



# Reach

## SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

### Sri Ramakrishna on When it is Safe to Live in the World

One is safe to live in the world, if one has Viveka (discrimination of the Real from the unreal) and Vairagya (dispassion) and, along with these, intense devotion to God.

**Source:** *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 3.

### Sri Sarada Devi on Discrimination

The mind is no better than a wild elephant. It runs with the wind. Therefore one should always discriminate and strive hard for the realization of God.

**Source:** *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 21.

### Swami Vivekananda on Taking Up One Ideal

Our duty is to encourage everyone in his struggle to live up to his own highest ideal, and strive at the same time to make the ideal as near as possible to the truth.

**Source:** *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 37.

### Buddha on Impermanence

Every single moment we're undergoing birth and death. This is the way things are.

**Source:** <https://bestquote.com/buddhist-quotes-change-impermanence->

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### 4. From the Devotees

Dream by Russell Atkinson

**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.

## 1. NEWS FROM AUSTRALIAN CENTRES 11 MARCH 2023 TO 10 JUNE 2023

### ADELAIDE

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### Daily Activities

- The Centre functioned from 7.30am-12.30pm and 4.00pm-8.00pm. The evening vesper service to Sri Ramakrishna was performed from 7.00-7.30 pm followed by *bhajans*, devotional reading and meditation.

### Regular Activities

- Swami Manyananda conducted a class on the *Vedanta Sara* or 'Fundamentals of Vedanta' every Wednesday from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon.
- Swami Manyananda also conducted classes on the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* on Sundays from 11:00 am.
- Every alternate Saturday, Swami Manyananda conducted a reading and discussion on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* before the evening *aratrikam*.
- On Sundays Swami Manyananda conducted classes on the *Vivekachudamani* from 5:30 to 6:30 pm.

### Celebrations

- Ramanavami*—marking the birth of Lord Rama—was celebrated on Thursday, 30 March 2023. The evening programme following *aratrikam*, included a short puja, *bhajans*, *Ramanama Sanskirtanam*, *pushpanjali* and prasad distribution.
- Sankaracharya Jayanti was celebrated on Tuesday, 25 April 2023. The evening programme following *aratrikam* included a short puja, singing of different *stotras* composed by Adi Sankaracharya and prasad distribution.



*Ramanavami in Adelaide*

### Other Activities

The Interfaith Committee of South Australia held a meeting on Friday, 5 May 2023 at St Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Adelaide. Swamis Aksharatmananda, from the Ramakrishna Mission, Sri Lanka and Manyananda were the representatives for Hinduism. Leaders from the different faiths comprising Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and Christianity (Catholic, Anglican, Quakers, Uniting church) as well as an Aboriginal leader were present. The main topics of discussion were *Respect for First Nations*, *Respect for all faith traditions* and *Responsibility to our community and our world*.



*Swamis Aksharatmananda and Manyananda at an Interfaith Meet*



## Visiting Swamis

Swami Aksharatmananda, President, Ramakrishna Mission, Sri Lanka visited the Vedanta Centre of Adelaide from Wednesday, 3 to Saturday, 6 May 2023. He gave a talk at 11:00am on Wednesday 3rd May. A meet and greet evening with the local devotees was held on Friday, 5 May 2023.

### BRISBANE

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

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Contact: Swami Atmeshananda (07) 3818 9986

URL: <http://vedantabrisbane.org>

## Daily Activities

- Daily 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 6:30 pm and 7:15 pm.

## Regular Activities

- Sunday mornings:- (a) Yoga class from 7:45 am to 9:15 am. (b) *Srimad-Bhagavad Gitā* Class (10:00 am—11:00 am). (c) *Bala Sangha* or children's classes and *Yuva Sangha* (10:00 am—11:00 am during school term). (d) Hindi language classes fortnightly from 11:00 am to 12:15 pm.
- A class on the *Brahma Sutras* was conducted on Tuesdays from 11 am to 12 noon. In the evening Yoga classes were conducted from 6:30 to 7:45 pm.
- A Vedic Chanting class was held online on Wednesdays from 7:30 am to 8:30 am.
- A monthly *satsanga* was held at Sunnybank Hills on the first Monday of every month at 19, Scribbly Gum Street.
- Classes on *Meditation and Spiritual Life* were held from 7:30 pm — 8:30 pm at 134 Fleming Rd, Chapel Hill, Qld, on the last Friday of every month.

