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Reminiscences of Swami Sridharanandaji

Vedanta Centre of Sydney, Ermington, NSW 2115

Revered Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj

Foreword

This special issue of 'REACH' records the reminiscences of late Rev.Swami Sridharanandaji. He influenced many lives in different ways and everyone who came in contact with him could not but be touched by his personality. We are grateful to Most Revered Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj, the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission for his words about Swami Sridharanandaji. The message that appears here was sent to us by him during the Memorial meeting held on the 24th December 2025. Swami Sridharanandaji was an extraordinary person in every way – his physical personality was imposing, his baritone voice commanded respect; his gentle yet firm nature would make a person approach him with awe. His sharp memory and an inimitable sense of humour is phenomenal. He was, in the true sense, a Counsellor, an Advisor, a Guru to many. His wise counsel in most ordinary as well as complex situations has changed the outlook towards life of people who came in contact with him. While the achievements of a monk in our tradition is not highlighted, his contribution towards the growth and development of the Ramakrishna Order is enormous and thus he was truly an instrument in the hands of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda. We hope that readers of this issue will benefit from the articles written by those whose lives were touched by Swami Sridharanandaji.

We would, however, like to mention that the opinions expressed by persons that have contributed to this issue is exclusive theirs and does not in any way, reflect the views of our Organisation.

Swami Atmeshananda

Message by Revered President Maharaj on the occasion of the memorial function in honour of Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj held on 24 December 2025 at the Sydney Centre

We are deeply saddened by the passing away of revered Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj, the senior-most monk of our Order who was one amongst the last of his era. Having started his monastic career with wide association with the stalwart-monks who succeeded the direct disciples like Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj, he had seen in his long life of 99 years, our Order in almost all its phases of growth.

Vastly scholarly and highly practical in his field of work, he was a pillar of wisdom and service. Numberless devotees and monks had found in him a great source of inspiration. He was a very popular speaker in the Hindi belt of our country. I had the opportunity to invite him to Arunachal Pradesh where he lectured from many platforms impressing high officials - civil and military.

He was highly appreciated for his establishment of one of the biggest general hospitals in Uttar Pradesh, a lasting contribution to the welfare of society. Naturally, his loss will be felt by many in our Mission.

I offer my heartfelt prayers to Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji to shelter him in their blessed abode of infinite peace and joy.

Yours in the Lord,
Swami Gautamananda
President

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Swami Dhruveshananda

Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Kutir, Almora

Everyone knew Swami Sridharanandaji lovingly as Salil Maharaj. He was senior to many of us. He had received initiation from revered Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj, and he also had served him devotedly, at Shyamlatal and other places. He stayed with him for long periods, rendering personal service, and spent many days with him at Shyamlatal Ashrama as his Sevak (attendant).

There is one incident about Maharaj's early introduction to the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, which Meera (from Lucknow) also recalls. At that time, Swami Shantaswarupanandaji was serving as the Manager at Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata. During this period, Salil Maharaj was a student at Shibpur Engineering College. One afternoon, he went to Advaita Ashrama in Kolkata to buy some books he needed, when the Ashrama would usually close. But Swami Shantaswarupanandaji noticed him, called him inside and made him sit down. He also gave him the books he was looking for and spoke with him at length. Salil Maharaj was deeply impressed by Swami Shantaswarupanandaji. Thereafter, he began visiting him frequently. They would sit together and engage in discussions on scriptures and spiritual ideals. Through this association, his attraction towards the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission deepened. His love for Swamiji also grew, and he wholeheartedly accepted the ideals of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. Eventually, he joined Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata during the time Swami Shantaswarupanandaji was there. We heard this directly from Salil Maharaj himself.

After he joined, Swami Shantaswarupanandaji took him to Belur Math. At that time, revered Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj was the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Swami Shantaswarupanandaji introduced Salil Maharaj to him, and he received his blessings. Later, Salil Maharaj received initiation from him as well. During this period, Swami Madhavanandaji Maharaj was the General Secretary of the Math and Mission. Swami Shantaswarupanandaji introduced him to Swami Madhavanandaji, and Salil Maharaj also came into close contact with him. When he expressed to Swami Madhavanandaji Maharaj his desire to join the

Order, Swami Madhavanandaji initially discouraged him. He said, “You do not yet know enough about the Order, and we too do not know enough about you. Therefore, you should not take such a decision in haste; take more time." However, when he persisted after a period of reflection, Swami Madhavanandaji permitted him to join. At the time of joining, he advised him, “Now go and make friends with the brahmacharins, so that whenever you feel low or face duhkha-kashta (sorrow and difficulties), you can share your feelings with them and feel light in your heart."

He was later introduced to Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj, a direct disciple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. Even before joining the Order, whenever he visited Belur Math, he would invariably go to Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj. He was deeply impressed by Swami Shantanandaji – the loving care and affection that he showered, his warm and compassionate personality; and his deeply inspirational presence. Swami Shantanandaji would speak at length about the Holy Mother and other spiritual topics. Salil Maharaj served Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj for a long time. Much later, after Salil Maharaj had joined the Order, Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj was stationed at the Varanasi Sevashrama, where he was suffering from tuberculosis. In those days, people were extremely afraid of TB, and no one would go near a patient suffering from it. There was a widespread fear that merely going close to such a patient would lead to infection. Despite this, Brahmachari Salil went to Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj every day. He spoke with him and served him devotedly. The Adhyaksha of the Varanasi Sevashrama once warned him, saying, “You know he has tuberculosis. If you contract TB, the Math and Mission will not keep you. You will be sent back home." Salil Maharaj replied calmly, “That does not matter. I will go to Maharaj and serve him. Whether the Math and Mission keep me or not is of no concern to me." Eventually, when Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj was sent to the TB Sanatorium at (at Ranchi), Salil Maharaj was sent along as his attendant (sevak). Importantly, Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj was not informed that he was suffering from tuberculosis. When he was taken by ambulance from the railway station to the Sanatorium and he saw the words “TB Sanatorium" written at the gate, he was deeply shocked. He realised the truth and thought to himself that since this young Brahmachari had been serving him so closely, he too might contract TB. He feared that the world would forever blame him that while serving him, this young monk also contracted the disease and died. After being taken to the Sanatorium, Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj stopped speaking entirely. For three days he did not utter a single word to Salil Maharaj, nor did he take any food. Salil Maharaj felt deeply distressed and thought that perhaps he had committed some mistake in his service, some lapse that had caused Maharaj’s silence and refusal of food. After three days and three nights, Salil Maharaj felt that Belur Math should be informed. In those days there were no telephones or mobile phones. He decided that he would go to the Ranchi post office and send a telegram. He even drafted the telegram. Before leaving, he prepared Maharaj’s morning breakfast and took it to him. To his great surprise, he found Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj cheerful and radiant. After three days of silence and gloom, Maharaj accepted the breakfast and appeared peaceful. When asked why he had not spoken for three days and whether he was angry,

Swami Shantanandaji Maharaj replied, “When I entered this sanatorium and realised it was a TB sanatorium, I thought that while serving me you would also get TB. I feared that the world would never forgive me for that. From that moment, I prayed continuously to Holy Mother, day and night, for three days and three nights, saying, ‘Mother, let this boy die in any way You choose, but never from tuberculosis.’ Early this morning, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi appeared to me and said, ‘Do not worry. He will never have TB.’" This incident was narrated by Salil Maharaj himself.

Throughout his life, whenever any difficulty arose whether in work, in spiritual practice, or in the life of anyone connected with him this was his method. He would quietly pray to Holy Mother for two, three, or four days. Until he received an inner answer, he would continue his prayer unwaveringly.

When his posting to Australia was proposed, I asked him, “Maharaj, is it your wish to go? Is it voluntary?" He replied, “Belur Math asked me for my preference. Bhuteshanandaji (Bhuteshanandaji passed away in 2000 when Salil Maharaj was 75) Maharaj asked me what I wished to do, but I did not answer. I have not taken any final decision. My wish is to go into solitude for some days and pray to the Holy Mother. Whatever command she gives, I shall obey. If she says, ‘Go to Australia,’ I will go. Otherwise, I will remain in India, either in some Ashrama or in the Himalayas, and spend the remaining years of my life quietly. I am already seventy-five; whether ten, twenty, or twenty-five years remain, I shall live them in that way."

