



# Reach

Oz Mountain, Gunnedah, NSW

## SAYINGS AND TEACHINGS

### Sri Ramakrishna on Positive Thinking

If you say, 'I am a sinner', eternally, you will remain a sinner to all eternity. You ought rather to repeat, 'I am not bound, I am not bound. Who can bind me? I am the son of God, the King of kings'.

**Source:** *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 5-6.

### Sri Sarada Devi on Mind

It is in the mind alone that one feels pure or impure. A man first makes his own mind guilty and then sees another's fault.

**Source:** *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 22-23.

### Swami Vivekananda on Women

All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever be in future.

**Source:** *Great Sayings: Words of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda*; The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture; Calcutta; page 39.

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

## 1. NEWS FROM AUSTRALIAN CENTRES 13 MARCH 2024 TO 10 JUNE 2024

### ADELAIDE

16 East Terrace, Kensington Gardens, SA 5068

Email: [vedanta.adelaide@gmail.com](mailto: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 read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* followed by discussion before the evening *aratrikam*.
- On Sundays Swami Manyananda conducted classes on the *Vivekachudamani* from 5:30 to 6:30 pm.
- Bala Sangha or spiritual classes for children are held on Sundays from 4 to 5 pm. It is conducted by Swami Manyananda and volunteers and includes mantra chanting, meditation, yoga, singing, reading from spiritual texts, value-based lessons and arts and crafts. The programme concludes with refreshments.

### Celebrations

- Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary was celebrated on Saturday, 23 March 2024. The program included special puja with Vedic chanting, bhajans, homa, a talk on the '*Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*' by Swami Manyananda, aratrikam, pushpanjali and prasada distribution.



*Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary in Adelaide*

- Ramanavami—marking birth of Lord Rama—was celebrated on Wednesday, 17 April 2024. The evening program following the daily aratrikam, included a short puja, bhajans, Ramanama Sankirtanam, pushpanjali and prasada distribution.
- By the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, Ma Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda and the generous contributions from many devotees, friends



*Ramanavami in Adelaide*

and well-wishers, the Vedanta Centre of Adelaide renovated its shrine area recently. The inauguration of the new shrine was held on Saturday, 27 April 2024. The morning program included puja, homa, aratrikam, pushpanjali and prasada distribution. Swami Sri-



## BRISBANE

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

Email: [info@vedantabrisbane.org](mailto: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.
- 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 11:15 am to 12:30 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 6:30pm to 7:45 pm.
- A monthly satsang was held at Sunnybank Hills on the first Monday of every month at 19, Scribbly Gum Street.
- Fortnightly on Thursdays there was a study of the *Vivekachudamani*, online, from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. organized by Shakti Global, Gold Coast.
- A monthly satsang was held at the Centre on the 3rd Sunday of each month. The programme consisted of chanting, bhajans, a talk on a special subject and serving of lunch prasad.
- 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 *Ramanama Sanskirtanam* was held fortnightly at the Centre on ekadashi days (7:00 pm — 8:00 pm).
- Devotees took turns in decorating and wor-



*The new shrine in Adelaide*

dharananda, Swami Dhyanananda, Swami Vedamritananda (from the Vedanta Society of Southern California), Swami Manyananda, Br Prajnachaitanya (Sridhar), Br Ram, and Br Tapas were present. Swami Vedamritananda gave a talk on 'Seeing God Everywhere' on Sunday morning (28 April 2024). Swami Dhyanananda from the Vedanta Centre of Sydney gave a talk on 'Sadhana Chatusthaya' on Sunday evening. Swami Sridharananda also interacted with the devotees on Sunday evening (28 April 2024).



