



Reach

SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

Sri Ramakrishna on Seeking God

Seek God. Then see Him in man: His Divinity is manifest more in man than in any other object. Man is the greatest manifestation of God.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 3-4.

Sri Sarada Devi on Meditation

Practise meditation, and by and by your mind will be so calm and fixed that you will find it hard to keep away from meditation.

Source: *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 21-2.

Swami Vivekananda on Man

Man is like an infinite spring, coiled up in a small box, and that spring is trying to unfold itself, and all the social phenomena that we see are the result of this trying to unfold.

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

Zen Buddhism

Zen is not some kind of excitement, but concentration on our usual everyday routine." – Shunryu Suzuki

Source: <https://zenfulspirit.com/2019/10/10/zen-quotes/>

IN THIS ISSUE

1. News from Australian Centres

- ◆ Adelaide
- ◆ Brisbane
- ◆ Canberra
- ◆ Melbourne
- ◆ Perth
- ◆ Sydney

2. Karma Yoga: We Help Ourselves, not the World? (From The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda)

3. Feature Article: Zen / Chan Buddhism

4. From the Devotees: Going to Jayrambati and Sri Sarada Devi by Russell Atkinson

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 2023 TO 10 SEPTEMBER 2023

ADELAIDE

16 East Terrace, Kensington Gardens, SA 5068

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 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.
- A *Bala Sangha* or spiritual classes for children began on 30 July 2023. It is held on Sundays from 4 to 5 pm. It is conducted by volunteers and includes mantra chanting, meditation, yoga, singing, reading from spiritual books, val-



Bala Sangha in Adelaide

ue based lessons and arts and crafts. The programme concludes with refreshments.

Celebrations

- Guru Purnima* was observed on 3 July 2023. The evening programme included *aratrikam*, special puja, *bhajan*, a talk on 'The Importance of Guru Purnima' by Swami Manyananda, pushpanjali and prasada distribution.
- Krishna Janmashtami* was celebrated on 7 September 2023. The evening programme included *aratrikam*, special puja, *bhajan*, a reading and explanation from *Srimad Bhagavatam* on the divine birth of Sri Krishna by Swami Manyananda, pushpanjali and prasada distribution.



Krishna Janmashtami in Adelaide

Other Activities

- The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association of Australia held an Eid reunion lunch on Saturday, 22 July 2023. The purpose of the event was to bring together people from different faiths and backgrounds to create an atmosphere of acceptance, respect, and friendship and to foster interfaith harmony. Swami Manyananda participated as the Hindu representative.

Visiting Swamis

- Swami Chandrashekharananda, Swami in-charge of the Vedanta Society of Portland, Oregon, USA visited the Centre from 14 to 17 August 2023. He gave two talks. The first on 15 August 2023 on 'An Overview of the History



**Ahmadiyya Muslim Association of Australia's
Eid Reunion Function in Adelaide**

and Activities of the Vedanta Society of Portland' that was followed by interaction with the local devotees. The second was on 'Spiritual Life and Vedanta' on 16 August 2023. The talks were well attended.



**Swami Chandrashekharananda, Swami in-charge
of the Vedanta Society of Portland, Oregon, USA
in Adelaide**

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

- 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.
- 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 Vedanta group on the Gold Coast studied the *Bhagavad Gita* 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 Cen-

tre. Classes are available for all ages. For inquiries please email Malar: ville7560@yahoo.com.au

- A meditation class, moderated by Sunjoy Ingle, began on 6 August 2023. It is being held from 6: 30 pm to 7: 30 pm on alternate Mondays.
- On alternate Fridays, the Centre's volunteers cooked food at the Centre's soup kitchen for the needy. An average of 200 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 20 families receive grocery hampers along with cooked food and free bread. The Centre purchases the groceries from Food Bank Queensland and local grocers. Generous donations are also made for the purpose by the public and some organizations. The Centre invites donations from devotees/public to serve the needy. This can be done by making a donation on a specific day, for example on the birthday or some other important day in their life.



