin and yang are both simultaneous and perpetual. Thus, the sage’s ecstatic union is a “moving together with the Dao; dispersing and concentrating, his appearance has no consistency.” United with the constant Dao,

the sage's outer aspect becomes one of ungraspable change. Because the gods can become perceptible only by adapting to the mode of this changing world, their apparitions are "transformations" (*bianhua*); and the magician (*huaren*) is believed to be one who transforms rather than one who conjures out of nothing.

Wuwei

The power acquired by the Daoist is *de*, the efficacy of the Dao in the human experience, which is translated as "virtue." Laozi viewed it, however, as different from Confucian virtue:

Persons of superior virtue are not virtuous, and that is why they have virtue. Persons of inferior [Confucian] virtue never stray from virtue, and that is why they have no virtue.

The "superior virtue" of Daoism is a latent power that never lays claim to its achievements; it is the "mysterious power" (*xuande*) of Dao present in the heart of the sage—"persons of superior virtue never act (*wuwei*), and yet there is nothing they leave undone."

Wuwei is neither an ideal of absolute inaction nor a mere "not-overdoing." It is actions so well in accordance with things that their authors leave no traces of themselves in their work: "Perfect activity leaves no track behind it; perfect speech is like a jade worker whose tool leaves no mark." It is the Dao that "never acts, yet there is nothing it does not do." There is no true achievement without *wuwei* because every deliberate intervention in the

natural course of things will sooner or later turn into the opposite of what was intended and will result in failure.

Those sages who practice *wuwei* live out of their original nature before it was tampered with by knowledge and restricted by morality; they have reverted to infancy (that is, the undiminished vitality of the newborn state); they have "returned to the state of the Uncarved Block (*pu*)." *Pu* is uncut and unpainted wood, simplicity. Society carves this wood into specific shapes for its own use and thus robs the individual piece of its original totality. "Once the uncarved block is carved, it forms utensils (that is, instruments of government); but when the Sages use it, they would be fit to become Chiefs of all Ministers. This is why the great craftsman (ruler) does not carve (rule)."

Identity of Life and Death

Mystic realization does away with the distinction between the self and the world. This idea also governs Zhuangzi's attitude toward death. Life and death are but one of the pairs of cyclical phases, such as day and night or summer and winter. "Since life and death are each other's companions, why worry about them? All things are one." Life and death are not in opposition but merely two aspects of the same reality, arrested moments out of the flux of the ongoing mutations of everything into everything. Human beings are no exception: "They go back into the great weaving machine: thus all things issue from the Loom and return to the Loom."

Viewed from the single reality experienced in ecstasy, it is just as difficult to distinguish life from death as it is to distinguish the waking Zhuangzi from the dreaming butterfly. Death is natural, and men ought neither to fear nor to desire it. Zhuangzi's attitude thus is one of serene acceptance.

Source: Adapted from Encyclopedia Britannica

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2. FEATURE ARTICLES

B. Practical Religion: Breathing and Meditation

Delivered in San Francisco, April 5, 1900

Different philosophies posit different things. Buddhism claims that there is no soul or God and that everything is full of misery. This lecture focusses on the Yoga philosophy which aims to tap into the power of the soul through controlling internal nature. Internal nature is controlled through various breathing and meditation practices. Unhappiness or misery is said to be caused by not having control over the body. And this is overcome through these yogic practices of breathing and meditation, especially controlling the 5 senses of knowledge, regulating food, sleep

Everyone's idea of practical religion is according to his theory of practicality and the standpoint he starts from. There is work. There is the system of worship. There is knowledge.

The philosopher thinks...the difference between bondage and freedom is only caused by knowledge and ignorance. To him, knowledge is the goal, and his practicality is gaining that knowledge. ...The worshipper's practical religion is the power of love and devotion. The worker's practical religion consists in doing good works. And so, as in every other thing, we are always trying to ignore the standard of another, trying to bind the whole world to our standard.

Doing good to his fellow-beings is the practical religion of the man full of love. If men do not help to build hospitals, he thinks that they have no religion at all. But there is no reason why everyone should do that. The philosopher, in the same way, may denounce every man who does not have knowledge.

People may build twenty thousand hospitals, and the philosopher declares they are but...the beasts of burden of the gods. The worshipper has his own idea and standard: Men who cannot love God are no good, whatever work they do. The



[Yogi believes in] psychic [control the others by his own standard. and] the conquest of [internal] nature. "How much have you gained dollars and fed rats and cats, as towards that? How much control some do in India. They say that over your senses, over your men can take care of themselves, body?"--that is all the Yogi asks. but the poor animals cannot. That And, as we said, each one judges is *their* idea. But to the Yogi the

goal is conquest of [internal] nature, and he judges man by that standard. ...