After handing over the charge here, he went on leave and stayed at in Coimbatore for some days. Later he returned. By that time my transfer had taken place, but I had worked with him for four years, from 1996 to 2000, during which time the Lucknow Ashrama’s temple construction was underway. I was present at the inauguration (temple opening) as well. There is a striking incident connected with Salil Maharaj relating to the construction of the present temple at the Lucknow ashrama. In its earlier days, the Lucknow centre functioned from a property premises in the bazaar area, close near to where the nursing school now stands. Later, when the ashrama

was shifted to its present site at Nirala Nagar, Revered Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj laid the foundation stone for the future temple at a location then earmarked for the shrine. Years later, when the ashrama had developed further and Sridharanandaji Maharaj – himself a trained engineer – was serving as the head, he carefully reviewed the layout. He felt that the originally marked site would leave the temple somewhat hidden and lacking the prominence befitting such a sacred structure. Unsure of the right alternative, he began to pray earnestly to Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi for guidance. He would often sit in the veranda of his first-floor room, quietly contemplating the matter while looking over the ashrama grounds. He later narrated that this period of prayer and reflection continued for several days. One day, while seated there in deep thought, he experienced a vivid inner vision. He saw a young woman, radiant and joyful, moving about a particular spot within the ashrama. She strikingly resembled Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. With childlike happiness, she playfully held and twirled the end (aanchal) of her sari as she walked with carefree steps, full of joy. As he looked more intently, he felt certain that it was none other than Holy Mother herself.

Salil Maharaj felt that Holy Mother was indicating her chosen site for the temple. Accepting this as divine guidance, he resolved to act accordingly. He invited the then President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Most Revered Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, to lay the foundation stone at this newly revealed location. Within a few months of that sacred act, Revered Gambhiranandaji Maharaj attained Mahasamadhi. The temple that stands today occupies precisely the spot shown in that vision. The incident, narrated by Maharaj himself, offers a rare glimpse into his deep spiritual relationship with Holy Mother.

Later, after my transfer to Gujarat, I once telephoned him and asked what decision he had taken. He said that after staying in solitude for about thirteen days, he received an inner answer from Holy Mother one night, “My child, go. Everyone in Australia is waiting for you to spread the ideals of Thakur. You will succeed in all your work."

At the age of seventy-five or seventy-six, he took charge of the Sydney Ashrama. At that time there was nothing – no house, no centre, even though there were groups of devotees in the different states of Australia. Initially, he stayed at a devotee’s home. Gradually, a house was rented, later another small house was purchased. When that proved insufficient, a slightly larger house was acquired, though objections were raised regarding parking. Finally, a larger property was obtained, and the Ashrama was firmly established. In this way, at least six Ashramas came into existence in Australia under his guidance. I too had the opportunity to visit Australia at Maharaj’s invitation in 2018. The Sydney Ashrama is now large and beautiful, with a magnificent temple, and an even larger temple is under construction. He arranged for me to visit three Ashramas which had been run as the sub-centres of the Sydney Ashrama. The Brisbane Ashrama stands on fifty-two acres of land. The Melbourne centre also grew steadily. The Sydney Centre also has a retreat property at Growee. Maharaj once took us there (retreat Centre), and we stayed together overnight – seven of us in a single room – sharing food and life with complete simplicity. On our

return journey, Maharaj first arranged a vehicle for us and chose to travel himself by train, saying that he had some work to attend to. He encouraged us to see the country and visit a few places along the way. I felt uneasy that Maharaj would willingly endure discomfort while we travelled in comfort.; Yet, knowing him, I also knew that he would never agree otherwise. Such was his love – he would always accept inconvenience himself so that others might remain at ease. Eventually, he consented to our travelling by train only after I requested it in the name of experience, so that we might later describe the journey honestly to others, including our experience of public transport in Australia. This was his nature – always thinking first of others' comfort, never his own.

Maharaj had also deputed two brahmacharis to accompany me and show us places of interest, especially during our onward journey by car, during which we stopped at many notable locations including at Cairns (in Queensland). His reverence for seniors and his love for monks, brahmacharis, and devotees was deep and equally profound. When Swami Shantaswarupanandaji returned from America in very poor health and was unable to walk without support, Salil Maharaj – after seeking due permission from both Swami Shantaswarupanandaji and the Headquarters – personally brought him to Lucknow and ensured his treatment and care. From 1970 to 1996, Swami Shantaswarupanandaji lived there, surrounded by devoted service, regular medical attention, and deep respect. During the summer months, when the heat of Lucknow became unbearable and might have adversely affected Parvati Maharaj's health, Salil Maharaj rented a house exclusively for him at Julikot, which continues to remain under the care of the Lucknow Ashrama. Each year, he would arrange for Swami Shantaswarupanandaji to stay there for three to four months, accompanied by a driver, staff, a cook, and a sevak (attendant) Brahmachari. Salil Maharaj himself would visit him every month, often bringing doctors along, to ensure that he faced no difficulty or discomfort.

Similarly, Salil Maharaj extended silent, dignified help to many devotees in distress, protecting their dignity without publicity or display. His compassion was quiet but profound. He was not only a great Karma Yogi but also a scholar. He conducted Gita classes as well as classes on Upanishads and other scriptures regularly and had a remarkable memory. Even after fifty or fifty-five years, he could recite Rabindranath Tagore's poetry continuously for an hour. Until the very end, his memory remained sharp and luminous.

When I was later serving at Limbdi (under Rajkot centre) in 1994-95, an industry (Jyoti Ltd.) from Baroda invited Maharaj for a lecture tour across Gujarat. I had the good fortune of accompanying him during this tour and taking him around Jhagadia (SEWA Rural), Limbdi, Bhavnagar, and Ahmedabad, which once again gave me the opportunity to serve him personally. During this time, I heard from him many reminiscences about Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj and several other senior monks. At Bhavnagar, I particularly remember one night when we stayed at the house of a devotee (Merchant family). Those moments remain vivid in my memory.

I was in charge of the Rajkot centre from 2005 to 2011, and during this period, in 2007–08, Maharaj visited India from Australia. I had requested him to stay at Rajkot for ten days. Although

his schedule was very tight, he graciously agreed to stay for eight days. During those eight days, he delivered lectures on four days on Thakur, Ma, Swamiji, and Vedanta. Originally planned for three days, he later added a fourth session so that all the ideas could be assimilated and woven together. The Gujarati devotees who attended those talks still remember them vividly even today. They were completely mesmerized by the way Maharaj inspired them through the ideals of Thakur, Ma and Swamiji. Devotees from across India – North and South, and from all parts of Gujarat – came to meet him. Members of the merchant family, Mr. Manish, who was then holding a very senior position in the Army, and many other devotees gathered to seek his company. Everyone was very deeply happy to meet Maharaj after a long time, and Maharaj himself was equally delighted to see them. Those days at Rajkot were filled with precious moments of joy and spiritual warmth. While leaving, Maharaj remarked, “Thakur ekhane jagrata aachen", meaning that One can feel Thakur’s living presence at this centre and “onar aashrivaad sobar opore thaakbe" that His blessings would continue to shower upon all from this place. My last meeting with Maharaj was in Sydney in 2018. He had called me to visit him once more, and I had planned to go in 2025, but for certain reasons it could not materialize. The last time we spoke over the telephone, he said to me, “Toke dekhle, khushi hobo." (I would be happy to see you).

Ajit and Susmita Ghosh

Melbourne

My name is Susmita Ghosh, and I was initiated by Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj in May 1982 in Melbourne. My husband, Dr. Ajit Ghosh, was initiated by Revered Swami

Vireswaranandaji Maharaj in 1969 while he was an undergraduate student at Presidency College, Kolkata and residing at the Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Belgharia, near Kolkata.

We met Revered Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj in April 2001 when he delivered a discourse on 'Bhakti Yoga' in Melbourne. I would like to narrate a few memorable events/encounters that we had with our most respected and beloved Swamiji.