Maa Sarada's Kitchen in Brisbane

- The Maa Sarada's kitchen prepares and sells food at a reasonable cost to people on Saturdays. On an average, about 100 persons avail themselves of this service. The kitchen is efficiently managed by volunteers.

- 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 meal for anyone wishing to participate in this service.

Celebrations

- *Guru Purnima* was celebrated on 2 July 2023. Worship, devotional singing, a dance offering to the Guru by Malarville Kandiah and a talk on the importance of the Guru in our life were conducted on this occasion. Members of the Queensland Multifaith Community Council (QFCC) attended the programme.



Guru Purnima in Brisbane

- *Krishna Janmashtami* was celebrated on 7 September 2023. Chanting from *Vishnu Sahasranama*, devotional singing, worship and a talk on the life of Sri Krishna were some of the aspects of the celebration.

Other Activities

- International Yoga Day was observed on 24 June 2023. The event started with pranayama led by Jyotiba Pail, followed by a Hatha Yoga session for beginners. Stacey Aspinall conducted a relaxation session (Yoga Nidra)



Krishna Janmashtami at Brisbane

followed by Laughter Yoga session by Po Mei Kwong. Kristy from Revive Yoga school led the participants in Vinyasa Yoga. An interactive workshop by Dr. Madhavi Kathiri about the theme 'Science of Life from the Ayurveda point of view' was very informative. The event concluded with kirtan conducted by the Namdhari Sikh Samaj. A separate programme for children was also conducted on the occasion. A few stall holders displayed their wares and sold them to the public. The Ma Sarada's kitchen served food on the occasion.



International Yoga Day in Brisbane

- During the school holidays, a creative writing workshop was conducted by Nerin Gounden on 27 June and 4 July 2023. The children highly appreciated the interactive workshops.
- Murali Ramakrishnan conducted flute workshops during the school holidays on 27 and 30 June, and 4 and 7 July 2023. About six children



Flute Workshop in Brisbane

and two adults participated in this programme.

- On 25 July 2023 Charis Mullen, MP for Jordon and Assistant Treasurer, Queensland Government, visited the Centre to discuss matters pertaining to the training of apprentices by Challenge Employment Training Centre, and met with the apprentices.



Charis Mullen, MP for Jordon and Assistant Treasurer, Queensland Government, visited the Brisbane Centre on 25 July 2023

- National Tree Day was celebrated on 30 July 2023 with the planting of plants and trees by volunteers of the Centre. Around 50 plants were planted on the occasion.



National Tree Planting Day in Brisbane

Visiting Swamis

- Swami Chandrashekharananda, Swami in-charge of the Vedanta Society of Portland, Oregon, USA visited the Centre from 4 to 9 August 2023. He also visited Cairns while he was in Brisbane.

Forthcoming Programmes

- Art and Flute workshops during the school holidays in September 2023.
- Chanting of *Durga Saptashati* during *navaratri* between 14 to 23 October 2023.
- Ashtami puja on 22 October 2023.

CANBERRA

17 Bean Crescent, McKellar, ACT 2617

Email: 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. They will resume some time in the future.

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

- 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* by Swami Sunishthananda.
- A guided meditation session was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Sundays from 9:30 am to 10:00 am.
- A class on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* on the second and fourth Wednesday from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm by Swami Sunishthananda.
- A *Vivekachudamani* class was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on the first, third and 5th Thursdays from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm.
- Swami Sunishthananda also conducted a class on the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* on the 1st Saturday of every month at 6 St Patrick's Pl, Tarneit, Victoria.



Narada Bhakti Sutras Class at 6 St Patrick's Pl, Tarneit, Victoria.

Celebrations

- On the morning of Sunday, 2 July 2023, *Guru Purnima* was celebrated. The programme included



Guru Purnima in Melbourne

special worship, talk and bhajans. Devotees shared prasadam after the event.