*On the occasion of the inauguration of the new shrine in Adelaide*

shipping 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 at the Toowoomba Council Library .
- A class on the *Ashtavakra Gita* was conducted at 101 Sharpless Drive, Springfield Lakes, on a fixed day of the month.
- Monthly, the Vedanta group on the Gold Coast studied the *Bhagavad Gita* from 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm
- The Centre facilitates the granting of No Interest Loans (NILS) for people who need emergency help towards payment of white goods, vehicle repairs and similar expenses. A maximum of \$2000 is given out as loan for persons who fulfil the criteria. This is an initiative by the Good Shepherd Charities in conjunction with the National Australia Bank. Mr. Ron Mitchell and Mrs. Ferdous Mitchell volunteered at our Centre on Wednesdays to run this service. This is an ongoing activity.
- The Central Queensland University's Chiropractic College conducted a free Chiro consultation and treatment clinic at the Centre on alternative Fridays. Along with their supervisors, the advanced students at the College delivered this service free of charge to people. This service began on 19 April 2024.
- On Fridays, the Centre's volunteers cooked food at the Centre's soup kitchen for the needy. An average of 300 meals per week is packed into containers and frozen. They are distributed free of cost through the Westside Community Centre and Serving Our People (SOP). 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 families receive grocery hampers along with cooked food and free bread.
- The Maa Sarada's kitchen prepares and sells food at a reasonable cost to people on Saturdays. On an average, about 120 persons avail themselves of this service. The kitchen is efficiently managed by volunteers.
- On Tuesdays, a Justice of the Peace (JP) renders service at the Centre from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm.

People needing the service access this free service.

- The Centre, in association with the Namdhari Sikh Association, conducted 'Kirtan and Langar' on the last Sunday of every month. After meditation and singing of kirtans, the Sikh brethren cooked and served delicious meals to anyone who could come and partake of it.

### Celebrations

- The birth anniversary (tithi puja) of Sri Ramakrishna was observed on 12 March 2024. A handful of devotees were able to be present during puja in the morning.
- The public celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday was conducted on 16 March 2024. After special puja with homa (fire worship), a Multifaith programme was held when representatives of Bahai (Dr. Abbas Muhajer), Christianity- Catholic (Margaret Naylon) and Liberal- Dr. Denis Bartrum, Islam (Imam Mohammad Atae Rabbi Hadi), Pagan (Linda Ward) Sufi (Dr. Arsalan Mozaffari Falarti), Sikh (Suba Satnam Singh) and Hindu faith (Dr. Ashim Majumdar) spoke on the subject 'The path of Saints and Prophets'. Many members of the public participated in the event. The programme was interspersed with Sitar music by Shrabani Chowdhury, an eminent Sitar player.



*Multifaith Programme in Brisbane*





*Ramanavami in Brisbane*

- Ramanavami was celebrated on 17 April 2024. After formal worship, devotees participated in singing of the *Ramanama Sanskirtanam* and bhajans. Prasad was distributed after the programme.
- Sankaracharya’s birth anniversary was held on 12 May 2024. The programme consisted of chanting from scriptures, a talk on the birth and teachings of Sri Sankara, devotional singing, and distribution of prasad.
- Buddha Purnima was celebrated on 23 May 2024. After evening vespers, hymns from the Dhammapada and other Buddhist scriptures were chanted/sung, followed by a Talk on the ‘Significance of the Advent of Bhagavan Buddha’ by Swami Atmeshananda. Devotees partook of prasad served after the event.

**Other Activities**

- Swami Atmeshananda participated in the Annual Faith Service for the Legal Profession and Judiciary on 11 March 2024 at the Albert Street Church, Brisbane. This event was intended to be an inclusive opportunity for faith organizations to pray for and show support for judicial officers and lawyers and for engagement with the community. The Swami



*Annual Faith Service for the Legal Profession*

met with the Chief Justice of Queensland High court and appraised her about the Ramakrishna Order.



*Harmony Week in Brisbane*

- On the occasion of Harmony Week (18 to 24 March), a day-long program was held at the Centre on Saturday, 23 March 2024. Apart from food and variety stalls, there was a jumping castle for children, performances by Uncle Glenn Barry, Bharata Natyam by Ashwini



*Mayor of Ipswich Teresa Harding, with Swami Atmeshananda*

Nandakumar, Choir by Philippines-Australia Multicultural Association, music by Sargam Music Academy, Handpan and Bansuri fusion by PanAlchemy and African drumming by Balaki Balaka.



- A panel discussion included Hon Shayne Neumann MP, Mayor of Ipswich Teresa Harding, Councillor Nicole Jonic, Councillor Paul Tully, Dr. Maha Sinnathamby, and Mr. Ram Mohan deliberated on the essence of Harmony in the Community. About 450 people attended the events.
- Swami Atmeshananda participated in Iftar dinner programme organized by Ahmadiyya Muslim Association on 6 April 2024 and delivered a lecture on the subject 'Fasting in my religion – a Hindu perspective'.
- A memorial meeting for the late President of the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Smaranananda, was held on 7 April 2024 at the Centre. On this occasion, devotees meditated, chanted hymns from the scriptures, sang devotional songs and Swami Atmeshananda spoke about



*Ms. Veena Goverdhan, Magistrate, Southport Court House, Gold Coast.*



*Bollywood singer Kumar Sanu with Swami Atmeshananda*



*Memorial Meeting for the late Swami Smaranananda*

the Guru Shakti and reminisced about his association with the Swami.