- **Friendliness and Humorous Nature**
  Swamiji loved good food, particularly authentic Bengali cuisine. Once Swamiji accepted our invitation for dinner during his stay in Melbourne while delivering his monthly lectures. I made 'Rasogollas' for Swamiji and served him the sweets. I requested him to squeeze out the syrup before eating, to minimize the sugar intake. He replied by answering in Bengali, 'Aare rosgolla khaoar maneta ki, jodi ros ta tipe ber kore dees ?' or 'What is the point of eating Rasogollas, if there is no syrup?' During winter when Swamiji used to visit and stay at our Melbourne Ashrama, initially at Judy Court and later at Ringwood East, Victoria, I knitted a pair of woollen socks so that his feet would stay warm and comfortable. He really appreciated this. Once, I offered to knit a woollen hat to keep his head warm. He jokingly quipped 'Amar Matha emnii garam, tor aar hat banate hobena (My head is usually always hot, you need not knit a hat for this). Both these encounters show the friendly and humorous side of Swamiji.
- **Love of Gardening**
  Swamiji loved gardening. When he became aware of Ajit's keen interest in growing vegetables in our backyard, he used to share his experiences of growing all kinds of vegetables in the Lucknow Ashrama in India. Once he told us that the only things the Lucknow Ashrama used to buy were salt and sugar. The rest of the things for everyday consumption were grown there itself. Whenever we went to Sydney to visit Swamiji, we took some home-grown vegetables. When I had a chance, I even cooked these vegetables for him. When we visited Swamiji in Sydney for the first time and stayed there for two days, he used to discuss with Ajit about planting and nurturing a 'Panchavati' (five auspicious trees), similar to that at Dakshineswar, at the Sydney Centre. He may have also wanted one at our Ashrama in Ringwood East. Eventually, we became very close to Swamiji through our mutual love of gardening.
- **Selling Homegrown Vegetables at the Ringwood East Ashram for Fund raising**
  Around 2010, we had an excess number of vegetables grown in our garden. Once before Swamiji's lecture, I kept some vegetables such as packets of chillies, Lauki (long gourd) and Puin Shak (Malabar Spinach) next to the display of books organized by Mohan to raise funds for our Ashrama. Seeing the display of vegetables, Swamiji asked - 'Ei sob kire?' (What are all these?). When I explained to him that the intent was for fund raising, he was very supportive and took a packet of chillies. Then he said to me in Bengali - 'Tui poisata dibi' (Will you pay for me).

- **Eagerness to help**

  Swamiji was always willing to help children, irrespective of age. Our eldest son Arnab wanted to learn Sanskrit during his visit to India while he was a medical student and doing voluntary work in Kolkata (Calcutta). Swamiji helped him to stay for four weeks at the Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture at Gol Park, Kolkata.

In November 2024, we visited the Sydney Ashrama with our eldest granddaughter, Amara. Even though she was only five years old, Swamiji's interaction with her was incredible and she was blessed. When we last visited Swamiji at the end of January 2025 in the Sydney Ashrama, we spent almost two hours with him and had lots of general discussions about the Vedanta Centres in Australia. Before we left, Swamiji held my hand and said in Bengali - 'Tor Melbourne bhalo na lagle, baper bari chole aii' (If you do not like Melbourne, then come and stay at your father's house.

This illustrates how intimate Swami Sridharanandaji became with everyone who interacted with him.

Ambika Prasad

Sydney

Just like bees are drawn to honey
So were people of every walk to our Revered. Sridharanandaji Swami.

This we need not even state
For that was a clearly obvious trait
Drawn as devotees were to spiritual nourishment great
As also were the defeated as they tasted compassion that did them elate.

At every place into which Swamiji stepped,
Swamiji's love did make people - him enthusiastically accept
Lucknow wept when Swamiji – the place left
For he had built the Ashram there from scratch,
And quite naturally to Swamiji's warmth devotees did get so attached.

They knew so well that his loving hand
Their well-being – physically and emotionally spanned,
It lifted them to view life from a grandstand,
And carried them to the Lord's land – their dreamland.

America was saddened when Swamiji's travels were physically cordoned.

Australia now sobs as Swamiji's physical heart no longer throbs.

So, if I were to quote two lines from the Arathikam
I'm sure you'll nod to agree with the message of their strum:

Bhaktarjana Yugala Charana … **Tarana Bhava Par.**

Are the two lines that throw open His doors to compassion – ajar.

The meaning of which will undoubtedly carry you through strife.
Thy two feet, possessed by devotees, carry one across the ocean of life.

Flowing through our Swamiji along his entire life's wheel,
Was his ingrained oneness with the values of Thakur, his ideal.

**

My narrative, I'll start with the HEARTWRENCHING WAIL
That takes one to one's Guru who guides us gently yet firmly to lift our obscuring veil.
While every seeker – be it a Buddha or a commoner – generally due to intense disparity steps onto the quest
Seeking acceptable solutions that heal and eradicate the perceived mess,

I can speak from experience only about the views I viewed
That had me rolling and writhing and thus had seeking sewed …

The main setting was the school I taught in
Wherein students of different nationalities were in an antagonistic spin – caught in
Their differing faiths and external differences
Became the cause of Oneness' hindrances
As the prime teacher of the students from the other lands
My heart was torn by discrimination's & divisiveness' fangs
"Ohhhh Lord of All – why isn't there a Master for whom Oneness is the main call?!"
… was what kept me weeping through every day's brutal brawls.

Each preacher whom I'd ever heard of
Seemed to say that only his path was the path to quaff!

My heart was unstoppably bleeding & tumultuously torn

I writhed in pain when suddenly I was a new place shown:

Verily a coincidence
Was that Ashram visiting incident … .

My friend who in those days oft carted me from work
Asked if she could take me to an Ashram – from our routine – a quirk … .

We entered into a huge hall with a Shrine – an eye-catching view
Comprising three people's pictures about whom I had little clue … .

Soon it was to be the vesper service my friend softly indicated
And a strange song then actuated …

Next my friend said we could go and see the resident Swami
And I nodded as I knew was expected of me.

We moved into a room inside and an eye-catching man in orange robes spied
My friend ducked down to prostrate at his feet and I followed as I understood that was how we had to - him – greet.

"Swamiji, this is Ambika and she makes dramas" my friend chirped
And I gawked for it was the weirdest introduction that I'd yet heard … .

But, even stranger was the unbeknownst Swami's response:
"Ohhhh is that so – then, would you like to create a drama about Sri Ramakrishna?"
– little did I know that these words a revelation would launch … .

For the Swami's next words had my eyes widen … .
"You know, Sri Ramakrishna's main teaching … .
"**All religions lead to the same goal**", were fully laden!!

My jaw dropped as this information out popped
"What?!!", so there was actually somebody who just what I wanted – had taught?!?

You can quite see how wonderstruck I did be – ignorant me
And also see how I longed to know the path that this master could show everyone including me … who to Him now continually bow.

***

The Swamiji in the incident
Was Rev. Sridharanandaji – the magnificent
The time & the place:
2004, Sydney Ashfield Ashram space

My subsequent meeting
Was quite intriguing
But for that you'd have to wait
For today I'll elaborate
Not on the narrative
But on humans' restorative
On a few of many outstanding traits
Seen in the Reverend – that truly elates.

You must bear in mind though
That for me the view was noveau
It was the first time I'd with awareness seen
People who – to work for a mission – so keen
Their mission was their breath
I soon learnt it was also their wealth.

Simplicity, frugality, discernment & sincerity
These are a few flourishing leaves on their ever-green tree.

**

Now I'll shift to the topic that had me spin dried:

Khandana Bhava Bandhana, … **Tomay**

The first two lines of the Arathikam that do here apply … .

The meaning runs as …
O Breaker of the world's bondage, by the world adored. I worship Thee,
For that indeed is what Swamiji did in order to make me free

At an early stage of me going there Swamiji had lovingly asked,
"What took you so long to come here?" the meaning of which had simply slid – me – past …

Swamiji had asked me once if I knew the difference between self and Self with a capital S,
And my lack of awareness, I had to quite naturally confess . . . .

“All in good time", Swamiji had then reassured,
And these triggers along with Swamiji’s other prompts slowly had me cured.

One major way was by Swamiji saying that he wanted me to edit a transcript
Of his audio text on Mundaka Upanishad – knowing I’m certain of its undoubted merit
Of slowly but surely egging me on to knowledge ferret . . . .

He had known well about my interest and inclination
And with the ask coming from him, I needed no persuasion.

Swamiji made time to see me regularly and the text explain,
And I’d sincerely strain to expand my ignorant brain.

Swamiji, told me exactly how to the superfluous in the text to truncate
Perhaps with the awareness that understanding the contents would within me, the Lord invocate . . . .

But ever so slow was I to, the required grasp,
And to – with awareness about the inference of the proverbial – two birds – GASP!

One bird enjoys the sweet & bitter fruits on the tree
While the other just watches as a witness and is thus free.

To think that when I was first asked to edit it truly thought it was for Swamiji’s benefit!!
While as anyone who wasn’t a novice could easily say
– that it was the Lord’s Grace for me to awareness inherit!!

Such was the stretch that Swamiji made with his time and knowledge
How I wish that all this I could, much earlier on, acknowledge . . . .