- On the morning of Sunday, 10 September 2023, Krishna Janmashtami was celebrated. The program included special worship, *Shyama Nama Sankirtanam*, and bhajans. Swami Mahabodhananda from the Vedanta Centre of Sydney delivered a talk on 'Teachings of Sri Krishna'. Tiasha Sahu presented Flute recital as a part of the celebration. Devotees shared prasadam after the event.



Flute Recital on Krishna Janmashtami in Melbourne

Other Activities

- As a part of the PRMC 5 (Priority Response to Multicultural Communities: 5th Phase) project funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Victorian Government, our centre conducted a series of 7 Seminars on Resilience Building and Stress Management. The last two seminars were held on 11 June 2023 and 25 June 2023.

- Swami Sunishthananda was invited by the SKY Meditation Society to deliver a talk on 'The Significance of Yoga in Everyday Life' on International Yoga Day, observed on Saturday, 24 June 2023 at the Shiva Vishnu Temple, Car-rum Downs, Victoria.
- Swami Sunishthananda was invited to speak on 'The Essence of Isha Upanishad' at a Hindu Scriptures Conference organized by BAPS Sri Swaminarayan Mandir, Mill Park, Victoria on Sunday, 30 July 2023.



Swami Sunishthananda at BAPS Sri Swaminarayan Mandir, Mill Park, Victoria

- Swami Sunishthananda was invited to conduct prayers at the Maroondah Council Meeting on Monday, 28 August 2023.



Swami Sunishthananda reciting prayers at the Maroondah Council Meeting

Visiting Swamis

- Swami Chandrashekharananda, Swami in Charge, Vedanta Society of Portland, Oregon, USA, visited our centre from 17 August 2023 to 21 August 2023. A *satsang* was arranged on Sunday, 20 August 2023. During the *satsang* he sang bhajans and delivered a talk on 'The Life of Holy Mother'. Devotees shared prasadam after the event.



Swami Chandrashekharananda in Melbourne

- Swami Rajrajeswaranand Giri Ji Maharaj, Mahamandaleshwar, Sri Panchdashnam, Juna Akhada, Badarikashrama, Himalayas, India visited our centre on Friday, 8 September 2023. He attended the evening *aratrikam* and interacted with the devotees.



Swami Rajrajeswaranand Giri Ji Maharaj, Mahamandaleshwar, Sri Panchdashnam, Juna Akhada, Badarikashrama in Melbourne

- Swami Mahabodhananda, Vedanta Centre of Sydney, visited our centre between 6 to 13 September 2023.



Swami Mahabodhananda in Melbourne

PERTH

51 Golf View Street, Yorkine, WA 6060

Email: vedantaperth@gmail.com

Contact: Sumita Chetty (04) 3892 8136

Regular Activities:

- Aratrikam* was conducted each night by a person or family taking the responsibility for it.
- Monthly *satsangs* were held on 18 June and 13 August 2023.
- Swami Dhanyananda and Brahmachari Prajnachaitanya from Sydney visited Perth from 7 to 9 July and 19 to 24 August 2023. Swami Dhanyananda gave talks on these occasions. The programme also included *aratrikam* and prasad distribution.
- The Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday, 20 August 2023. Swami Dhanyananda presided over the meeting.



Swami Chandrashekharananda in Perth

Visiting Swamis

- Swami Chandrashekharananda, Swami in-charge of the Vedanta Society of Portland, Oregon, USA, visited the Centre from 22 to 24 August 2023. He gave a talk on Vedanta on 23 August 2023.

SYDNEY

2 Stewart Street, Ermington, 2115

Email: vedasydney@vedantasydney.org

Contact: (02) 8197 7351

URL: 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 by the Vedanta Centre of Sydney.