- A special talk was organized on 21 April 2024 during our monthly satsang by Ms. Veena Goverdhan, Magistrate at the Southport Court House on the Gold Coast. She spoke on the subject 'Spirituality in Professional Life'. The talk was well appreciated by the large number of people who participated in this programme.
- A fund-raising concert by the famous Bollywood singer Kumar Sanu was organised by RKS Foundation in Brisbane on 5 May 2024. Proceeds from the concert was donated to the Vedanta Centre. The artist visited the Centre on 6 May 2024.

### Visiting Swamis

- Swami Sarvalokananda, head of Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, visited Brisbane from 30 March to 1 April 2024. The Swami delivered a talk on 30 March on the subject 'Spiritual Life'. It was well attended.

## CANBERRA

4 Brigalow St, O'Connor ACT 2602

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

Contact: Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman 6258 7612/0433 593 860

### Inauguration of a New Property

- Mr Jaishankar Venkataraman and his wife Usha decided to hand over Jaishankar's ancestral property for the purposes of an ashrama. The property is a 3 bedroom house with the address 4 Brigalow St, O'Connor, 2602. The handing over of the keys formally took place

**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**

- Aratrikam, bhajans, readings from the Rama-krishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda literature, and meditation were conducted between 7:00 pm and 8:00 pm daily.
- A scriptural class was conducted on Sundays from 10:30 am to 11:30 am on the *Bhagavad Gita* by Swami Sunishthananda.
- A guided meditation session was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Sundays from 10:00 am to 10:30 am.
- A class on *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* was conducted on the second and fourth Thursday from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm by Swami Sunishthananda.
- A *Vivekachudamani* class was conducted by Swami Sunishthananda on Tuesdays from 7:30 to 8:30 pm.
- A children's class is conducted on Sundays from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

**Celebrations**

- On the morning of Sunday, 17 March 2024, the birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated. The programme included special worship, homa and bhajans. Devotees shared prasadam after the event. In the evening after the



*Sri Ramakrishna's Birth Anniversary in Melbourne*



*The Donated Property in Canberra*



*Transferring the Keys Function in Canberra*

on 12 May 2024, the day of Sankara Jayanti. Swami Sridharananda and other monastics and devotees of the Sydney Centre attended the function along with locals.

**Regular Activities**

- Evening aratrikam and prayers are now conducted every evening at the centre.
- Regular talks by Swami Sridharananda on the *Bhagavad Gita* are also scheduled to recommence in June 2024



aratrikam, Swami Sunishthananda delivered a talk on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

- On the evening of Saturday, 20 April 2024, Ramanavami was celebrated. The programme included special worship and singing Ramanama Sankirtanam and bhajans. The children of children's group chanted the Rama Stotram. Devotees shared prasadam after the event.



*Ramanavami in Melbourne*

### Other Activities

- Hon. Will Fowles, State MP of Ringwood Constituency, visited our centre on Friday, 15 March 2024. He met the Managing Committee Members, discussed the activities of our centre, and had tea and refreshments.



*(3rd from left) Hon. Will Fowler, State MP for Ringwood with Swami Sunishthananda and others*

- Swami Sunishthananda was invited to deliver a talk on the topic "Spirituality in the Digital Age" by the Bengali Association of Victoria Seniors on Monday, 24 March 2024, at the Glen Waverly Community Centre.



*Swami Sunishthananda at the Bengali Association of Victoria*



*Prayer Meeting for late Swami Smaranananda, the 16th President of the Ramakrishna Order*

- A prayer meeting for Swami Smaranananda, the 16<sup>th</sup> President of Ramakrishna Order, who passed away on 26 March 2024, was organized on Sunday, 7 April 2024.
- Swami Sunishthananda was invited by the Victorian United Nations Day of Vesak Celebration Committee (Victoria's Buddhist Community Celebrating Vesak Together), to represent Hinduism and address the Interfaith congregation on Saturday, 11 May 2024, at Melbourne Town Hall.
- A satsang was organized on the morning of Sunday, 26 May 2024. The event included chanting, guided meditation, two discourse sessions, and a question-answer session. All shared lunch after the event.