We are always talking [about] practical religion. But it must be practical in *our* sense. Especially [so] in the Western countries. The Protestants' ideal is good works. They do not care much for devotion and philosophy. They think there is not much in it. "What is your knowledge!" [they say]. "Man has to do something!"...A little humanitarianism! The churches rail day and night against callous agnosticism. Yet they seem to be veering rapidly towards just that. Callous slaves! Religion of utility! That is the spirit just now. And that is why some Buddhists have become so popular in the West. People do not know whether there is a God or not, whether there is a soul or not. [They think:] This world is full of misery. Try to help this world.

The Yoga doctrine, which we are having our lecture on, is not from that standpoint. [It teaches that] there is the soul, and inside this soul is all power. It is already there, and if we can master this body, all the power will be unfolded. All knowledge is in the soul. Why are people struggling? To lessen the misery. ...All unhappiness is caused by our not having mastery over the body. ...We are all putting the cart before the horse. ...Take the system of work, for instance. We are trying to do good by...comforting the poor. We do not get to the cause which created the misery. It is like taking a bucket to empty out the ocean, and more [water] comes all the time. The Yogi sees that this is nonsense. [He says that] the way out of misery is to know the cause of misery first. ...We try to do the



good we can. What for? If there is an incurable disease, why should we struggle and take care of ourselves? If the utilitarians say: "Do not bother about soul and God!" what is that to the Yogi and what is it to the world? The world does not derive any good [from such an attitude]. More and more misery is going on all the time. ...

The Yogi says you are to go to the root of all this. Why is there misery in the world? He answers: "It is all our own foolishness, not having proper mastery of our own bodies. That is all." He advises the means by which this misery can be [overcome]. If you can thus get mastery of your body, all the misery of the world will vanish.

Every hospital is praying that more and more sick people will come there. Every time you think of doing some charity, you think there is some beggar to take your charity. If you say, "O Lord, let the world be full of charitable people!"--you mean, let the world be full of beggars also. Let the world be full of good works--let the world be full of misery. This is out-and-out slavishness!

...The Yogi says, religion is practical if you know first why misery exists. All the misery in the world is in the senses. Is there any ailment in the sun, moon, and stars? The same fire that cooks your meal burns the child. Is it the fault of the fire? Blessed be the fire!

Blessed be this electricity! It gives light. ...Where can you lay the blame? Not on the elements. The world is neither good nor bad; the world is the world. The fire is the fire. If you burn your finger in it, you are a fool. If you [cook your meal and with it satisfy your hunger,] you are a wise man. That is all the difference. Circumstances can never be good or bad. Only the individual man can be good or bad. What is meant by the world being good or bad? Misery and happiness can only belong to the sensuous individual man.

The Yogis say that nature is the enjoyed; the soul is the enjoyer. All misery and happiness--where is it? In the senses. It is the touch of the senses that causes pleasure and pain, heat and cold. If we can control the senses and order what they shall feel--not let them order us about as they are doing now--if they can obey our commands, become our servants, the problem is solved at once. We are bound by the senses; they play upon us, make fools of us all the time.

Here is a bad odour. It will bring me unhappiness as soon as it touches my nose. I am the slave of my nose. If I am not its slave, I do not care. A man curses me. His curses enter my ears and are retained in my mind and body. If I am the master, I shall say: "Let these things go; they are nothing to me. I am not miserable. I do not bother." This is the outright, pure, simple, clear-cut truth.

The other problem to be solved is--is it practical? Can man attain to the power of mastery of the body? ...Yoga says it *is* practical. ...Supposing it is not--suppose there are doubts in your mind. You have got to try it. There is no



other way out. ...

You may do good works all the time. All the same, you will be the slave of your senses, you will be miserable and unhappy. You may study the philosophy of every religion. Men in this country carry loads and loads of books on their backs. They are mere scholars, slaves of the senses, and therefore happy and unhappy. They read two thousand books, and that is all right; but as soon as a little misery comes, they are worried, anxious. ...You call yourselves men! You stand up...and build hospitals. You are fools!