Celebrations

- Guru Purnima* was celebrated on 3 July 2023 at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney in the morning and evening. In the morning, after the puja, devotees visited the shrine and paid their respects. In the evening there was a chanting programme by the children of the youth group and a talk by Swami Dhyanananda. Prasad was distributed in the morning and evening.
- Krishna Janmashtami* was observed on 7 September 2023. The programme, after the daily evening *aratrikam*, included chanting of the *Shyama Nama Sankirtanam* and a short play by the children of the *Bala Sangha*. The function ended with prasad distribution.



Bala and Yuva Sangha Children in Sydney on Guru Purnima



Krishna Janmashtami performance by the Bala and Yuva Sangha Children in Sydney

Visiting Swamis

- Swami Chandrashekharananda, Swami in Charge of the Vedanta Society of Portland visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 26 July 2023 to 3 August 2023 and again from 24 August 2023 to 28 August 2023. While the Swami was in Sydney, he interacted with the devotees and gave a talk on Sunday, 27 August 2023.



Swami Chandrashekharananda in Sydney

2. Karma Yoga: We Help Ourselves, not the World? —SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (From The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda)

In 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 for accessibility. Paragraphing and subheadings have been provided 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*.

Three Parts of All Religions—Philosophy, Mythology and Ritual

Before considering further how devotion to duty helps us in our spiritual progress, let me place before you in a brief compass another aspect of what we in India mean by Karma. In every religion there are three parts: philosophy, mythology, and ritual. Philosophy of course is the essence of every religion; mythology explains and illustrates it by means of the more or less legendary lives of great men, stories and fables of wonderful things, and so on; ritual gives to that philosophy a still more concrete form, so that everyone may grasp it—ritual is in fact concretised philosophy.

The Importance of Ritual, Karma or Symbols

This ritual is Karma; it is necessary in every religion, because most of us cannot understand abstract spiritual things until we grow much spiritually. It is easy for men to think that they can understand anything; but when it comes to practical experience,

they find that abstract ideas are often very hard to comprehend. Therefore symbols are of great help, and we cannot dispense with the symbolical method of putting things before us.

From time immemorial symbols have been used by all kinds of religions. In one sense we cannot think but in symbols; words themselves are symbols of thought. In another sense everything in the universe may be looked upon as a symbol. The whole universe is a symbol, and God is the essence behind. This kind of symbology is not simply the creation of man; it is not that certain people belonging to a religion sit down together and think out certain symbols, and bring them into existence out of their own minds.

The symbols of religion have a natural growth. Otherwise, why is it that certain symbols are associated with certain ideas in the mind of almost every one? Certain symbols are universally prevalent. Many of you may think that the cross first came

into existence as a symbol in connection with the Christian religion, but as a matter of fact it existed before Christianity was, before Moses was born, before the Vedas were given out, before there was any human record of human things. The cross may be found to have been in existence among the Aztecs and the Phoenicians; every race seems to have had the cross. Again, the symbol of the crucified Savior, of a man crucified upon a cross, appears to have been known to almost every nation. The circle has been a great symbol throughout the world. Then there is the most universal of all symbols, the Swastika. At one time it was thought that the Buddhists carried it all over the world with them, but it has been found out that ages before Buddhism it was used among nations. In Old Babylon and in Egypt it was to be found. What does this show?

All these symbols could not have been purely conventional. There must be some reason for them; some natural association between them and the human mind. Language is not the result

of convention; it is not that people ever agreed to represent certain ideas by certain words; there never was an idea without a corresponding word or a word without a corresponding idea; ideas and words are in their nature inseparable. The symbols to represent ideas may be sound symbols or colour symbols. Deaf and dumb people have to think with other than sound symbols.

Every thought in the mind has a form as its counterpart. This is called in Sanskrit philosophy Nama-Rupa—name and form. It is as impossible to create by convention a system of symbols as it is to create a language. In the world's ritualistic symbols we have an expression of the religious thought of humanity. It is easy to say that there is no use of rituals and temples and all such paraphernalia; every baby says that in modern times. But it must be easy for all to see that those who worship inside a temple are in many respects different from those who will not worship there. Therefore the association of particular temples, rituals, and other concrete forms with particular religions has a tendency to bring into the minds of the followers of those religions the thoughts for which those concrete things stand as symbols; and it is not wise to ignore rituals and symbology altogether. The study and practice of these things form naturally a part of Karma-Yoga.