- A reading from the lives of the direct monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna was conducted on their birth anniversaries after the evening *aratrikam*.
- Chanting of the *Sri Ramanama Sanskirtanam* was held fortnightly at the Centre on *ekadashi* days (7:00 pm — 8:00 pm).
- 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 for the Vedanta Group at Toowoomba on the first Wednesday of every month.
- A class on the *Ashtavakra Gita* was conducted at 101 Sharpless Drive, Springfield Lakes, on a fixed day of the month.
- On alternate Saturdays, the *Bhagavad Gita* was studied by the Vedanta group on the Gold Coast from 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm
- Mrs Malarville Kandaiah of Sri Abbinayia Barathalaayam conducted classical Indian Bharatanatyam dance lessons every Wednesday evening in the community hall, Vedanta Centre. Classes are available for all ages. For inquiries please email Malar: [ville7560@yahoo.com.au](mailto:ville7560@yahoo.com.au)
- On alternate Fridays, the Centre's volunteers cooked food at the Centre's soup kitchen for the needy. An average of 230 meals per week is packed into containers and frozen. They are distributed free of cost through the Westside Community Centre. Many needy people come to the Centre and avail themselves of the free meals as well.
- Every Friday the Centre's food bank distributed groceries to the needy. An average of 12 grocery hampers along with cooked food and free bread were distributed to the needy.
- The Maa Sarada's kitchen prepares and sells food at a reasonable cost to people on Saturdays. On an average, about 110 persons avail themselves of this service. The kitchen is efficiently managed by volunteers.
- Some enterprising members of the community, mainly housewives, put up stalls at the Centre on Saturdays selling items like clothing, jewelry and other useful household items. The Centre provided them with the space to set up

their stalls when the Ma Sarada's kitchen is open.

- On Fridays, a Justice of the Peace (JP) renders service at the Centre from 10 am to 11 am People needing the service access this free service.
- A *satsanga* was held on the third Sunday of every month at the Centre. The programme consists of group chanting from the scriptures, devotional music, talks on chosen topics and partaking of prasad.
- In collaboration with the Namdhari Sikh Association, Brisbane, a 'Kirtan and Langar' programme was introduced once a month from May 2023. The last Sunday of every month is chosen for this service. Volunteers cook a sumptuous free meal for anyone wishing to participate in this service.

## Celebrations

### (Celebrating 125 years of the Ramakrishna Mission)

- As a part of the ongoing celebrations, commemorating 125 years of service by the Ramakrishna Mission (1897-2023), the following two programmes were conducted by the Centre:-



*In collaboration with the Namdhari Sikh Association, Brisbane, a monthly 'Kirtan and Langar' programme was held at the Centre*

- a) Harmony Day on 18 March 2023. A day long programme on the theme: 'One and All – Harmony Day' was conducted at the Centre's premises. On this day, the car park, was converted into a fair grounds. A variety of stalls were set up by different vendors. A stage was erected where eminent musicians entertained the audience with live music. Workshops were held at the Centre's hall. Of special attraction

was petting zoo animals which attracted many children. On the stage, a guest panel consisting of eminent persons discussed the importance of the spirit of harmony with unity in diversity as its core. They especially commended the Centre for promoting harmony in the community. The following persons participated in the panel:- Cr. Teresa Harding- Mayor of Ipswich, Charis Mullen, MP – local member for Jordon and the Assistant Treasurer-Queensland Government, Hon. Shayne Neumann – Federal MP, Senator Paul Scarr- Federal Senator, Cr.



*Harmony Day (Stalls)*

Nicole Jonic – Division 2 Councillor for Ipswich City (representing Springfield Lakes) and Dr. Maha Sinnathamby. Peter Carey and Narendran Sinnathamby entertained the audience and conducted the programme as MCs. The Springfield Radio broadcast the entire event live. A raffle draw with attractive prizes donated by local businesses provided some funds towards conducting the event. The Ma Sarada's kitchen served food to the guests. The event was supported by the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, Queensland Government with a grant. Ms. Menaka Thomas coordinated the event



*The Dignitaries on Harmony Day in Brisbane*



with the help of many volunteers.

- b) **Multifaith Programme – 30 April 2023.** Representatives of major religions were invited by the Centre to participate in a multifaith programme. The theme was 'As many faiths, so many paths' which is one of the main tenets of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. Representatives of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity (both Catholic and Liberal), Bahai, Islam, Sufism and Hinduism presented their views on the subject. Hon. Shayne Neumann, Federal MP participated in the event. Their talks were interspersed with classical music, classical dance and devotional songs. All the participants were served with lunch.



***Multifaith Programme in Brisbane***

- *Ramanavami* was celebrated on 30 March 2023. The programme consisted of worship to Sri Rama, singing of *Ramanama Sanskirtanam*, bhajans and prasad distribution.
- Sankaracharya Jayanti was observed on 25 April 2023. After worship, devotees chanted hymns from Sri Sankaracharya's compositions and partook of prasad.
- Buddha Purnima was celebrated on 5 May 2023 at the Centre. Worship, recitations from the *Dhammapada*, hymns to Buddha, a talk on the subject 'Buddha – the great psychologist' by Dr. Sudhir Chhatbar and distribution of dinner prasad were the components of the programme.



***International Women's Day on 26 March 2023 at the Queensland Vedic Cultural Centre***

### **Other Activities**

- Swami Atmesohananda was invited to participate as a speaker at a function organized on the occasion of International Women's Day on 26 March 2023 at the Queensland Vedic Cultural Centre.
- Queensland Faith Communities Council (QFCC) invited Swami Atmesohananda to meet with Hon. Jim Chalmers MP, Treasurer of Australia, as a religious representative on 31 March 2023. The meeting, organized by the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC), raised the issues around the response to Climate Change and the transition beyond fossil fuels.