What is the difference between men and animals? ..."Food and

[sleep], procreation of the species, and fear exist in common with the animals. There is one difference: Man can control all these and become God, the master." Animals cannot do it. Animals can do charitable work. Ants do it. Dogs do it. What is the difference then? Men can be masters of themselves. They can resist the reaction to anything. ...The animal cannot resist anything. He is held...by the string of nature everywhere. That is all the distinction. One is the master of nature, the other the slave of nature. What is nature? The five senses...

[The conquest of internal nature] is the only way out, according to

Yoga. ...The thirst for God is religion. ...Good works and all that [merely] make the mind a little quiet. To practise this--to be perfect--all depends upon our past. I have been studying [Yoga] all my life and have made very little progress yet. But I have got enough [result] to believe that this is the only true way. The day will come when I will be master of myself. If not in this life, [in another life]. I will struggle and never let go. Nothing is lost. If I die this moment, all my past struggles [will come to my help]. Have you not seen what makes the difference between one man and another? It is their past. The past habits make one man a genius and another man a fool. You may have the power of the past and can succeed in five minutes. None can predict the moment of time. We all have to attain [perfection] some time or other.

The greater part of the practical lessons which the Yogi gives us is in the mind, the power of concentration and meditation. ...We have become so materialistic. When we think of ourselves, we find only the body. The body has become the ideal, nothing else. Therefore a little physical help is necessary. ...

First, to sit in the posture in which you can sit still for a long time. All the nerve currents which are working pass along the spine. The spine is not intended to support the weight of the body. Therefore the posture must be such that the weight of the body is not on the spine. Let it be free from all pressure.

There are some other preliminary things. There is the great question of food and exercise. ...

The food must be simple and tak-



en several times [a day] instead of once or twice. Never get very hungry. "He who eats too much cannot be a Yogi. He who fasts too much cannot be a Yogi. He who sleeps too much cannot be a Yogi, nor he who keeps awake too much." He who does not do any work and he who works too hard cannot succeed. Proper food, proper exercise, proper sleep, proper wakefulness--these are necessary for any success.

What the proper food is, what kind, we have to determine ourselves. Nobody can determine that [for us]. As a general practice, we have to shun exciting food. ...We do not know how to vary our diet with our occupation. We always

forget that it is the food out of which we manufacture everything we have. So the amount and kind of energy that we want, the food must determine. ...

Violent exercises are not all necessary. ...If you want to be muscular, Yoga is not for you. You have to manufacture a finer organism than you have now. Violent exercises are positively hurtful. ...Live amongst those who do not take too much exercise. If you do not take violent exercise, you will live longer. You do not want to burn out your lamp in muscles! People who work with their brains are the longest-lived people. ...Do not burn the lamp quickly. Let it burn slowly and gently. ...Every anxie-

ty, every violent exercise--physical and mental--[means] you are burning the lamp.

The proper diet means, generally, simply do not eat highly spiced foods. There are three sorts of mind, says the Yogi, according to the elements of nature. One is the dull mind, which covers the luminosity of the soul. Then there is that which makes people active, and lastly, that which makes them calm and peaceful.

Now there are persons born with the tendency to sleep all the time. Their taste will be towards that type of food with is rotting--crawling cheese. They will eat cheese that fairly jumps off the table. It is a natural tendency with them.

Then active people. Their taste is for everything hot and pungent, strong alcohol...

Sattvika people are very thoughtful, quiet, and patient. They take food in small quantities, and never anything bad.

I am always asked the question: "Shall I give up meat?" My Master said, "Why should you give up anything? It will give you up." Do not give up anything in nature. Make it so hot for nature that she will give you up. There will come a time when you cannot possibly eat meat. The very sight of it will disgust you. There will come a time when many things you are struggling to give up will be distasteful, positively loathsome.

Then there are various sorts of breathing exercises. One consists of three parts: the drawing in of the breath, the holding of the breath--stopping still without breathing--and throwing the breath out. [Some breathing exer-

cises] are rather difficult, and some of the complicated ones are attended with great danger if done without proper diet. I would not advise you to go through any one of these except the very simple ones.

Take a deep breath and fill the lungs. Slowly throw the breath out. Take it through one nostril and fill the lungs, and throw it out slowly through the other nostril. Some of us do not breathe deeply enough. Others cannot fill the lungs enough. These breathings will correct that very much. Half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening will make you another person. This sort of breathing is never dangerous. The other exercises should be practised very slowly. And measure your strength. If ten minutes are a drain, only take five.

The Yogi is expected to keep his own body well. These various breathing exercises are a great help in regulating the different parts of the body. All the different parts are inundated with breath. It is through breath that we gain control of them all. Disharmony in parts of the body is controlled by more flow of the nerve currents towards them. The Yogi ought to be able to tell when in any part pain is caused by less vitality or more. He has to equalise that. ...