The Relationship between Thoughts and Words

There are many other aspects of this science of work. One among

them is to know the relation between thought and word and what can be achieved by the power of the word.

In every religion the power of the word is recognised, so much so that in some of them creation itself is said to have come out of the word. The external aspect of the thought of God is the Word, and as God thought and willed before He created, creation came out of the Word.

In this stress and hurry of our materialistic life, our nerves lose sensibility and become hardened. The older we grow, the longer we are knocked about in the world, the more callous we become; and we are apt to neglect things that even happen persistently and prominently around us. Human nature, however, asserts itself sometimes, and we are led to inquire into and wonder at some of these common occurrences; wondering thus is the first step in the acquisition of light. Apart from the higher philosophic and religious value of the Word, we may see that sound symbols play a prominent part in the drama of human life. I am talking to you. I am not touching you; the pulsations of the air caused by my speaking go into your ear, they touch your nerves and produce effects in your minds. You cannot resist this. What can be more wonderful than this? One man calls another a fool, and at this the other stands up and clenches his fist and lands a blow on his nose. Look at the power of the word! There is a woman weeping and miserable; another wom-

an comes along and speaks to her a few gentle words, the doubled up frame of the weeping woman becomes straightened at once, her sorrow is gone and she already begins to smile. Think of the power of words! They are a great force in higher philosophy as well as in common life. Day and night we manipulate this force without thought and without inquiry. To know the nature of this force and to use it well is also a part of Karma-Yoga.

Why Should we do Good to the World?

Our duty to others means helping others; doing good to the world. Why should we do good to the world? Apparently to help the world, but really to help ourselves. We should always try to help the world, that should be the highest motive in us; but if we consider well, we find that the world does not require our help at all. This world was not made that you or I should come and help it. I once read a sermon in which it was said, "All this beautiful world is very good, because it gives us time and opportunity to help others." Apparently, this is a very beautiful sentiment, but is it not a blasphemy to say that the world needs our help? We cannot deny that there is much misery in it; to go out and help others is, therefore, the best thing we can do, although in the long run, we shall find that helping others is only helping ourselves.

As a boy I had some white mice. They were kept in a little box in which there were little wheels, and when the mice tried to cross

the wheels, the wheels turned and turned, and the mice never got anywhere. So it is with the world and our helping it. The only help is that we get moral exercise. This world is neither good nor evil; each man manufactures a world for himself. If a blind man begins to think of the world, it is either as soft or hard, or as cold or hot.

We are a mass of happiness or misery; we have seen that hundreds of times in our lives. As a rule, the young are optimistic and the old pessimistic. The young have life before them; the old complain their day is gone; hundreds of desires, which they cannot fulfil struggle in their hearts. Both are foolish nevertheless. Life is good or evil according to the state of mind in which we look at it, it is neither by itself. Fire, by itself, is neither good nor evil. When it keeps us warm we say, "How beautiful is fire!" When it burns our fingers, we blame it. Still, in itself it is neither good nor bad. According as we use it, it produces in us the feeling of good or bad; so also is this world. It is perfect. By perfection is meant that it is perfectly fitted to meet its ends. We may all be perfectly sure that it will go on beautifully well without us, and we need not bother our heads wishing to help it.