Now I take it as everything happens in its own sweet time
And, while I send out my silent prayer of gratitude, I try to with life, chime.

***

Today we take joy in Swamiji who like a life giving tree,

Sheltered all – no matter who they be.

From the scorching run and life's torrential pains,
He shielded, cared and made joy sustain.

While he summoned no one nor sent anyone away,
But with his unconditional protection, made all those who came happy and gay.

And the fruit of knowledge that Swamiji in abundance bore,
Into one and all he lovingly poured.

Let's pause now and these qualities better acquaint,
Hey … but don't these match that of a Saint?

Such Divine features that helped us all towards non discriminative Oneness?
Won't these take us all to the bliss of peaceful fullness?

Wouldn't it be fair then if I were to say?
That the following lines of the Arathikam come into play?

Pranarpana, Jagata Tarana, … **Krintana Kalidor.**

Thou hast sacrificed Thy life for the world's deliverance, O Breaker of the bondage of the Kaliyuga …

With my Ever-so-humble Pranaams to my Revered Guru,
Your striving child: Ambika

Anitha Raju

Melbourne

Swami Sridharanandaji, to me, personified the presence of my Ishta, the Holy Mother. With Swamiji's grace I feel like I have been able to connect with The Mother in a tangible way. Swamiji explained an experience from my past life that caused me to feel so drawn to The Mother. On his Japa Mala he had a locket with a lock of The Mother's hair. Once, when he had stayed at my home, he placed the mala in my shrine for three days and said - "There, now, The Mother's presence is with you in your shrine".

The first time that I met Swamiji was around October 2004. His first discourse at Christchurch, New Zealand, was at our house and the topic was “Sadhana". Although I have been blessed to have been associated with the Ramakrishna Mission since my childhood and received mantra diksha from revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji in 1990. I feel that my journey as a conscious Sadhaka started that day with Swamiji’s talk. I burst into tears after his talk with a huge regret that I had wasted my life. He gently told me to start in earnest and since then every moment spent in Swamiji’s presence has been a learning experience. Every word that he uttered had a lesson - his lessons have guided me in every aspect of my life, be it yoga, sadhana, parenting, professional work, financial management, recipes etc.

The beauty was that Swamiji blended the teaching of deep truths with the unconditional love of a parent and a dear friend, combined with a wonderful sense of humour. I feel like he observed everything, he knew me through and through, and he knew what was going to happen in my life even before I did.

I would like to share 3 incidents that remind me that we were so blessed to know a great soul who was so joyful and playful.

- Once I was serving Swamiji tea at the dining table. My son Rohan was about 6 or 7 years old. Rohan was sitting at the table across from Swamiji and suddenly I saw a cheeky look on Rohan’s face and Swamiji was chuckling. Swamiji warned me saying ‘now, you don’t react’. I realised that Rohan and Swamiji were bicycle pedalling with their feet under the table!
- Another time, I was going to cut mangoes for Swamiji’s lunch and he called my younger son Vaibhav and taught him how a mango should be eaten without being cut up. Sucking all the juice, complete with licking the juice running down the fingers; and then sucking all the pulp from the mango seed. They had a competition to see who got the seed completely white! The lesson was aiming for perfection in every task!
- The final incident that I would like to share is from the occasion when we had conducted Bala Sangha classes at the Ashram. At the conclusion of the term, we had asked Swamiji if

he could meet with the children for a brief chat. Swamiji was initially reluctant as he said that he wasn't sure about a topic that he could discuss with small children in the 5 –10-year age group. We said that we could give the children an opportunity to ask him questions and he agreed. There was a 5-year-old boy, Arjun, who came up with a question "Everybody talks about God, but what is God? Have you seen God?" Swamiji said, "Yes, I have seen God. God is in everyone and everything". Arjun asked, "In this table, this chair?". Swamiji said "Yes". Then Arjun said, "But I can't see God?". Swamiji said, "You can see God too, if you train yourself to be able to see God". Arjun seemed satisfied by the answer and all the adults in the room were stunned with the exchange!

With the Mother's grace we were so fortunate to have had the chance to meet and interact with Swamiji in this lifetime.

Om Jananim Saradam devim Ramakrishnam jagadgurum
Padapadme tayoh shritva pranamami muhurmuhuh

Aradhana Ganguly

Melbourne

We first met Boro Swamiji (endearing name for Swami Sridharanandaji) in the nineties. In 1991, Mouli (my husband) and I had taken diksha (spiritual initiation) from Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj in Melbourne. Growing up in Australia, I really had no idea what diksha was. I also had no idea of Vedanta philosophy. Life following diksha went on as usual.

Since 2001, Boro Swamiji used to come to Melbourne and give lectures once a month and they were held at Monash University. I attended those lectures whenever I was able to go. I remember that after each lecture, there was always a central concept, which lingered in my mind, long after the lecture. One important concept was that, with the saturation of the Divine, a gradual transformation of personality comes about. It was a powerful idea and one that filled me with hope and & possibilities. The concepts of Diksha and Vedanta started to become clearer.

Over the years I personally witnessed Boro Swamiji giving guidance and courage to devotees, undergoing some crisis or problems. The sheer strength of his personality transformed so many lives. I am thankful that my own parents were fortunate to receive diksha from Boro Swamiji.

When my cat, Zachary passed away, I was distraught. I asked Boro Swamiji if I should have a sraaddha for him. With a straight face, full of compassion, he replied that it was not necessary, though over the years, Zachary had indeed become humanised.

Boro Swamiji's passing is a great loss to us all. I would like to express my gratitude for all the knowledge and wisdom that he has given us. His dynamic and compassionate personality will forever remain etched in our hearts. Our pranams to you Swamiji.

Archita Das

Before starting to write about Boro Maharaj (Revered Swami Sridharanandaji), who is my Gurudev, I thought it would be very easy for me, because I have known him for the last 19 years. But when I actually sat down to write about him, I felt unsure about where to begin. I have to go back to 2006.

At that time, we were living in Toronto, Canada. Boro Maharaj used to visit the Toronto Vedanta Centre at Toronto almost every year. Whenever he came, it was always a time full of joy.

In July 2008, I lost my father just after returning from India. I was not able to say my last goodbye to my dad. That same year, in September, Boro Maharaj came to Toronto. It was a Thursday evening before prayer. Boro Maharaj was sitting alone in the library. We had arrived a little early, and I saw him sitting there. I entered the library to convey my pranams. When I did pranams to Boro Maharaj, he suddenly asked me, “What is your name? Come to Sydney. It will feel like your dad’s house." I burst into tears and said to him, “Maharaj, I lost my dad in July. I was not able to say a last goodbye to him for the last time." That was my first interaction with him.

One Friday evening, when we went to the centre again, Debalina – who was traveling with Boro Maharaj – asked me, “Archita, do you know who cooked the mixed vegetables last night?" I got a little scared and asked her, “Was there something wrong with it, Debalina? I cooked the mixed vegetables." She immediately took me in front of Boro Maharaj and said to him, “Maharaj, Archita cooked the mixed vegetables last night." I will never forget Boro Maharaj’s response: “Aha! I felt like I was eating my mother’s cooking." In Toronto, a few groups of people, were blessed to cook food for Boro Maharaj, Kripamayanandaji Maharaj and the other devotees on different days of the week. I used to make dinner on Thursdays.

I felt a deep wish to receive mantra diksha (or spiritual initiation) from Boro Maharaj. But it was not easy, because according to Belur Math’s rules, no Maharaj can give initiation outside their assigned territory. I expressed my desire to Revered Swami Kripamayanandaji Maharaj at

the Toronto Centre. Then in 2009, when Boro Maharaj came again to Toronto, I expressed my desire to him directly to him. However, he strictly refused, following the rules of Belur Math. The day Maharaj left Toronto for the U.S., I received a phone call from Boro Maharaj. He told me that, “Kripamayanandaji has requested me to give you the mantra if you are able to come to Sydney. I have accepted Kripamayanandaji’s request., From today I accept you as my disciple. However, you must come to Sydney to receive the mantra." I felt like I was on cloud nine. This was possible only because of Revered Kripamayanandaji Maharaj’s request and of course my husband Kausik’s support. Kausik received the mantra from Revered Swami Kripamayanandaji’s Maharaj in 2009.