***Queensland Faith Communities Council (QFCC) invited Swami Atmesohananda to meet with Hon. Jim Chalmers MP, Treasurer of Australia***

- Br. Ram attended the Ipswich Multicultural network on 11 April 2023. The network addressed the issues for Ipswich-based young people and discussed the strategies to identify activities for communities and services to support young people.

- During the monthly *satsanga* on Sunday 16 April 2023, Mr. M. K. Angajan of the Life Mastery Foundation, South Africa, spoke on the subject 'Programme your mind for Happiness'.
- The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association, Brisbane, invited Swami Atmeshananda to give a talk on the subject 'Fasting in my Religion' – from the Hindu perspective on 16 April 2023.
- Swami Atmeshananda was invited to talk on the importance of the *Bhagavad Gita* at a 'Reception and Presenting of the Gita' event on Monday 24 April 2023 at the BAPS Swaminarayan Temple, Kingston, QLD. On the occasion, a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* was presented to Hon. Milton Dick, Speaker Australian Parliament. The event was organized as part of the International Gita Mahotsav by Shri Swami Gyananandaji Maharaj from Kurushetra, India.



*'Reception and Presenting of the Gita' to Hon. Milton Dick, Speaker Australian Parliament. at the BAPS Swaminarayan Temple, Kingston, QLD.*

- Swami Atmeshananda participated in a candlelight ceremony on 4 May 2023 at the Orion Lagoon. The Greater Springfield Surrounds had organized a programme to remember and pray for people affected by domestic and family violence.
- Challenge Employment and Training has been awarded a project under Qld Government's 'Skilling Queenslanders for work Initiative' providing traineeship opportunities for 30 participants. The Vedanta Centre has been chosen as the training centre for this programme which enables them



*Candlelight Ceremony at the Orion Lagoon for People Affected by Domestic and Family Violence*

to learn about landscaping and allied trades. The training began from the first week of May 2023.

### Visiting Swamis

- Swami Aksharatmananda, head of the Ramakrishna Mission in Sri Lanka, visited Brisbane from 27 April to 2 May 2023. During his visit, he interacted with the Sri Lankan diaspora, gave talks at the Sri Selva Vinayagar kovil (temple) and held *satsangas* at devotees' houses. He also spoke at the multifaith programme held at the Centre on 30 April 2023 as a representative of the Hindu faith.



*Swami Aksharatmananda who spoke on the Hindu Faith at a Multifaitth Programme*

### Forthcoming Programmes

- International Yoga Day on 24 June 2023
- Guru Purnima on 2 July 2023
- Fundraising Concert (Bharatanatyam) on 26 August 2023 at the St. John's theatre for performing arts (sponsored by Nadananjali school of dance)



## CANBERRA

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

Contact: Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman 6258 7612/0433 593 860

### Regular Activities

- On account of the Covid 19 pandemic the *Bhagavad Gita* classes have been suspended temporarily.

## MELBOURNE

5-7 Angus Ave, Ringwood East, VIC 3135

Email: [vedanta.melb@gmail.com](mailto:vedanta.melb@gmail.com)

Contact: Swami Sunishthananda (03) 8684 9594

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

### Regular Activities

- Vesper service (*aratrikam*), *bhajans*, readings from the Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda literature and meditation were conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm daily.
- A scriptural class on Sundays from 10:00 am to 11:00 am on the *Bhagavad Gita*.
- Guided meditation was conducted on Sundays from 9:30 am to 10:00 am.
- A scriptural class on the second and fourth Thursday from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.
- A *Vivekachudamani* class was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on the first, third and 5th Thursdays.

### Celebrations

- On the morning of Sunday, 2 April 2023, *Ramanavami* was celebrated. The programme included special worship, *Ramanama Sanskirtanam* and *bhajans*. Devotees shared prasadam after the event.

### Other Activities

- As a part of the PRMC 5 (Priority Response to Multicultural Communities: 5<sup>th</sup> Phase) project

funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Victorian Government, our centre is conducting a series of Seminars on Resilience Building and Stress Management. Until now, 5 seminars have been conducted on 26 March 2023, 9 April 2023, 23 April 2023, 14 May 2023 and 28 May 2023.

- Sri M (also known as Sri Madhukarnath), an Indian yogi, spiritual guide, social reformer, and educationist, visited our centre, met the devotees, delivered a talk, and had lunch with all present on Monday, 20 March 2023.

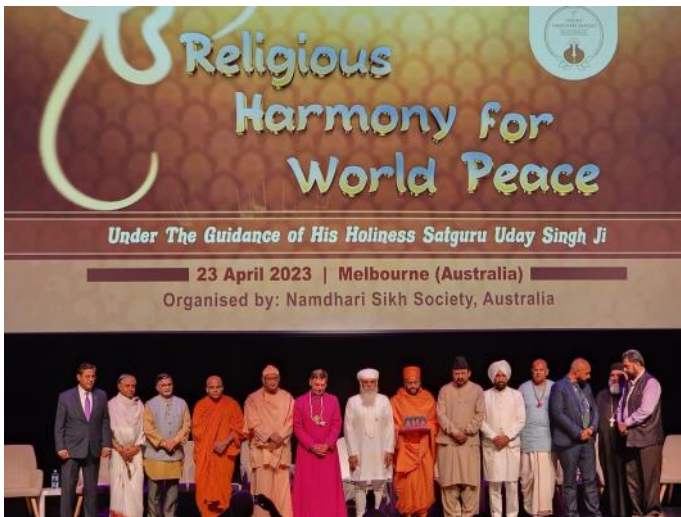


*Visit of Sri M (also known as Sri Madhukarnath) to Melbourne*

- Swami Sunishthananda was invited to represent Hindu Faith for a Multifaith Prayer Meeting organized by the Multicultural Commission of Victorian Government on the evening of Monday, 20 March 2023.