Another condition [for success in Yoga] is chastity. It is the cornerstone of all practice. Married or unmarried--perfect chastity. It is a long subject, of course, but I want to tell you: Public discussions of this subject are not to the taste of this country. These Western countries are full of the most degraded beings in the shape of teachers who teach men and women that if

they are chaste they will be hurt. How do they gather all this? ...People come to me--thousands come every year--with this one question. Someone has told them that if they are chaste and pure they will be hurt physically. ...How do these teachers know it? Have they been chaste? Those unchaste, impure fools, lustful creatures, want to drag the whole world down to their [level]! ...

Nothing is gained except by sacrifice. ...The holiest function of our human consciousness, the noblest, do not make it unclean! Do not degrade it to the level of the brutes. ...Make yourselves decent men! ...Be chaste and pure! ...There is no other way. Did Christ find any other way? ...If you can conserve and use the energy properly, it leads you to God. Inverted, it is hell itself. ...

It is much easier to do anything upon the external plane, but the greatest conqueror in the world finds himself a mere child when he tries to control his own mind. This is the world he has to conquer--the greater and more difficult world to conquer. Do not despair! Awake, arise, and stop not until the goal is reached! ...

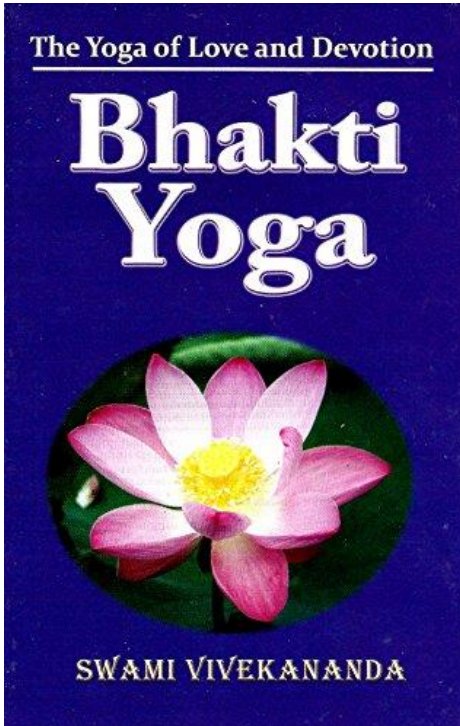
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Ramakrishna Vivekananda Literature



Bhakti Yoga

Author: Swami Vivekananda

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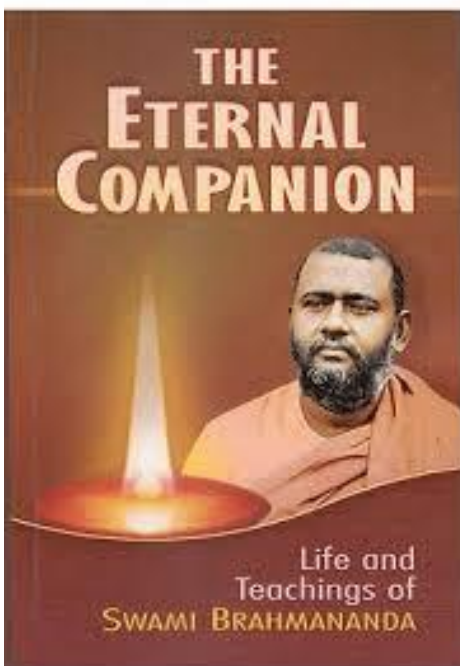
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Love in its varied aspects is the motive force behind all the actions of living beings. But love takes its highest form when directed towards the God. Among the different paths leading man towards the attainment of the Supreme Truth is the one of love, devotion, and complete surrender. In this book Swami Vivekananda expounds how this path of Bhakti leads man to God. Being an exposition by one of the pioneers in the religious and spiritual realm of the modern times, the value of this work need not be emphasized. Lucid, simple, and to the point, the words of the Swami touch the hearts of the readers and puts them on to the divine path of love supreme.



The Eternal Companion: Life and Teachings of Swami Brahmananda

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Swami Brahmananda was considered by Sri Ramakrishna to be his spiritual son. He was the first President of the Ramakrishna Order and beacon-light of inspiration to all during the infancy of the Ramakrishna Movement. His life and teachings continue to inspire earnest people to new heights of spirituality. The first part of this book contains Swami Brahmananda's biography, and the second part, his teachings.