In December 2010, my husband Kausik, my son Arka and I, went to Australia from Canada to receive the mantra from Boro Maharaj. We arrived the day before Holy Mother’s birthday, on 25 December 2010. Revered Boro Maharaj told me, “Tomorrow, 26th December, is Holy Mother’s birthday, and we will all be very busy with the celebrations. The day after tomorrow morning, in the morning, I will give you the mantra." I requested Maharaj, “Can you please give me the mantra on 1 January 1st, Kalpataru Day?" He immediately said, “Do you want to take it on Kalpataru Day? Okay, as you wish." And on 1 January 1, 2011, I officially received the mantra from Boro Maharaj.

In December 2011, our daughter was born. Right after her birth, she was fighting between life and death with multiple organ failure. She was on life support for a month. At one point, the doctors withdrew her life support, and miraculously, one by one, her organs started working again. I still remember that for one month, Boro Maharaj used to wait for our phone calls every single day. When we received our daughter’s first MRI report and the doctors told us that 75% of her brain was already damaged, we called Maharaj and told him, “I do not know how, but you have to save my daughter’s life. You have to pray to Mother, and I know Mother will listen to your prayers." I also told him, “Just as Santanandaji Maharaj prayed to Holy Mother for your life, you have to do the same for my daughter, and I know Mother will listen to you." Boro Maharaj and Swami Kripamayanandaji Maharaj both prayed, and Mother listened. Our daughter got her life back. After one month, when our daughter came home from the hospital, I called Boro Maharaj and said - “Maharaj, please promise me – please don’t go anywhere without seeing my daughter, even if you get a call from Mother." Maharaj started laughing and told me, “Okay, okay – without seeing Rai (my daughter’s name), I am not dying." In Bengali, he said, “Ore, tor meye ke na deklhe ami morbo na." It was in 2018, one day, when I called him, he said, “If possible, please come to Sydney. I want to see Rai." As soon as Maharaj told me this, my husband, Kausik, said, “When Boro Maharaj says so, we have to go and visit him." That was our second visit. We were so happy – Rai got to see Boro Maharaj for the first time and received his blessings.

On every phone call, I used to get scolded by Boro Maharaj. One day I asked him, “Why do you always scold me?" His response was, “Listen, we were four brothers and sisters. Most of the time, I used to get scolded by my mother. One day I asked her, ‘Why do you scold me more than my other three siblings?’ My mother hugged me and said, ‘I love you more than your other siblings.’" Immediately I asked Boro Maharaj, “Does that mean you are telling me that you love me more

than your other disciples?" He laughed and said, “Mother didn’t even give you that many brains to understand this." In Bengali, he said, “Ma Thakurun tomar mathay ki eituku bojhar buddhi den ni?"

It was really hard to catch him on the phone because of his busy schedule, and later because of his health. Once, I tried calling him for more than 20 days, but every time something came up, and I could not talk to him. I became very frustrated. When I finally got a chance to talk to him, the first thing I said was, “If I had called Thakur that many times, probably Thakur would probably have come to give me darshan. You are still alive, and I cannot get a chance to talk to you. When you are no longer alive, what will I do? “Maharaj replied, “I have never seen a disciple like you – asking her Guru, who is still alive, what she will do after his death’. Then he said to me, “Hold on to Holy Mother. She will always protect you." I said to told Maharaj, “If Mother listens to me, then why do I need a Guru?" I told him, “You have a very good connection with your Mother. When you pray for us, Mother always listens because you are her good child."

I am missing all the funny conversations I had with him. Since 2011, after my initiation from Boro Maharaj, it never happened that we started any special day without calling him and taking his blessings. The 25th of December 25th is Rai’s birthday. This was the first time (25 December 2025) that she started her day without Boro Maharaj’s blessing., and I felt such emptiness in my heart.

Boro Maharaj loved listening to Rabindra Sangeet. He told our daughter, Rai, to learn a few Rabindra Sangeet songs that were favourites of both Boro Maharaj and his Gurudev, Revered Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj. In July 2024, when we went to visit Boro Maharaj, Rai sang those songs for him. He was so happy that he blessed Rai by giving her two volumes of Gitabitan from his own collection. That was the most precious blessing for her – and for us.

For the last 16 years, it had become such a deep habit for me, that whenever there was anything very important – a serious matter, happiness, sadness, or anything at all – I always wanted to share it with Boro Maharaj. Just like little children who, after coming back from school, want to tell their parents everything that happened during the day, I used to feel the same way.

I tried to call him many times, but most of the time it would take several days before I could actually speak with him. One day I told him, “Maharaj, you are too old now. You should take some rest. You should stay only at the Sydney Ashram and do your work from there. Please do not travel." Maharaj listened to me and said, “Yes, at this age now I have to listen to you. I do Thakur’s work (Ore amake je Thakurer kaj korte hoi)." I told him - Maharaj, I know you are very happy to be with your Ma Thakurain, but please do not forget me. You have many disciples like me, but I have only one Guru like you. When someone talks about you, I feel like those children who feel so happy and proud when they hear their parents’ name.

I miss you, Maharaj. I still feel that I will receive a phone call and be able to speak with you again.

Ashita Mitra

Adelaide

Om Sree Guruvaye Namah

I first met my Guruji (Swami Sridharanandaji) nearly 13 years ago, when I went to the Dulwich community Hall to listen to his Bhagavad Gita talk for the first time. At first glance, when I saw him, I felt that I was standing in front of my “father" - tall, very pleasant, a smiling face looking at me and asking my name etc. It was one day before my special birthday. I vividly remember, someone introduced me to him and said, it was my birthday, the following day. He instantly blessed me.

That was the onset of a new journey of my life. Since then, I would regularly attend his Gita lectures, every month, without fail. Gradually I became very attached and my motivation towards the divine trinity flourished.

As time passed, I became a very active member of the Vedanta chapter of Adelaide. After 3 years of knowing him, I had the golden opportunity to obtain “Mantra Diksha" from the late Rev. Swamiji. My focus diverted more towards listening to his spiritual talks. Each time, when he visited Adelaide, I took every opportunity to be around him along with other devotees, Swamis & Brahmacharis, attending various talks and getting his guidance, as I needed him in every step of this journey. I visited him at the Sydney Ashram frequently along with my other dear friends regularly in recent years, when he could not come to Adelaide. Each time, we would discuss various spiritually focused topics. Sometimes he would recite the most suitable or appropriate shlokas from the Bhagavad. Gita.

My last visit to him was from Oct 20th - 23rd, 2025, when he told us the history and his experiences about how he established the Vedanta centre of Sydney from grass roots, till what it is today. It was amazing to hear and visualise, how difficult and challenging that task was. Gradually, over the years with his guidance, motivation and inspiration, all of us in Australia (various States) and New Zealand, are now blessed with our local Centres.

I sincerely follow his guidance, his instructions and I feel his presence and wisdom in every step of my life. You are my guide, my mentor, my Guru and my most trusted person. May you rest in peace Swamiji. I will always remember your kind words and guidance.

Chandra Rangnath

The quintessential *bhadralok* monk.

I remember attending his first lecture series in Canberra - it was on Mundaka Upanishad. Then a brief series on Patanjala Yoga Sutras. Subsequently, several classes on the Bhagavad Gita.

I can never forget that *bhadralok* bearing, the deep, resounding voice, the impeccable English, the deep and crystal-clear knowledge of the Shastra, the deep devotion to the Holy Trio, and, the compassion and the humanity manifesting through his soft-spoken words and the expressions on his face.

A true Mahatma. Fortunately, we can revisit and listen to most of his Sydney classes on Youtube.

Swamiji is in bliss at the feet of Holy Mother and Sri Thakur.

With kind regards,

Debanjali Sengupta

What Swamiji Sridharanandaji has meant to our family is difficult to capture in words entirely. We experienced his kindness at a delicate juncture in our life. My son, our only child, came to us after challenging personal circumstances, which reminds us daily of the Grace which invisibly influences our lives - Grace that we were able to experience directly through Swami Sridharanandaji at a point where our life felt like it was slipping through the cracks between a rock and hard place. At that time, Swamiji lent us light, hope and faith, which we needed most and were perhaps devoid of mustering ourselves. Swamiji was gentle in calling out what was the harsh truth - that there was no one else to blame, but ourselves. As our generation tends to do, we were running after a myriad achievements and ambitions. Can we really have it all or, can we not? We were grateful for so much but lacking in what we wanted most. The personal challenges we faced were life's way of teaching us lessons we needed to learn, the hard way.