*Multifaith Prayer Meeting organized by the Multicultural Commission of Victorian Government*



*Religious Harmony Conference organized by the Namdhari Sikh Community*

- Swami Sunishthananda was invited by the Durga Temple Committee to deliver a talk on the Significance of Hindu New Year Celebration on the occasion of Hindu New Year on Wednesday, 22 March 2023 at the Durga Temple, Rockbank, Victoria.
- Our centre represented the Hindu Faith at the Interfaith Music Concert organized by Maroondah Interfaith Network held at Janssen Spirituality Centre, Boronia, Victoria, on Sunday, 26 March 2023.
- Swami Sunishthananda was invited to represent the Hindu Faith at an Interfaith Meet organized by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Victoria as a part of Iftar celebration to address on the topic, "Significance of Fasting in the Hindu Tradition" at Outlook Community Centre, Pakenham, Victoria, on Saturday, 8 April 2023.
- Swami Sunishthananda was invited to represent the Hindu Faith at a Religious Harmony Conference organized by the Namdhari Sikh Community in presence of their spiritual leader, His Holiness Satguru Uday Singh Ji, on Sunday, 23 April 2023 at Bunjil Place, Narre Warren, Victoria.
- Swami Sunishthananda was invited to represent the Hindu Faith at an Interfaith Meet organized by the Buddhist Council of Victoria as

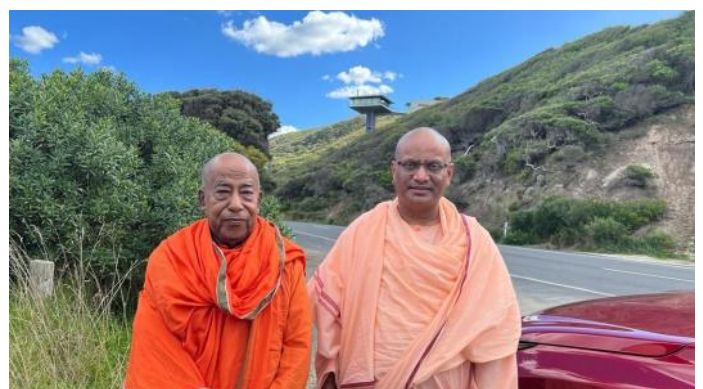


*Interfaith Meet organized by the Buddhist Council of Victoria*

a part of Victorian United Nations Day of Vesak celebration on Saturday, 13 May 2023 held at Melbourne Town Hall.

### Visiting Swamis

- Swami Aksharatmananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Colombo, Sri Lanka, visited our centre from 17 April 2023 to 21 April 2023. A special talk was arranged on the evening of Wednesday, 19 April 2023, after the evening *aratrikam*, which was well attended. On his way back to Colombo, he came back to Melbourne on 6 May 2023 along with Swami Manyananda, and Mr. Raman Sharma, from the Vedanta Centre of Adelaide.



*Swami Aksharatmananda with Swami Sunishthananda*



## PERTH

51 Golf View Street, Yorkine, WA 6060

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Contact: Sumita Chetty (04) 3892 8136

### Regular Activities:

- *Aratrikam* was conducted each night by a person or family taking the responsibility for it.
- Monthly *satsangas* were held on 12 March 2023 and 23 April 2023.
- Swami Dhyanananda and Brahmachari Prajnachaitanya from Sydney visited Perth from 25 to 28 May 2023. On 26 May, Swami Dhyanananda gave a talk on Karma Yoga and on 28 May a talk on Sri Ramakrishna. A special worship of Sri Ramakrishna was performed on 27 May by the visiting monks from Sydney.



*Sri Ramakrishna's Puja in Perth*

## SYDNEY

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Contact: (02) 8197 7351

URL: [www.vedantaaustralia.org](http://www.vedantaaustralia.org)

### Daily Activities

- The shrine was open from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm seven days a week.
- 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

- *Sri Ramanama Sanskirtanam* was conducted on *ekadashi* days after the vesper service.
- Devotees also received spiritual counselling and guidance.
- The quarterly newsletter entitled *Reach* is compiled and published.
- The Centre also has a library containing books of the Ramakrishna-Sarada-Vivekananda literature, philosophy and religion.

### Celebrations

- *Ramanavami* was held on 30 March 2023. The programme included *aratrikam*, *Ramanama Sanskirtanam*, *bhajans* and the distribution of prasad.