## Visiting Swamis

- Swami Sarvalokananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Delhi visited our centre from 27 March 2024 to 30 March 2024. A satsang was arranged on the evening of 29 March in which the guest Swami delivered a talk and met the devotees. All shared prasada after the event.



*Swami Sarvalokananda in Melbourne*

## PERTH

51 Golf View Street, Yorkine, WA 6060

Email: [vedantaperth@gmail.com](mailto: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. A monthly satsang was held on 21 April 2024.

### Celebrations

- Sri Ramakrishna's (1836-1886) birth anniversary was observed on 17 March 2024. The programme included prayers, bhajans, aratrikam, reading of spiritual texts and prasada distribution. This was also a part of our monthly programme for March.
- Buddha Purnima was observed on 26 May 2024. The programme included aratrikam, bhajans, reading from sacred texts and prasada distribution. This was also a part of our monthly programme for May.



*Buddha Purnima in Perth*

## SYDNEY

2 Stewart Street, Ermington, 2115

Email: [vedasydney@vedantasydney.org](mailto:vedasydney@vedantasydney.org)

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.
- 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 teaches the *Bhagavad Gita* every Sunday from 10:30 am to 11:30 am.
- Ramanama Sanskirtanam* was conducted on eka-dashi 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.
- Yoga Classes are conducted by Sudhir Mooray on Saturdays from 9:30 am to 11:00 am.



*Ramanavami in Sydney*



*Raghunathdas Maharaj at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney*

### **Celebrations**

- Ramanavami was observed at the Vedanta Centre on 17 April 2024. The programme included worship, singing of *Ramanama Sanskirtanam*, bhajans and the distribution of prasad.

### **Visiting Swamis**

- Swami Vedamritananda from the Vedanta Society of Southern California visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 2 March to 30 May 2024.
- Swami Sarvalokananda, head of the Ramakrishna Mission in New Delhi, visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney from 23-26 March 2024 and 4-5 April 2024.

- The Minister for Multiculturalism, NSW Government, the Hon. Steve Kamper and the State MP for Parramatta, the Hon Donna Davis visited the Vedanta Centre of Sydney on 20 May 2024 in relation to a successful grant application.



*Swami Sarvalokananda, head of the Ramakrishna Mission of New Delhi, in Sydney*



*(7th from Left) Steve Kamper, State Minister for Multiculturalism and Donna Davis, State MP for Parramatta with others*

### **Other Activities**

- The Vedanta Centre hosted a programme by Vishwa Varakari Samsthan (VVS). The VVS held some bhajans by Shri Raghunathdas Maharaj on 7 May 2024 at the Vedanta Centre.



## 2. Karma Yoga: The Ideal of Karma Yoga

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

*(From The Complete Works of 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 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*.

### *The Four Yogas*

The grandest idea in the religion of the Vedanta is that we may reach the same goal by different paths; and these paths I have generalised into four, viz. those of work, love, psychology, and knowledge. But you must, at the same time, remember that these divisions are not very marked and quite exclusive of each other. Each blends into the other. But according to the type which prevails, we name the divisions. It is not that you can find men who have no other faculty than that of work, nor that you can find men who are no more than devoted worshippers only, nor that there are men who have no more than mere knowledge. These divisions are made in accordance with the type or the tendency that may be seen to prevail in a man. We have found that, in the end, all these four paths converge and become one. All religions and all methods of work and worship lead us to one and the same goal.

### *Freedom is the Goal of the Struggle*

I have already tried to point out that goal. It is freedom as I understand it. Everything that we perceive around us is struggling towards freedom, from the atom to the man, from the insentient, lifeless particle of matter to the highest existence on earth, the human soul. The whole universe is in fact the result of this struggle for freedom. In all combinations every particle is trying to go on its own way, to fly from the other particles; but the others are holding it in check. Our earth is trying to fly away from the sun, and the moon from the earth. Everything has a tendency to infinite dispersion. All that we see in the universe has for its basis this one struggle towards freedom; it is under the impulse of this tendency that the saint prays and the robber robs. When the line of action taken is not a proper one, we call it evil; and when the manifestation of it is proper and high, we call it good. But the impulse is the same, the struggle towards freedom. The saint is oppressed with the knowledge of his condition of