It is no surprise that, when life feels like it is falling apart, we cling to faith, for hope and direction. Our faith gets strengthened when we hear the conviction of words said out aloud that “you will be okay." Swami Sridharanandaji’s words were like medicine at the time, and he told us to believe in the ways of the Divine and never were we to doubt that. When our son was born not long after, it felt like a prayer that had been answered directly through Swami Sridharanandaji.

There is a final anecdote that I would like to share, as I still remember it, often. Once when I visited Swamiji, I was seated in front of him in a spot where the sun shone directly in my eyes. The conversation went on briefly, but I kept fidgeting to guard my eyes. Swamiji paused; to point out that, this is a good example of something I could learn. When in an uncomfortable situation, there is no great benefit or reward in bearing with it endlessly. Instead, find a solution to the problem and act on it, promptly. With that advice, he made me shift my chair so that the sun was no longer in my eyes, and said “See, it is that simple. Do not make it a problem when it does not need to be." Point noted, I have drawn inspiration from this simple advice often. I remember this often.

We feel incredibly grateful to have had experienced Swami Sridharanandaji’s grace at a time we needed it most. We are humbled by his generosity towards us, and forever indebted to Swamiji for his spiritual guidance and blessing.

Deepali Mistry

Sydney

I would like to share this memory of Swami Sridharanandaji

On a cold evening in May 2001, just a month after arriving in Sydney, I first met Swamiji at Strathfield. From then on, I began attending his lectures at the Ashfield Ashram. Something in my life altered after this. From that day onward, he has been a guiding light for me. In January 2014, our family went through a tragic personal loss. During that time, Swamiji stood by us with unwavering strength. He gave us courage, offered teachings that helped us understand the nature

of the world and reality, and guided us to see life in a broader, deeper context. He encouraged us to look within, to rise above a tamasik (indolent) attitude, and to stay connected to clarity and purpose. After the loss, he met with us many times one-on-one, patiently teaching, supporting, and helping us cope. He guided us to move forward and embrace whatever life had to offer. Without his presence and wisdom, I would not be where I am today; my life might have taken a very different shape. The greatest lesson he taught me was the power of acceptance, purpose and living in the present moment.

I thank Swami Sridharanandaji again, for everything.

Dr Nandita Bhattacharya

Melbourne

Swami Sridharanandaji came to Melbourne in the early 1990s when he was introduced to all of us by Swami Damodaranandaji. His first talk mesmerised all of us, as we in Melbourne were very keen to get an opportunity to learn about the scriptures.

In those early days we used to host Salil Maharaj for a talk in our homes and invite our friends over to experience the magic of listening to the Swami. On one such occasion, I had invited a few of my friends and organised lunch for all. The word spread about Salil Maharaj's talk in my home, which was jammed with so many interested friends who heard it from their friends. There was literally no room to move, so friends packed into the balcony as well. We were very lucky that the caterer was able to accommodate all guests. My mother-in law was here with us. She and Salil Maharaj had the same guru, so they were related as guru brother and sister. There was a strong bond between the two of them.

We regularly started having Salil Maharaj coming to Melbourne as the President of the Vedanta Centre of Sydney. On one such occasion, Swamiji expressed a desire to have "Bewlir daal". I did not know what that was. He gave me the recipe to prepare that daal! His knowledge was not

confined to the scriptures; he also had special culinary skills. I was able to learn many specific preparations from him. His interest in a variety of sweets motivated me to experiment with preparing sweets like “mishti doi", gulab jamuns, sandesh, and payesh, among others.

Govindan, Suresh and I as a trio were always planning how to accommodate so many people interested in attending the invaluable lectures of Salil Maharaj. His magnetic presence motivated us to think up ways to arrange for lectures in public halls so that the many interested people could attend. We started by booking a hall in Holmesglen TAFE, moving subsequently to Monash University where plenty of parking was available. To defray these expenses, we started fund-raising with a concurrent intention of having a Melbourne Ashram.

Swami Sridharanandaji often repeated a very profound statement to all of us."We are all children of the Divine". This changes the perspective we have towards our fellow beings.

May Thakur bless Swami Sridharanandaji and take him in His arms. We shall always miss his presence in our lives. May he be one with the Divine.

Dr Saurav Mitra

Adelaide

My reminiscences of Revered Swami Sridharananda Maharaj (our Revered Salil Maharaj) date back to my childhood, when I was a sixth grader in Patna. In those days, every year, my older brother and I took part in the recitation competition organised by the Ramakrishna Mission Patna. I took part in the event with great joy and enthusiasm and won prizes in two consecutive years. On the day of the prize distribution, Revered Maharaj, our chief guest from the Lucknow Ramakrishna Mission, would present the prizes to the children. Now that I am a mature man, I remember receiving my certificate and prize with great joy and pride from Revered Swami Sridharanandaji. I vividly remember his encouraging smile. Much later, when I came to Australia and met Salil Maharaj, I told him about my reminiscences. He was very happy and asked me about the whereabouts of the then-President Maharaj of the Patna Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Chandranandaji, who happened to be one of his contemporaries.

Also, it is worth noting that Revered Maharaj was a contemporary and bosom friend of Revered Swami Vishuddhatmanandaji (Affectionately Known as Srikanta Maharaj from R K Mission in Tamluk, West Bengal), my mother’s maternal uncle. At a young age, he left home with Salil Maharaj to join the Ramakrishna Mission order in Kolkata. From that perspective, I had a special respect for and relationship with Salil Maharaj when I came to Australia in 2003.

Another interesting incident occurred in 2009, when my parents came to Adelaide. Salil Maharaj used to deliver talks three days a month in a hired community hall. On one such occasion, my parents and I went to listen to Salil Maharaj’s talk on the Patanjali Yogasutras at Dulwich Community Hall. After the talk, my parents went to meet and greet Maharaj. When my father

approached him, Maharaj immediately said, “I know your face but I cannot recognise you." My father was awestruck. My parents hail from Patna (Bihar) in India. My family is deeply devoted to the Ramakrishna Mission. My grandparents were initiated by Swami Sivanandaji. My parents were initiated by Swami Ranganathanandaji. They were regular devotees at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, Patna, and Swami Sridharanandaji visited the Patna Ashram from time to time. He also served as the minister in charge of the Patna Ashram in 1954. So, from his sharp memory, Maharaj could recognise my father from his association with the Ramakrishna Mission Patna (several decades ago), which was remarkable. Salil Maharaj’s talk was so profound that some of the words he spoke that day, my mother still remembers, and they still reverberate in her ear. Another instance reminds me of Swami Sridharanandaji’s sharp memory. Whenever Maharaj used to come to Adelaide, he would often ask me about a regular devotee named Bithika Sarkar at the Patna Ramakrishna Mission, with whom he had a long association dating back several decades. When Bithika di learnt of Maharaj’s genuine enquiries through me in Patna, she was very surprised that Salil Maharaj still remembered her.

Salil Maharaj’s talks continue to inspire me to this day in every walk of my life. His sharp, penetrating words on the “awareness of the presence of the divine, which is already within us" always echo in my ears.

Photo with Swami Sridharanandji with my parents Smt. Baby Mitra and Prof. Sandip Kumar Mitra in Dulwich Community Hall in the year 2009 (Source: personal collection)

Gayatri and Shreyas

India

First advice:

"Should I be a Monk or a patriot?" I was probably 12 years old, when I posed this question to Revered Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj! We were sitting right on the banks of the Narmada near Jhagadia, the town where we resided. It was early evening in the late 1980s. We had brought easy chairs and snacks of Gujarati mamra-sev that Maharaj used to relish. This meeting was called by my parents to request Maharaj's guidance. My parents, both initiated devotees, had a great faith in Maharaj; hence, important decisions always involved Maharaj. I, being just 12 years old, was immature. I used to read biographies of freedom fighters and monks. This created a dilemma whether to work for the country as a patriot or strive towards God realisation as a Monk. This dilemma possessed my 12-year-old mind. Hence, I posed this question to Maharaj: "Should I be a Monk or a patriot?" He smiled slightly with a bit of amusement at this question of a 12-year-old boy. "Be a man first! Then, decide whether you want to be a patriot or a Monk." As simple as that. He solved my problem. He brought resolution to my long standing, amusing dilemma. He conveyed a few more pieces of other advice that day. As it got darker, we folded our chairs and returned home. I did not realise then that this was one of the many existential questions that I would pose throughout the next four decades and receive answers to resolution. More importantly, I was to find out later from Maharaj that one does not need to choose between apparently opposite options (patriot or Monk, householder or Monk). He would later help us understand that the key lies in how we perform our duties, irrespective of being a householder or a Monk.