### Visiting Swamis

- Swami Aksharatmananda from the Ramakrishna Mission, Colombo, Sri Lanka, visited Sydney from 21 April to 27 April 2023. He was invited by 'Abaya Karam', a charity raising money for the orphan children in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. He also spoke at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney on 23 April 2023 and attended some parlour talks.
- Swami Vedamritananda, popularly known as Bob Maharaj from the Vedanta Centre of Southern California, USA, spent a few months in Sydney from February to May 2023.
- Swami Manyananda from the Vedanta Centre of Adelaide visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 23 March to 29 March 2023.
- Swami Sunishthananda visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 20 May to 22 May 2023.



*Swami Aksharatmananda in Sydney*

## 2. WHAT IS DUTY?

### —SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

**I**n the 63rd issue of *Reach* we began serializing Swami Vivekananda's *Karma Yoga*. The original *Karma Yoga* was published during Swamiji's lifetime during the latter part of the 19th century, comprising his talks on the subject which were stenographed by G.G. Goodwin. These were also edited by Swami Saradananda. After the original publication, *Karma Yoga* was included in the first volume of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. The following article is a reproduction of the original in which two changes have been made to make it more accessible. Paragraphing and subheadings have been employed to facilitate easier access to the readings. We hope that these changes will enable people to read Swamiji's original lectures as found in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*.

#### *Different Ideas of Duty*

It is necessary in the study of *Karma Yoga* to know what duty is. If I have to do something I must first know that it is my duty, and then I can do it. The idea of duty again is different in different nations. The Moham-medan says what is written in his book, the Koran, is his duty; the Hindu says what is in the Vedas is his duty; and the Christian says what is in the Bible is his duty. We find that there are varied ideas of duty, differing according to different states in life, different historical periods and different nations.

#### *Difficulty in Defining Duty*

The term "duty", like every other universal abstract term, is impossible clearly to define; we can only get an idea of it by knowing its practical operations and results. When certain things occur before us, we have all a natural or trained impulse to act in a certain manner towards them; when this impulse comes, the mind begins to think about the situa-

tion. Sometimes it thinks that it is good to act in a particular manner under the given conditions; at other times it thinks that it is wrong to act in the same manner even in the very same circumstances.

#### *What makes an act a Duty?*

The ordinary idea of duty everywhere is that every good man follows the dictates of his conscience. But what is it that makes an act a duty? If a Christian finds a piece of beef before him and does not eat it to save his own life, or will not give it to save the life of another man, he is sure to feel that he has not done his duty. But if a Hindu dares to eat that piece of beef or to give it to another Hindu, he is equally sure to feel that he too has not done his duty; the Hindu's training and education make him feel that way.

In the last century there were notorious bands of robbers in India called thugs; they thought it their duty to kill any man they

could and take away his money; the larger the number of men they killed, the better they thought they were. Ordinarily if a man goes out into the street and shoots down another man, he is apt to feel sorry for it, thinking that he has done wrong. But if the very same man, as a soldier in his regiment, kills not one but twenty, he is certain to feel glad and think that he has done his duty remarkably well.

Therefore we see that it is not the thing done that defines a duty. To give an objective definition of duty is thus entirely impossible. Yet there is duty from the subjective side. Any action that makes us go Godward is a good action, and is our duty; any action that makes us go downward is evil, and is not our duty. From the subjective standpoint we may see that certain acts have a tendency to exalt and ennoble us, while certain other acts have a tendency to degrade and to brutalise us. But it is not possible to make out with certainty which acts have which kind of tendency



in relation to all persons, of all sorts and conditions. There is, however, only one idea of duty which has been universally accepted by all mankind, of all ages and sects and countries, and that has been summed up in a Sanskrit aphorism thus: "Do not injure any being; not injuring any being is virtue, injuring any being is sin."

### *Duty in the Bhagavad Gita*

The Bhagavad Gita frequently alludes to duties dependent upon birth and position in life. Birth and position in life and in society largely determine the mental and moral attitude of individuals towards the various activities of life. It is therefore our duty to do that work which will exalt and ennoble us in accordance with the ideals and activities of the society in which we are born. But it must be particularly remembered that the same ideals and activities do not prevail in all societies and countries; our ignorance of this is the main cause of much of the hatred of one nation towards another. An American thinks that whatever an American does in accordance with the custom of his country is the best thing to do, and that whoever does not follow his custom must be a very wicked man. A Hindu thinks that his customs are the only right ones and are the best in the world, and that whosoever does not obey them must be the most wicked man living. This is quite a natural mistake which all of us are apt to make. But it is very harmful; it is the cause of half the uncharitableness found in the world.

When I came to this country and was going through the Chicago Fair, a man from behind pulled at my turban. I looked back and saw that he was a very gentlemanly-looking man, neatly dressed. I spoke to him; and when he found that I knew English, he became very much abashed. On another occasion in the same Fair another man gave me a push. When I asked him the reason, he also was ashamed and stammered out an apology saying, "Why do you dress that way?" The sympathies of these men were limited within the range of their own language and their own fashion of dress. Much of the oppression of powerful nations on weaker ones is caused by this prejudice. It dries up their fellow-feeling for fellow men. That very man who asked me why I did not dress as he did and wanted to ill-treat me because of my dress may have been a very good man, a good father, and a good citizen; but the kindness of his nature died out as soon as he saw a man in a different dress. Strangers are exploited in all countries, because they do not know how to defend themselves; thus they carry home false impressions of the peoples they have seen. Sailors, soldiers, and traders behave in foreign lands in very queer ways, although they would not dream of doing so in their own country; perhaps this is why the Chinese call Europeans and Americans "foreign devils". They could not have done this if they had met the good, the kindly sides of Western life.