Yet we must do good; the desire to do good is the highest motive power we have, if we know all the time that it is a privilege to help others. Do not stand on a high pedestal and take five cents in your hand and say, "Here, my poor man," but be grateful that

the poor man is there, so that by making a gift to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world, and thus become pure and perfect. All good acts tend to make us pure and perfect. What can we do at best? Build a hospital, make roads, or erect charity asylums. We may organise a charity and collect two or three millions of dollars, build a hospital with one million, with the second give balls and drink champagne, and of the third let the officers steal half, and leave the rest finally to reach the poor; but what are all these? One mighty wind in five minutes can break all your buildings up. What shall we do then? One volcanic eruption may sweep away all our roads and hospitals and cities and buildings. Let us give up all this foolish talk of doing good to the world. It is not waiting for your or my help; yet we must work and constantly do good, because it is a blessing to ourselves. That is the only way we can become perfect. No beggar whom we have helped has ever owed a single cent to us; we owe everything to him, because he has allowed us to exercise our charity on him. It is entirely wrong to think that we have done, or can do, good to the world, or to think that we have helped such and such people. It is a foolish thought, and all foolish thoughts bring misery. We think that we have helped some man and expect him to thank us, and because he does not, unhappiness comes to us. Why should we expect anything in return for

what we do? Be grateful to the man you help, think of him as God. Is it not a great privilege to be allowed to worship God by helping our fellow men? If we were really unattached, we should escape all this pain of vain expectation, and could cheerfully do good work in the world. Never will unhappiness or misery come through work done without attachment.

The world will go on with its happiness and misery through eternity. There was a poor man who wanted some money; and somehow he had heard that if he could get hold of a ghost, he might command him to bring money or anything else he liked; so he was very anxious to get hold of a ghost. He went about searching for a man who would give him a ghost, and at last he found a sage with great powers, and besought his help. The sage asked him what he would do with a ghost. "I want a ghost to work for me; teach me how to get hold of one, sir; I desire it very much," replied the man. But the sage said, "Don't disturb yourself, go home." The next day the man went again to the sage and began to weep and pray, "Give me a ghost; I must have a ghost, sir, to help me." At last the sage was disgusted, and said, "Take this charm, repeat this magic word, and a ghost will come, and whatever you say to him he will do. But beware; they are terrible beings, and must be kept continually busy. If you fail to give him work, he will take your life." The man replied, "That is easy; I can give him work for all his life." Then he went to a forest, and after long

repetition of the magic word, a huge ghost appeared before him, and said, "I am a ghost. I have been conquered by your magic; but you must keep me constantly employed. The moment you fail to give me work I will kill you." The man said, "Build me a palace," and the ghost said, "It is done; the palace is built." "Bring me money," said the man. "Here is your money," said the ghost. "Cut this forest down, and build a city in its place." "That is done," said the ghost, "anything more?" Now the man began to be frightened and thought he could give him nothing more to do; he did everything in a trice. The ghost said, "Give me something to do or I will eat you up." The poor man could find no further occupation for him, and was frightened. So he ran and ran and at last reached the sage, and said, "Oh, sir, protect my life!" The sage asked him what the matter was, and the man replied, "I have nothing to give the ghost to do. Everything I tell him to do he does in a moment, and he threatens to eat me up if I do not give him work." Just then the ghost arrived, saying, "I'll eat you up," and he would have swallowed the man. The man began to shake, and begged the sage to save his life. The sage said, "I will find you a way out. Look at that dog with a curly tail. Draw your sword quickly and cut the tail off and give it to the ghost to straighten out." The man cut off the dog's tail and gave it to the ghost, saying, "Straighten that out for me." The ghost took it and slowly and carefully straightened it out, but as soon as he let it go, it instantly curled up again. Once more he labori-

ously straightened it out, only to find it again curled up as soon as he attempted to let go of it. Again he patiently straightened it out, but as soon as he let it go, it curled up again. So he went on for days and days, until he was exhausted and said, "I was never in such trouble before in my life. I am an old veteran ghost, but never before was I in such trouble." "I will make a compromise with you," he said to the man, "you let me off and I will let you keep all I have given you and will promise not to harm you." The man was much pleased, and accepted the offer gladly.