bondage, and he wants to get rid of it; so he worships God. The thief is oppressed with the idea that he does not possess certain things, and he tries to get rid of that want, to obtain freedom from it; so he steals. Freedom is the one goal of all nature, sentient or insentient; and consciously or unconsciously, everything is struggling towards that goal. The freedom which the saint seeks is very different from that which the robber seeks; the freedom loved by the saint leads him to the enjoyment of infinite, unspeakable bliss, while that on which the robber has set his heart only forges other bonds for his soul.

### *The Relationship between Freedom and Unselfishness*

There is to be found in every religion the manifestation of this struggle towards freedom. It is the groundwork of all morality, of unselfishness, which means getting rid of the idea that men are the same as their little body. When we see a man doing good work, helping others, it means that he cannot be confined within the limited circle of "me and

mine". There is no limit to this getting out of selfishness. All the great systems of ethics preach absolute unselfishness as the goal. Supposing this absolute unselfishness can be reached by a man, what becomes of him? He is no more the little Mr. So-and-so; he has acquired infinite expansion. The little personality which he had before is now lost to him forever; he has become infinite, and the attainment of this infinite expansion is indeed the goal of all religions and of all moral and philosophical teachings.

The personalist, when he hears this idea philosophically put, gets frightened. At the same time, if he preaches morality, he after all teaches the very same idea himself. He puts no limit to the unselfishness of man. Suppose a man becomes perfectly unselfish under the personalistic system, how are we to distinguish him from the perfected ones in other systems? He has become one with the universe and to become that is the goal of all; only the poor personalist has not the courage to follow out his own reasoning to its right conclusion. Karma-Yoga is the attaining through unselfish work of that freedom which is the goal of all human nature. Every selfish action, therefore, retards our reaching the goal, and every unselfish action takes us towards the goal; that is why the only definition that can be given of morality is this: *That which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral.*

### *Relativity of Morality and Unselfishness*

But, if you come to details, the matter will not be seen to be quite so simple. For instance, environment often makes the details different as I have already mentioned. The same action under one set of circumstances may be unselfish, and under another set quite selfish. So we can give only a general definition, and leave the details to be worked out by taking into consideration the differences in time, place, and circumstances. In one country one kind of conduct is considered moral, and in another the very same is immoral, because the circumstances differ. The goal of all nature is freedom, and freedom is to be attained only by perfect unselfishness; every thought, word, or deed that is unselfish takes us towards the goal, and, as such, is called moral. That definition, you will find, holds good in every religion and every system of ethics. In some systems of thought morality is derived from a Superior Being--God. If you ask why a man ought to do this and not that, their answer is: "Because such is the command of God." But whatever be the source from which it is derived, their code of ethics also has the same central idea--not to think of self but to give up self. And yet some persons, in spite of this high ethical idea, are frightened at the thought of having to give up their little personalities.

We may ask the man who clings to the idea of little personalities to consider the case of a person

who has become perfectly unselfish, who has no thought for himself, who does no deed for himself, who speaks no word for himself, and then say where his "himself" is. That "himself" is known to him only so long as he thinks, acts, or speaks for himself. If he is only conscious of others, of the universe, and of the all, where is his "himself"? It is gone forever.

### *Karma yoga as a system of Ethics to achieve Unselfishness*

Karma-Yoga, therefore, is a system of ethics and religion intended to attain freedom through unselfishness, and by good works. The Karma-Yogi need not believe in any doctrine whatever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realising selflessness; and he has to work it out himself. Every moment of his life must be realisation, because he has to solve by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory, the very same problem to which the Jnani applies his reason and inspiration and the Bhakta his love.