Therefore the one point we ought to remember is that we

should always try to see the duty of others through their own eyes, and never judge the customs of other peoples by our own standard. I am not the standard of the universe. I have to accommodate myself to the world, and not the world to me. So we see that environments change the nature of our duties, and doing the duty which is ours at any particular time is the best thing we can do in this world. Let us do that duty which is ours by birth; and when we have done that, let us do the duty which is ours by our position in life and in society. There is, however, one great danger in human nature, viz. that man never examines himself. He thinks he is quite as fit to be on the throne as the king. Even if he is, he must first show that he has done the duty of his own position; and then higher duties will come to him.

When we begin to work earnestly in the world, nature gives us blows right and left and soon enables us to find out our position. No man can long occupy satisfactorily a position for which he is not fit. There is no use in grumbling against nature's adjustment. He who does the lower work is not therefore a lower man. No man is to be judged by the mere nature of his duties, but all should be judged by the manner and the spirit in which they perform them.

Later on we shall find that even this idea of duty undergoes change, and that the greatest work is done only when there is no selfish motive to prompt it. Yet it is work through the sense

of duty that leads us to work without any idea of duty; when work will become worship--nay, something higher--then will work be done for its own sake. We shall find that the philosophy of duty, whether it be in the form of ethics or of love, is the same as in every other Yoga--the object being the attenuating of the lower self, so that the real higher Self may shine forth--the lessening of the frittering away of energies on the lower plane of existence, so that the soul may manifest itself on the higher ones. This is accomplished by the continuous denial of low desires, which duty rigorously requires. The whole organisation of society has thus been developed, consciously or unconsciously, in the realms of action and experience, where, by limiting selfishness, we open the way to an unlimited expansion of the real nature of man.

### *Love Greases the Wheels of Duty*

Duty is seldom sweet. It is only when love greases its wheels that it runs smoothly; it is a continuous friction otherwise. How else could parents do their duties to their children, husbands to their wives, and vice versa? Do we not meet with cases of friction every day in our lives? Duty is sweet only through love, and love shines in freedom alone. Yet is it freedom to be a slave to the senses, to anger, to jealousies and a hundred other petty things that must occur every day in human life? In all these little roughnesses that we meet with in life, the highest expression of freedom is to forbear. Women, slaves to their own irritable, jealous tempers, are apt to blame their hus-

bands, and assert their own "freedom", as they think, not knowing that thereby they only prove that they are slaves. So it is with husbands who eternally find fault with their wives.

### *Chastity as the First Virtue in Men or Women*

Chastity is the first virtue in man or woman, and the man who, however he may have strayed away, cannot be brought to the right path by a gentle and loving and chaste wife is indeed very rare. The world is not yet as bad as that. We hear much about brutal husbands all over the world and about the impurity of men, but is it not true that there are quite as many brutal and impure women as men? If all women were as good and pure as their own constant assertions would lead one to believe, I am perfectly satisfied that there would not be one impure man in the world. What brutality is there which purity and chastity cannot conquer? A good, chaste wife, who thinks of every other man except her own husband as her child and has the attitude of a mother towards all men, will grow so great in the power of her purity that there cannot be a single man, however brutal, who will not breathe an atmosphere of holiness in her presence. Similarly, every husband must look upon all women, except his own wife, in the light of his own mother or daughter or sister. That man, again, who wants to be a teacher of religion must look upon every woman as his mother, and always behave towards her as such.

The position of the mother is the highest in the world, as it is the one place in which to learn and exercise the greatest unselfishness. The love of God is the only love that is higher than a mother's love; all others are lower. It is the duty of the mother to think of her children first and then of herself. But, instead of that, if the parents are always thinking of themselves first, the result is that the relation between parents and children becomes the same as that between birds and their offspring which, as soon as they are fledged, do not recognise any parents. Blessed, indeed, is the man who is able to look upon woman as the representative of the motherhood of God. Blessed, indeed, is the woman to whom man represents the fatherhood of God. Blessed are the children who look upon their parents as Divinity manifested on earth.

The only way to rise is by doing the duty next to us, and thus gathering strength go on until we reach the highest state.

### *Story About Duty from the Mahabharata*

A young Sannyasin went to a forest; there he meditated, worshipped, and practised Yoga for a long time. After years of hard work and practice, he was one day sitting under a tree, when some dry leaves fell upon his head. He looked up and saw a crow and a crane fighting on the top of the tree, which made him very angry. He said, "What! Dare you throw these dry leaves upon my head!" As with these words he angrily glanced at them, a



flash of fire went out of his head--such was the Yogi's power--and burnt the birds to ashes. He was very glad, almost overjoyed at this development of power--he could burn the crow and the crane by a look.