This world is like a dog's curly tail, and people have been striving to straighten it out for hundreds of years; but when they let it go, it has curled up again. How could it be otherwise? One must first know how to work without attachment, then one will not be a fanatic. When we know that this world is like a dog's curly tail and will never get straightened, we shall not become fanatics. If there were no fanaticism in the world, it would make much more progress than it does now. It is a mistake to think that fanaticism can make for the progress of mankind. On the contrary, it is a retarding element creating hatred and anger, and causing people to fight each other, and making them unsympathetic. We think that whatever we do or possess is the best in the world, and what we do not do or possess is of no value. So, always remember the instance of the curly tail of the dog whenever you have a tendency to become a fanatic. You need not worry or make yourself sleepless

about the world; it will go on without you. When you have avoided fanaticism, then alone will you work well. It is the level-headed man, the calm man, of good judgment and cool nerves, of great sympathy and love, who does good work and so does good to himself. The fanatic is foolish and has no sympathy; he can never straighten the world, nor himself become pure and perfect.

To recapitulate the chief points in today's lecture: First, we have to bear in mind that we are all debtors to the world and the world does not owe us anything. It is a great privilege for all of us to be allowed to do anything for the world. In helping the world we really help ourselves. The second point is that there is a God in this universe. It is not true that this universe is drifting and stands in need of help from you and me. God is ever present therein, He is undying and eternally active and infinitely watchful. When the whole universe sleeps, He sleeps not; He is working incessantly; all the changes and manifestations of the world are His. Thirdly, we ought not to hate anyone. This world will always continue to be a mixture of good and evil. Our duty is to sympathise with the weak and to love even the wrongdoer. The world is a grand moral gymnasium wherein we have all to take exercise so as to become stronger and stronger spiritually. Fourthly, we ought not to be fanatics of any kind, because fanaticism is opposed to love. You hear fanatics glibly saying, "I do not hate the sinner. I hate the sin," but I am prepared

to go any distance to see the face of that man who can really make a distinction between the sin and the sinner. It is easy to say so. If we can distinguish well between

quality and substance, we may become perfect men. It is not easy to do this. And further, the calmer we are and the less disturbed our nerves, the more shall

we love and the better will our work be.

3. Feature Article: Zen / Chan Buddhism

Buddhism, as a world religion, began with Siddhartha Gautama (c. 563-483 BCE), later called the Buddha, in India. It was the world's first missionary religion according to Swami Vivekananda. It spread in north India in c. 273 BCE during the reign of King Ashoka. In around 100 CE, Mahayana (the great raft) broke off from the original Theravada or Hinayana school of Buddhism. Theravada Buddhism spread in Sri Lanka and later in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. Mahayana Buddhism spread in China, Korea, Tibet, Vietnam and Japan. Mahayana Buddhism becomes Chan Buddhism in China after Buddhism had already entered China earlier. It later spread as Zen Buddhism in Japan, Thien Buddhism in Vietnam and Seon Buddhism in Korea. Chan, Zen, Thien and Seon being the local

translations of the Sanskrit word 'Dhyana' or meditation.

This write up will provide an overview of Chan and Zen Buddhism as found in China and Japan.

Historical Development

The genesis of Chan/Zen Buddhism is the 'flower sermon' of the Buddha who just held out a golden lotus without speaking a word. Mahakasyapa is said to have smiled and ascertained the meaning without words, which led to him being designated the Buddha's successor.

Bodhidharma followed in the footsteps of the 'flower sermon' by articulating the message he was bringing to China: 'A special transmission outside the scriptures. With no dependence upon words or letters. A direct seeing into one's own true nature.' (Smith and Novak,

2003, p. 92).

Bodhidharma is the monk who is credited with the establishment of Chan Buddhism in China in the late 5th or 6th century CE. His life and contributions are hazy on account of the scarcity of historical sources. The two brief accounts present conflicting accounts of his age and nationality. According to one source he was Persian and according to another South Indian. But with a name like Bodhidharma he was probably Indian. Bodhidharma was considered to have been the 28th Indian patriarch in the line since the Buddha and the first Patriarch of Chan Buddhism in China. He is said to have met emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty in 527 CE and had an exchange with him. Bodhidharma and the second patriarch of Chan Buddhism are said to have based their teachings on an ancient Indian Buddhist text called the *Lankavatara Sutra*

which teaches enlightenment beyond words and thoughts. Since then Chan/ Zen was transmitted from patriarch to patriarch, until the 6th patriarch in the 8th century AD ordered the cessation of the formal transmission.