### *The Nature of the World*

Now comes the next question: What is this work? What is this doing good to the world? Can we do good to the world? In an absolute sense, no; in a relative sense, yes. No permanent or everlasting good can be done to the



world; if it could be done, the world would not be this world. We may satisfy the hunger of a man for five minutes, but he will be hungry again. Every pleasure with which we supply a man may be seen to be momentary. No one can permanently cure this ever-recurring fever of pleasure and pain. Can any permanent happiness be given to the world? In the ocean we cannot raise a wave without causing a hollow somewhere else. The sum total of the good things in the world has been the same throughout in its relation to man's need and greed. It cannot be increased or decreased. Take the history of the human race as we know it today. Do we not find the same miseries and the same happiness, the same pleasures and pains, the same differences in position? Are not some rich, some poor, some high, some low, some healthy, some unhealthy? All this was just the same with the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans in ancient times as it is with the Americans today. So far as history is known, it has always been the same; yet at the same time we find that, running along with all these incurable differences of pleasure and pain, there has ever been the struggle to alleviate them. Every period of history has given birth to thousands of men and women who have worked hard to smoothe the passage of life for others. And how far have they succeeded? We can only play at driving the ball from one place to another. We take away pain from the physical plane, and it goes to the mental one. It is like that picture in Dante's Hell where the misers were

given a mass of gold to roll up a hill. Every time they rolled it up a little, it again rolled down. All our talks about the millennium are very nice as schoolboys' stories, but they are no better than that. All nations that dream of the millennium also think that, of all peoples in the world, they will have the best of it then for themselves. This is the wonderfully unselfish idea of the millennium!

We cannot add happiness to this world; similarly, we cannot add pain to it either. The sum total of the energies of pleasure and pain displayed here on earth will be the same throughout. We just push it from this side to the other side, and from that side to this, but it will remain the same, because to remain so is its very nature. This ebb and flow, this rising and falling, is in the world's very nature; it would be as logical to hold otherwise as to say that we may have life without death. This is complete nonsense, because the very idea of life implies death and the very idea of pleasure implies pain. The lamp is constantly burning out, and that is its life. If you want to have life, you have to die every moment for it. Life and death are only different expressions of the same thing looked at from different standpoints; they are the falling and the rising of the same wave, and the two form one whole. One looks at the "fall" side and becomes a pessimist, another looks at the "rise" side and becomes an optimist. When a boy is going to school and his father and mother are taking care of him, everything seems blessed to him; his wants are

simple, he is a great optimist. But the old man, with his varied experience, becomes calmer, and is sure to have his warmth considerably cooled down. So, old nations, with signs of decay all around them, are apt to be less hopeful than new nations. There is a proverb in India: "A thousand years a city, and a thousand years a forest." This change of city into forest and vice versa is going on everywhere, and it makes people optimists or pessimists according to the side they see of it.

### *The Idea of Equality in the World*

The next idea we take up is the idea of equality. These millennium ideas have been great motive powers to work. Many religions preach this as an element in them--that God is coming to rule the universe, and that then there will be no difference at all in conditions. The people who preach this doctrine are mere fanatics, and fanatics are indeed the sincerest of mankind. Christianity was preached just on the basis of the fascination of this fanaticism, and that is what made it so attractive to the Greek and the Roman slaves. They believed that under the millennial religion there would be no more slavery, that there would be plenty to eat and drink; and, therefore, they flocked round the Christian standard. Those who preached the idea first were of course ignorant fanatics, but very sincere. In modern times this millennial aspiration takes the form of equality--of liberty, equality, and fraternity. This is also fanaticism. True equality has never been and

never can be on earth. How can we all be equal here? This impossible kind of equality implies total death. What makes this world what it is? Lost balance.

In the primal state, which is called chaos, there is perfect balance. How do all the formative forces of the universe come then? By struggling, competition, conflict. Suppose that all the particles of matter were held in equilibrium, would there be then any process of creation? We know from science that it is impossible. Disturb a sheet of water, and there you find every particle of the water trying to become calm again, one rushing against the other; and in the same way all the phenomena which we call the universe--all things therein--are struggling to get back to the state of perfect balance. Again a disturbance comes, and again we have combination and creation. Inequality is the very basis of creation. At the same time the forces struggling to obtain equality are as much a necessity of creation as those which destroy it.

Absolute equality, that which means a perfect balance of all the struggling forces in all the planes, can never be in this world. Before you attain that state, the world will have become quite unfit for any kind of life, and no one will be there. We find, therefore, that all these ideas of the millennium and of absolute equality are not only impossible but also that, if we try to carry them out, they will lead us surely enough to the day of destruction. What makes the differ-

ence between man and man? It is largely the difference in the brain. Nowadays no one but a lunatic will say that we are all born with the same brain power. We come into the world with unequal endowments; we come as greater men or as lesser men, and there is no getting away from that pre-natally determined condition. The American Indians were in this country for thousands of years, and a few handfuls of your ancestors came to their land. What difference they have caused in the appearance of the country! Why did not the Indians make improvements and build cities, if all were equal? With your ancestors a different sort of brain power came into the land, different bundles of past impressions came, and they worked out and manifested themselves. Absolute non-differentiation is death.