First interaction with my parents (Dr. Anil and Dr. Lata Desai, 1966):

My parents met Maharaj for first the first time around 1966 at the Lucknow Ramakrishna Ashram. I have heard this narrative multiple times from my parents, as well as from Maharaj. It was late afternoon on a hot summer day. My mother was posted to in Lucknow in the Indian Army. My father was visiting her from his own posting at Jhansi. He was inspired by the teachings of Sri Ramkrishna and Swami Vivekananda during his medical college days at Ahmedabad, India. Both doctors decided to join the army after the medical college, when there was a need for doctors, during the first India -Pakistan War. Maharaj was the first monk from the Ramakrishna Mission that they met on that day. My mother was tired and profusely sweating when she met Maharaj. She complained to Maharaj about my father that he made her walk such a long distance. It was a sweet quarrel among the couple. They immediately felt close to Maharaj and the conversation continued. My parents shared their desire to follow the ideals of Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji by working for the poor, after their education. "Are you married?" Maharaj asked them. "No. Not yet", said my embarrassed parents. Both had decided to get married during their internship. Now, it was Maharaj who was more embarrassed "Stupid of me for asking this question!", he would

recall saying many years later. After knowing that my parents were Gujaratis, he gave them a note and reference to of the Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, who was the President of the Rajkot Ramkrishna Mission, (and later the 15th President of the global Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Kolkata, India) and suggested that they visit Rajkot. After serving in the Army, they finished their postgraduation in general surgery and paediatrics. Subsequently, my parents met Revered Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj at Rajkot. He inspired them to get initiated by Revered Swami Vireshwaranandaji Maharaj right before my parents left for the USA in 1972 for further studies. For the next 10 years, there was almost no contact between my parents and Sridharanandaji Maharaj.

Contact reestablished (1980-2000):

My parents and their friends returned to India and started a non-profit organization, SEWA Rural, in 1980 in the rural-tribal Bharuch district of Gujarat. They were possessed by the ideals of Swami Vivekananda and Gandhiji. Soon after, they reconnected with Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj. Between 1980 and 2000, Maharaj visited SEWA Rural many times, and especially during situations when my parents often requested his guidance. He would come for a few days, have long conversations and offer solutions to whatever problems my parents presented. At times, it was an occasion of starting a new project and Maharaj arrived to bless us. Maharaj developed a direct connection with other members of SEWA Rural team. He invited them to visit Lucknow and its retreat centre. Once, he held a retreat for key members of SEWA Rural. I was still young when he visited SEWA Rural. However, I remember his visits as events of celebration, joy and laughter.

During our USA stay (2000-2009):

I moved to the US in 2000 for a postgraduation residency program. Around the same time, Maharaj was posted by the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission headquarters to Australia. to start a new centre. He started visiting the US every summer for retreats and lectures. One of the most important positive outcomes of our stay in the US was to be able to have high quality, intense Satsangs with Maharaj. We met him six times during his US visits at different locations. I deeply cherish these visits. He took deep interest in our spiritual well-being and this turned out to be a turning point in our lives.

It became a turning point, because Maharaj's articulation of how one can live a spiritual life really resounded with my wife and me. His articulation pierced our hearts and minds. We found a new way of living a spiritual life, in the midst of our householder lives. Few thoughts that he kept repeating were:

1. Convert each and every moment of life into a worship of the divine.
2. You are not this body-mind complex. You are the Brahman, the holy Ghost, the Ruh.
3. Be a pursuer of excellence in the work you do.
4. Do not be a slave of the three cardinal desires. Develop a fourth desire to offer everything to the Holy Trinity.

His lectures often repeated the same thoughts. This repetition of thoughts helped one to con-

solidate and then internalise the ideas. For the first time, we read the Bhagavad Gita and found a treasure. He instilled deep hope that one can live an intense spiritual life, in the midst of regular family and work life.

When I met him for the first time after getting engaged around 2002, it was at another devotee's home in Delaware. He asked me about my fiancée - Gayatri. As a newly engaged man, I started praising her. I even mentioned that Gayatri is a Vidya-Maya, not an Avidya-Maya! After a few minutes, I saw him smiling at me, when I was finished praising Gayatri. He said in his typical Lucknowi style "Aap to tarife kiye ja rahe ho, barkhurdar!". I got embarrassed! A few years later, however, Gayatri became his disciple and took initiation from him in at Sydney. His guidance and Gayatri's Guru-Shradhha greatly helped Gayatri's spiritual, family and work lives. She had developed regular contact with the Maharaj and I believe that she surpassed me in this regard.

Maharaj used to fondly remember one incident that occurred during our USA stay in the US. I was driving him from the Providence Centre in Providence to our home in New Jersey home. Maharaj loved French fries. He relished cherished anything made from potatoes, actually. So, we stopped at by a MacDonald's on the way as per his desire. I, in my inexperience, got only one serving of French fries and joined Maharaj in eating from the same serving consuming from the same serving. After a few moments, I suddenly stopped eating the fries, as when I realised my mistake of sharing food with a senior Monk without his consent. When he noticed that I had stopped eating, he asked me what had happened? After he asked several times, I conveyed to him that I made a mistake by ordering only one serving and sharing the same serving of fries with him. He had a hearty laugh at this and started having fun. "Am I an untouchable that you won't share fries with me?" He insisted that I shared same serving of fries. Over the years, he often heartily narrated this incident whenever we met.

Another incident demonstrates his love and which made us his own. We were driving Maharaj to Baltimore from our home in New Jersey home. He was in the passenger seat and Gayatri was sitting in the back seat. She was pregnant with our first child. Upon knowing of her pregnancy, Maharaj offered his Rudraksha mala first to Gayatri to put around her neck. The Rudraksha mala contained the holy nails of the Holy Mother and tufts of the hairs of the Guru Maharaj (Sri Ramakrishna)! It seems that he wanted to bless the baby that Gayatri was pregnant with. After a few minutes, he made me put on the Rudraksha mala around my neck. Gayatri and I got teary at this unexpected honour of being so close to the Holy Mother and Guru Maharaj. It was one of the most intimate spiritual experiences that we have ever had!

When we decided to move to India, he again counselled us in detail about how to work in an Indian context. Some of his advice made a big difference after we returned to India.

After moving to India (2010-2025)

After we returned to India, Maharaj continued to guide us remotely. Especially, Gayatri used to have regular phone calls with Maharaj. Over the years, Maharaj continued to remain a living presence in our personal lives.

We visited the Vedanta Centre at Sydney in 2020 just before the Covid epidemic. He came to pick us up from the airport in his usual characteristic style. I did not do know that he used to receive and drop devotees from the airports. It was a great lesson for us, seeing a senior Monk taking the trouble to show his affection. He also facilitated sightseeing in Sydney for us. I can never forget one intense session that we had with him that time. I was struggling with a few existential questions. Therefore, I sought Maharaj's guidance. He diagnosed my problem accurately and offered an effective treatment, which is still very helpful now. He emphasized the need to develop a correct attitude while fulfilling various personal and professional responsibilities. He advised me to develop a rock-solid conviction. Maharaj emphasized the need to offer everything that we do to Thakur, Ma and Swamiji. Maharaj went into detail about the Bhagavad Gita's phrase – *Yogah Karmashu Kaushalam*. His advice on that occasion, removed all my doubts and provided a clear way forward as usual.

We again visited Sydney in 2024. Upon our request, Maharaj had graciously agreed to initiate our two children, in spite of his ill health. During this visit, he guided us about Upasana (spiritual practices). Our 14-year-old daughter had some reservations about initiation, for which Maharaj found solutions in his characteristic and practical manner. His solutions provided a practical response to our daughter's dilemma and eventually she agreed to get initiated whole heartedly.

Three generations of our family have been blessed and guided by Maharaj. The relationship that started in 1965 on a hot summer day in Lucknow, eventually culminated on a cold winter day in Sydney. Before we departed, he put both his hands on each of our heads and blessed us. The time that we spent with Maharaj has been one of the most precious times of our lives. His presence changed us profoundly and positively. His words gave us direction. Most importantly, his love and warmth can never be forgotten. His smiling face will always be etched in our memory for a lifetime.

Gopinath Chattopadhyay

Brisbane

I am Gopinath (Gopi) Chattopadhyay, a humble, initiated devotee. My wife Kakoli was initiated by Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, our elder daughter Mimi was initiated by Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj and our younger daughter Shilpi was kindly initiated by Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj.