After a time he had to go to the town to beg his bread. He went, stood at a door, and said, "Mother, give me food." A voice came from inside the house, "Wait a little, my son." The young man thought, "You wretched woman, how dare you make me wait! You do not know my power yet." While he was thinking thus the voice came again: "Boy, don't be thinking too much of yourself. Here is neither crow nor crane." He was astonished; still he had to wait. At last the woman came, and he fell at her feet and said, "Mother, how did you know that?" She said, "My boy, I do not know your Yoga or your practices. I am a common everyday woman. I made you wait because my husband is ill, and I was nursing him. All my life I have struggled to do my duty. When I was unmarried, I did my duty to my parents; now that I am married, I do my duty to my husband; that is all the Yoga I practise. But by doing my duty I have become illumined; thus I could read your thoughts and know what you had done in the forest. If you want to know something higher than this, go to the market of such and such a town where you will find a Vyadha who will tell you something that you will be very glad to learn." The Sannyasin thought, "Why should I go to that town and to a Vyadha?" But after what he had seen, his mind

opened a little, so he went.

When he came near the town, he found the market and there saw, at a distance, a big fat Vyadha cutting meat with big knives, talking and bargaining with different people. The young man said, "Lord help me! Is this the man from whom I am going to learn? He is the incarnation of a demon, if he is anything." In the meantime this man looked up and said, "O Swami, did that lady send you here? Take a seat until I have done my business." The Sannyasin thought, "What comes to me here?" He took his seat; the man went on with his work, and after he had finished he took his money and said to the Sannyasin, "Come sir, come to my home." On reaching home the Vyadha gave him a seat, saying, "Wait here," and went into the house. He then washed his old father and mother, fed them, and did all he could to please them, after which he came to the Sannyasin and said, "Now, sir, you have come here to see me; what can I do for you?"

The Sannyasin asked him a few questions about soul and about God, and the Vyadha gave him a lecture which forms a part of the Mahabharata, called the *Vyadha Gita*. It contains one of the highest flights of the Vedanta. When the Vyadha finished his teaching, the Sannyasin felt astonished. He said, "Why are you in that body? With such knowledge as yours why are you in a Vyadha's body, and doing such filthy, ugly work?" "My son," replied the Vyadha, "no duty is ugly, no duty is impure. My birth placed me

in these circumstances and environments. In my boyhood I learnt the trade; I am unattached, and I try to do my duty well. I try to do my duty as a householder, and I try to do all I can to make my father and mother happy. I neither know your Yoga, nor have I become a Sannyasin, nor did I go out of the world into a forest; nevertheless, all that you have heard and seen has come to me through the unattached doing of the duty which belongs to my position."

### ***Pavhari Baba who Swamiji Met on his Travels in India***

There is a sage in India, a great Yogi, one of the most wonderful men I have ever seen in my life. He is a peculiar man, he will not teach any one; if you ask him a question he will not answer. It is too much for him to take up the position of a teacher, he will not do it. If you ask a question, and wait for some days, in the course of conversation he will bring up the subject, and wonderful light will he throw on it. He told me once the secret of work, "Let the end and the means be joined into one." When you are doing any work, do not think of anything beyond. Do it as worship, as the highest worship, and devote your whole life to it for the time being. Thus, in the story, the Vyadha and the woman did their duty with cheerfulness and whole-heartedness; and the result was that they became illumined, clearly showing that the right performance of the duties of any station in life, without attachment to results, leads us to the highest realisation of the perfection of the soul.

### *Futility of Grumbling about Duty*

It is the worker who is attached to results that grumbles about the nature of the duty which has fallen to his lot; to the unattached worker all duties are equally good, and form efficient instruments with which selfishness

and sensuality may be killed, and the freedom of the soul secured. We are all apt to think too highly of ourselves. Our duties are determined by our deserts to a much larger extent than we are willing to grant. Competition rouses envy, and it kills the kindness of the heart. To the grumbler all duties are distasteful; nothing will ever satisfy him,

and his whole life is doomed to prove a failure. Let us work on, doing as we go whatever happens to be our duty, and being ever ready to put our shoulders to the wheel. Then surely shall we see the Light!

## 3. OBITUARIES

### A) SWAMI PRABHANANDA, VICE PRESIDENT, RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION



Swami Prabhananda, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, passed away on 01 April 2023 at 6:50 p.m. at Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, Kolkata. He was 91 and had been suffering from age related ailments for some time.

Swami Prabhananda was born in Akhaura, district Tipperah (now in Bangladesh), on 17 October 1931. An initiated disciple of Swami Shankaranandaji, he joined the order at Narendrapur centre in 1958 and received sannyasa diksha from Swami Vireshwaranandaji in 1966. He served the Order at Narendrapur, Saradapitha and Seva Pratishthan centres as an assistant, and Purulia Vidyapith and the Institute of Culture, Gol Park, as the Head.

At Narendrapur centre, he served as the Director of the Institute of Social Education and Recreation (later known as Ramakrishna Mission Lokashiksha Parishad) for two years. He was also

the Headmaster of the Secondary and Higher Secondary schools at Narendrapur and the Principal of Vidyamandira College at Saradapitha. He later served as an Assistant Secretary of Seva Pratishthan for three years.