So long as this world lasts, differentiation there will and must be, and the millennium of perfect equality will come only when a cycle of creation comes to its end. Before that, equality cannot be. Yet this idea of realising the millennium is a great motive power. Just as inequality is necessary for creation itself, so the struggle to limit it is also necessary. If there were no struggle to become free and get back to God, there would be no creation either. It is the difference between these two forces that determines the nature of the motives of men. There will always be these motives to work, some tending towards bondage and others towards freedom.

### *Response to the World Machine*

This world's wheel within wheel is a terrible mechanism; if we put our hands in it, as soon as we are caught we are gone. We all think that when we have done a certain duty, we shall be at rest; but before we have done a part of that duty, another is already in waiting. We are all being dragged along by this mighty, complex world-machine. There are only two ways out of it; one is to give up all concerns with the machine, to let it go and stand aside, to give up our desires. That is very easy to say, but is almost impossible to do. I do not know whether in twenty millions of men one can do that. The other way is to plunge into the world and learn the secret of work, and that is the way of Karma-Yoga. Do not fly away from the wheels of the world-machine, but stand inside it and learn the secret of work. Through proper work done inside, it is also possible to come out. Through this machinery itself is the way out.

### *The Motives for Karma Yoga*

We have now seen what work is. It is a part of nature's foundation, and goes on always. Those that believe in God understand this better, because they know that God is not such an incapable being as will need our help. Although this universe will go on always, our goal is freedom, our goal is unselfishness; and according to Karma-Yoga, that goal is to be reached through work. All



ideas of making the world perfectly happy may be good as motive powers for fanatics; but we must know that fanaticism brings forth as much evil as good. The Karma Yogi asks why you require any motive to work other than the inborn love of freedom. Be beyond the common worldly motives. "To work you have the right, but not to the fruits thereof." Man can train himself to know and to practise that, says the Karma Yogi. When the idea of doing good becomes a part of his very being, then he will not seek for any motive outside. Let us do good because it is good to do good; he who does good work even in order to get to heaven binds himself down, says the Karma Yogi. Any work that is done with even the least selfish motive, instead of making us free, forges one more chain for our feet.

So the only way is to give up all the fruits of work, to be unattached to them. Know that this world is not we, nor are we this world; that we are really not the body; that we really do not work. We are the Self, eternally at rest and at peace. Why should we be bound by anything? It is very good to say that we should be perfectly non-attached, but what is the way to do it? Every good work we do without any ulterior motive, instead of forging a new chain, will break one of the links in the existing chains. Every good thought that we send to the world without thinking of any return, will be stored up there and break one link in the chain, and make us purer and purer, until we become the purest of mortals. Yet all this may seem to

be rather quixotic and too philosophical, more theoretical than practical. I have read many arguments against the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and many have said that without motives you cannot work. They have never seen unselfish work except under the influence of fanaticism, and, therefore, they speak in that way.

Let me tell you in conclusion a few words about one man who actually carried this teaching of Karma-Yoga into practice.

### *The Buddha as a Karma Yogi*

That man is Buddha. He is the one man who ever carried this into perfect practice. All the prophets of the world, except Buddha, had external motives to move them to unselfish action. The prophets of the world, with this single exception, may be divided into two sets, one set holding that they are incarnations of God come down on earth, and the other holding that they are only messengers from God; and both draw their impetus for work from outside, expect reward from outside, however highly spiritual may be the language they use. But Buddha is the only prophet who said, "I do not care to know your various theories about God. What is the use of discussing all the subtle doctrines about the soul? Do good and be good. And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is." He was, in the conduct of his life, absolutely without personal motives; and what man worked more than he? Show me in history one character who has soared so high above all. The whole human race has produced but one such char-

acter, such high philosophy, such wide sympathy. This great philosopher, preaching the highest philosophy, yet had the deepest sympathy for the lowest of animals, and never put forth any claims for himself. He is the ideal Karma-Yogi, acting entirely without motive, and the history of humanity shows him to have been the greatest man ever born; beyond compare the greatest combination of heart and brain that ever existed, the greatest soul-power that has ever been manifested. He is the first great reformer the world has seen. He was the first who dared to say, "Believe not because some old manuscripts are produced, believe not because it is your national belief, because you have been made to believe it from your childhood; but reason it all out, and after you have analysed it, then, if you find that it will do good to one and all, believe it, live up to it, and help others to live up to it." He works best who works without any motive, neither for money, nor for fame, nor for anything else; and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world. This man represents the very highest ideal of Karma-Yoga.