Teachings of Chan / Zen Buddhism

Chan / Zen try to go beyond words and concepts in their meditative practice call *Zazen*. The aspirant practising *Zazen* (seated meditation) sits in the lotus posture adopted from India, with half closed eyes, trying to meditate and awaken the Buddha mind. The aim of these meditation practices is *Satori* or enlightenment in Japanese which is beyond all concepts and texts. This *Satori* is said to strike suddenly like lightning and is the Zen version of mystical experience.

Zazen involves *Koans*. *Koans* are problems presented usually in the form of dialogues between Zen Masters and Zen enthusiasts. These *Koans* are contradictory, paradoxical and unpredictable and the object of meditation practices.

Impact of Zen/ Chan Buddhism

In China, in the 400s AD Buddhism was alive and well. But it was centered around the monks and nuns, translation of texts and monastery building. The arrival of Chan Buddhism in the late 5th and early 6th centuries transformed the Buddhist landscape. With the advent of Chan/Zen, the differences between monastics and laity ceased to exist. There was also a shift away from purely intellectual pursuits like dealing with texts. All this went to make Chan/Zen gain popularity among the masses. When Chan mingled with Taoism it acquired a new status. Taoism had long been in the consciousness of the Chinese. It blended naturally with Chan Buddhism and its breaking down established systems of thought.

In the 12th century Chan entered Japan and spread. In Japan there are broadly two schools of Zen: Rinzai and Soto. Rinzai began with Myoan Eisai travelling to China and bringing back teachings from Chan Buddhism. The Soto school began when Do-

gen travelled to China and studied under a Chan Master. He later returned to Japan and started the Soto school.

Chan/ Zen spread to America in the 20 century. One of the most popular writers of Zen was Dr. Suzuki who made Zen a popular religion in not only America, but in the West.

References

Smith, Houston and Novak, Phillip, *Buddhism a Concise Introduction*, PerfectBound (Harper Collins), 2003.

Stefon, Matt Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bodhidharma> accessed on 18 August 2023.

Hartney, Christopher and Jonathan Noble, *Cambridge Studies of Religion, Stage 6*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2008.

4. FROM THE DEVOTEES

BY RUSSELL ATKINSON

Going to Jayrambati

Away! To Jayrambati
(A village in West Bengal)

There to a little house,
Where lives the One and All,
In humble majesty concealed,
Face covered with a shroud,
So none can see her laughing
At the antics of the crowd.

One of many pilgrims
To knock upon Her door,
In humble surrender before Her,
I will bow upon the floor,
To wonder at Her being,
Is to forget the world – and more,
For in the revelation
At those old rustic feet,
There comes another seeing –
A wholeness so complete,
That parts are all dissolved;
Dualities blend and meet.

Away! I am going to Jayrambati,
Right now I make my start,
It will not take me long at all,
(It is not in West Bengal,
But here within my heart.)
There I hear the Mother sing,
As my breath flows in and out,
And I hear Her bangles ring,
As breaths move Her seven veils about;

If I could but forever be,
With Mother, in Jayrambati!

To Sarada Devi

I sit to write a poem to You,
Incarnate Mother of the Universe,
But alas!
When I think of You, the Goddess
Of speech,
Singer of sound,
Mistress of tongues and meaning,
I am speechless.

The wind sings Your praises
In the trees,
Birds sing to You songs of joy,
The restless seas chant You dirges;
Running streams intone mantras in Your honour.
Dawn light shines Arati in millions
Of dew drops on web and leaf –
The whole earth is a poem to Your Glory.
Except to mumble this,
I had best be silent.