Swami Prabhananda was appointed a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and a Member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission in April 1983. In 1984, he was elected as an Assistant Secretary of the twin organisations in which capacity he served for eleven years. He became the General Secretary of the Math and Mission in 2007 and continued in that post until he became a Vice-President of the order in 2012.

Swami Prabhananda has several books in Bengali and English to his credit, notable among which are: *Sri Ramakrishner Antyalila* (Last days of Sri Ramakrishna's Divine play), *Brahmananda Charit* (Comprehensive life of Swami Brahmananda), *Saradananda Charit* (Comprehensive life of Swami Saradananda), *First Meetings with Sri Ramakrishna and Early History of Ramakrishna Movement*. He also wrote a good number of articles in English and Bengali in the periodicals of our Order and other reputed journals. His talks at various nation-



al and international seminars bear the stamp of his deep thinking and scholarship. Ramakrishna Samgraha Mandir (Museum and Archives) at Belur Math is the standing monument to his laborious efforts in preserving various articles and artefacts associated with the founders of the Ramakrishna Movement.

During his spiritual ministry, he blessed many devotees with mantra diksha (spiritual initiation) in different parts of India, Bangladesh and Nepal. He also visited Singapore, Malaysia,, Canada, the US, the UK, Europe, Russia, Fiji, Aus-

tralia, New Zealand, South America, and South Africa at different times and spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and Vedanta.

Swami Prabhananda was known for his erudition, keen interest in academic pursuits and research work. He was meticulous in his daily routine and thorough in his work. He was respected by all for his austere habits, scholarship and dedication to the ideal. In his sad demise, the Sangha has sustained an irreparable loss.

## OBITUARIES

### **B) Dr. B. Ramakrishna, Patron and Founder, Vedanta Centre of Sydney**

We announce with a heavy heart the passing away of Dr. Bagalur Ramakrishna on 5 March 2023. As you may know Dr Ramakrishna, along with his wife, was a Patron of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney. Even though there is a history of the spread of Vedanta in Australia before the Vedanta Centre of Sydney was founded, Dr B Ramakrishna was the founder President of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney until October 2000 when Swami Sridharanandaji took the baton from him.

The Vedanta Centre of Sydney was started in January 1984 with Dr. B Ramakrishna as President and his wife Mrs Kanaka Ramakrishna as Treasurer. The Vedanta Centre of Sydney, before October 2000, hosted a number of Swamis of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, many who resided in their house, including Swami Damodarananda from Fiji quite regularly; Swami Bhuteshanandaji, the 12<sup>th</sup> President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in 1986 while he was



*Dr. B. Ramakrishna (third from Left) with others*

Vice President; Swami Shiveshvarananda from Singapore in 1988; Swami Parasharananda from Singapore in 1991; Swami Gahanananda, 14<sup>th</sup> President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in 1992, while he was Vice President; Swami Sridharananda in 1993 and 1997; Swami Jitatmananda in 1995; Swami Adhibhavananda in 1996; Swami Muktirupananda in 1998; Swami Jagadatmananda in 1999; Swami Bhaktirupananda in 1999;

Swami Smaranananda, the Present President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, while he was General Secretary in 1999.

The catalyst for the deputation of Swami Sridharananda to Sydney was Swami Smaranananda's visit in July 1999. Swami Smaranananda studied the fledgling organization and recommended to the Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math the value of affiliating the Vedanta Centre of Sydney to the Ramakrishna Math and deputing a Swami to Sydney.

Accordingly, Swami Sridharananda was selected and he arrived in Sydney in October

2000. Initially, he was accommodated at the residence of Dr. and Mrs Ramakrishna for about 3 weeks over which time the charge of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney was transferred to him on 22 October 2000 and formally affiliated to the Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math. After that he resided in a rented premises close to their residence. From the time of Swami Sridharananda's arrival Dr. and Mrs Ramakrishna and the rest of the family stood like a rock with him until the very end.

In the passing away of Dr. B. Ramakrishna the Vedanta Centre of Sydney has lost one of its pillars.

#### 4. FROM THE DEVOTEES DREAM BY RUSSELL ATKINSON

O to hear Sri Ramakrishna sing!  
What supernal joy that would bring,  
To see the radiant face with beaming eyes,  
As 'Hari OM! Hari OM Tat Sat' he cries.  
Devas would gather round  
Enraptured by His mantra's sound.  
O to see the Master dance,  
In the bliss of samadhi's trance,  
Moving in His magic space,  
Flooding all about with grace.  
To see the Master sit still as stone,  
Sightless eyes seeing God alone,  
But radiating joy so deep,  
The beauty caused those eyes to weep.  
Blessed are their eyes and ears,  
That make sacred memories for future years.  
Those who saw were thus thrice blessed,  
To be with a man by God possessed.  
Now, long after,  
I fancy that I hear their laughter,  
See the kirtan singers come,  
Hear the vina, cymbals, drum,  
Hear them sing 'Jai Jai Sri Kali Ma,'  
Calling devotees near and far,  
To sing and dance with the Master,

Till they could dance no faster,  
And bathed in joy sink to the floor,  
Drunk with the love the Master bore.  
But now, in a distant place and time,  
I, wistfully, dream this rhyme.