### 3. OBITUARY : SWAMI SMARANANANDA, 16TH PRESIDENT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

Swami Smaranananda, 16th President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, passed away on Tuesday, 26 March, 2024 at 8.14 pm.

He went on a visit to Kamarpukur and Jayrambati in September 2023. While in Jayrambati, his health deteriorated on account of a chest infection and he was admitted to Peerless Hospital in Kolkata on 27 September 2023. After two months, he was discharged from the hospital and taken to Narendrapur Ashrama. His health gradually improved over the next few weeks. However, on 18 January, 2024, he developed a fever and there was a fall in blood pressure. He was immediately admitted to the Peerless Hospital again. From there he was moved to Seva Pratishthan on 29 January, 2024. A month later, he developed septicaemia and suffered respiratory failure, for which he was put on ventilator support on 3 March, 2023. A tracheostomy was done on 13 March. As he subsequently developed acute kidney injury, haemodialysis was started. His condition gradually became critical. Despite the best available medical treatment, he passed away owing to septic shock and multi-organ dysfunction on 26 March at 8.14 pm. He was 94.

Condolences were received from many dignitaries, including the following: Smt. Droupadi Murmu, President of India; Sri Narendra Modi, Prime



*Swami Smaranananda, 16th President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission*

*(<https://www.millenniumpost.in/bengal/president-of-ramakrishna-mission-admitted-in-hosp->)*

Minister of India; Sri C V Ananda Bose, Governor of West Bengal; Sri Amit Shah, Union Home Minister; Ms Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal; Sri Pema Khandu, Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh; Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson of Congress Parliamentary Party; Sri Mohan Bhagwat, Chief of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh; and Sri Suwendu Adhikari, Leader of the Opposition, West Bengal.

Swami Smaranananda was born in Andami village in the district of Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, on 25 December 1929. He came in contact with the Mumbai centre when he was 20 years old. Inspired by the ideals of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, he joined the order at Mumbai



centre in 1952 at the age of 22. Swami Shankaranandaji Maharaj gave him mantra diksha in the same year. He also received from his guru brahmacharya vows in 1956 and sannyasa vows in 1960.

From Mumbai centre, he was transferred in 1958 to the Kolkata branch of the Advaita Ashrama. He served at both Mayavati and Kolkata centres of the Advaita Ashrama for 18 long years. For a few years he was the Assistant Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* magazine. He also enthusiastically worked to improve the standard of publications of the Advaita Ashrama.

He was later posted to Saradapitha centre as its Secretary in 1976. During his long tenure of more than 15 years there, educational and rural welfare work of Saradapitha saw tremendous development. When West Bengal was struck with devastating floods in 1978, he took up extensive relief operations along with his monastic assistants. From Saradapitha he was posted to Chennai Math as its Head in December 1991.

He was appointed a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and Member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission in 1983. In April 1995, he joined the Headquarters as an Assistant Secretary, and after two years, he took charge as the General Secretary of the twin organizations. As the General Secretary, he steered the worldwide Ramakrishna Organization for ten long years until May 2007 when he was elected a Vice-President of the Order. He became the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in July 2017.

He travelled extensively in India and different parts of the world, visiting many branches of the Math and Mission and also unaffiliated centres, spreading the message of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and Vedanta among a vast number of people. He also gave mantra diksha to thousands of spiritual

seekers.

Swami Smaranananda was also a voracious reader and a deep thinker. He contributed a number of articles to various journals of the Ramakrishna Order. Collecting his articles and talks, a few books have been brought out: *Smriti-Smaran-Anudhyan* and *Chintan-Manan-Anushilan* in Bengali, and *Musings of a Monk* in English.

Swami Smaranananda was loved and respected by all for his wisdom, simplicity, unassuming nature, sense of humour and spiritual fervour. His mahasamadhi has left a huge void that is difficult to fill.