My association with the Ramakrishna Mission became closer after my initiation by Swami Damodaranandaji Maharaj, who introduced me to Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj in 1998, when Maharaj came to Brisbane and delivered an excellent public lecture at the University of Queensland. Thereafter, we had the privilege of organising his inspiring lectures at other universities, including the Queensland University of Technology, as well as in public halls across Brisbane. I had the privilege of picking him up from and dropping him off at Brisbane Airport whenever he visited permanently moving to Australia in 2000. We were also fortunate to host him at our home in Kenmore, Brisbane, from time to time, before we later moved to Gladstone.

Maharaj (Swami Sridharanandaji) constantly reminded us that we must strive to be better human beings.

Other core teachings he often emphasised were:

- Complete surrender to the Divine Power
- Performing every action as a service to God.

He also spoke about three types of sevaks.

1. The first type is the Adham Sevak, one who forgets and needs to be reminded again and again about what needs to be done. I often felt that I might belong to this category. For instance, whenever Maharaj asked me to leave home early to reach the airport well in advance, this Adham Sevak (me!) would ask, “Why so early, Maharaj?" He would patiently explain, “Devotees have paid for my flights. If I miss the flight, I would have to request them again, or they would have to bear the cost of another ticket. That is neither fair to them nor good for me. Instead, if I can reach earlier, I can wait for my flight, and do japa, rather than creating unnecessary stress by being late."
2. The second category is the Madhyam Sevak, efficient, capable, and sincere in service, but one who generally needs to be told or asked to perform seva.
3. The highest category is the Uttam Sevak, one who understands what is needed and is ready to serve even before being asked. Maharaj himself was in this category in every aspect of service, especially in service to his Guru (Swami Virajanandaji, the 6th President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission). Swami Sridharanandaji was a perfectionist and therefore expected nothing less than 100 per cent % from all of us.

In another aspect of his life, he was the embodiment of “mano, vachan, ekadhar" – oneness of thought, word, and action. He clearly expressed what he meant, what he liked, and what he did

not like.

On one occasion, he needed to come to our house before lunch to rest briefly before an afternoon lecture. He told my wife Kakoli, “Please do not torture me with kindness through food. Just a little bit of muri (puffed rice) and matar shuti (green peas). That’s all I need." I was always a little afraid of him, not out of fear, but out of deep respect, especially with respect of asking him unnecessary questions or deviating, even slightly from his instructions. We discussed what to do for lunch and decided to follow exactly what he had asked. He was extremely pleased and later recounted this story on many occasions with great joy.

We remember his extraordinary kindness to devotees on countless occasions. During one of his visits to Brisbane, I was unable to attend his lecture due to unavoidable circumstances. My wife Kakoli and our younger daughter Shilpi were overseas, and our elder daughter Mimi also had work commitments. Maharaj had some time before going to the airport and requested one of the devotees to stop briefly at our house. He wanted to make sure that we were ok. It was a delightful and unexpected surprise. With his gracious, childlike smile, he said, “All the devotees usually come to see me, but today I have come to see the devotees who could not come." I said, “It must be due to our punya (good deeds) from our past lives, Maharaj, that a person like you has come to our home as an Atithi, Narayan (God as a guest) in human form."

I did not realise that this would be a “loose ball," which he would smilingly hit beyond the boundary for a six! He immediately responded, “That is true, my dear, you must have done some good deeds work in your past lives. But that is not enough. You must do more in this life to realise the goal of life: Tat Tvam Asi (You are That)." Caught off guard, I replied, “I will try, Maharaj." He smiled and said, “Just trying is not good enough, my dear." To cut the story short, he explained that realisation requires:

- *Sravanam* – Listening
- *Mananam* – Reflection
- *Nididhysanam* – Deep contemplation and absorption

He was a realised soul, yet so humble that he never spoke about himself. He spoke only about the Holy Trinity: Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swamiji Maharaj, about the well-being of devotees, and about the goal of life: *tmano mokrtham jagad-hitya ca*.

After Since COVID (2023), our interactions became fewer. This was, mainly due to his travels during our short stays in Sydney and restrictions on his public appearances and because of his age -related health issues. In November 2025, we visited the Sydney Ashram. Kirit bhai kindly facilitated the meeting, and Maharaj graciously spoke with us for some time. Unsure whether he still remembered me, I asked him. As always, he smiled and said, “How can I forget you, my friend? We have known each other since the first time I came to Brisbane."

In our final meeting that November, Maharaj was immensely kind, and Kirit bhai was most helpful in arranging a photograph together. We were allowed to stay until the end of visiting hours. I requested permission to express my true feelings, and it was graciously granted. I repeat

here what I said then:
"*Twameva Mata Cha Pita Twameva*
Twameva Bandhus Cha Sakha Twameva
Twameva Vidya Dravinam Twameva
Twameva Sarvam Mama Deva Deva

You are my mother, You are my father
You are my family, You are my friend
You are my knowledge, You are my wealth
You are everything to me, O Lord of Lords"

We will miss you, Maharaj. We will always remember you as a realised soul, who carried forward the sacred yajña (sacrifice) of spreading the message of Vedanta and the Holy Trinity - Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swamiji Maharaj across Australasia. Thank you, Maharaj. You are, and will always remain, in our hearts until our last breath and beyond.

Jay Thakur.

Namaskar.

Gouranga Dasvarma

Adelaide

I was destined to receive my Initiation from Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj. I did not think of receiving my spiritual initiation or Diksha from anyone; in spite of my wife Nandita (also known as Gopa) receiving her Initiation from Sri Mohanananda Maharaj of the Deoghar and Sri Balananda Ashram. My eldest brother, a deeply religious man himself was astonished that I did not ask to be initiated when my wife received her initiation. My reason for not getting initiated was my belief that one's parents were one's Parama Gurus, therefore there was no need for another Guru.

Then I met Swami Sridharananda ji! He was visiting Adelaide to lecture give lectures on the Bhagavad Gita. I was awestruck at the extent and depth of his knowledge, his eloquence, and the simplicity with which he explained the Shlokas. I made it a point to attend his lectures whenever he visited Adelaide. Swamiji was an epitome of humility. At the end of a lecture, he would meet with the devotees who conveyed their respects by touching his feet. I had problems with my knees. and Swamiji was aware of this. Hence, he would insist that I did not bend down to touch his feet; instead, he would shake hands with me and exchange pleasantries. My views about Diksha (spiritual initiation) started to change after meeting with Swamiji and listening to his lectures. I began reasoning with myself that my parents would still be my Parama Gurus even after my Diksha. In; but in addition, I would have my spiritual Guru. completing the trinity of Param

Gurus a man should have. After all, my parents had also received their initiation from a spiritual Guru, and they would have been happy to see me getting initiated. With this change in my views about Diksha, I decided that if I ever had to seek initiation, I would receive it only from Swami Sridharanandaji. In other words, meeting and speaking with Swamiji made a momentous change in my views on Diksha. I spoke to my wife about it, who was immensely happy at my change of heart and remarked that one's Guru is preordained which explains why I did not ask for initiation from her Guru when she received her Diksha. The next step for me was to wait for an opportunity to request Swami Sridharanandaji to give me Diksha. That opportunity came when Swamiji was visited Adelaide and stayed at the newly acquired property of the Vedanta Centre on Glynburn Road, where a shrine had been installed after the sacred consecration ceremony. The place had no cooking facilities and devotees took turns to bring food for the resident and visiting Swamis. Destiny gave my wife and myself the opportunity to bring lunch for Swami Sridharanandaji one day during his visit. Swamiji was alone at the Centre when we brought lunch. We set the table and invited Swamiji to have his food. But he insisted that we eat with him at the same table. As Swamiji and we spoke the same language, Bengali, we all conversed in Bengali as we ate. I saw this as the moment I was praying for and expressed my wish for initiation. Swamiji was highly pleased and told me in Bengali: "etoh khub bhalo khobor"(this is very good news!) and asked me to wait for further instructions after his return to Sydney regarding the date and time for the initiation. During our conversation over lunch, he narrated how, after he had completed his Engineering degree, he had informed his father of his decision to join the Ramakrishna Order.

After returning to Sydney, Swamiji sent a copy of the two-volume set of the book “Ramakrishna Lila Prasanga", an authentic Bengali biography of Thakur Sri Ramakrishna, written by his direct monastic disciple Swami Saradananda. Swamiji asked me to read these before the initiation. I will cherish this gift all my life. I received my initiation on 12 January 2019 at the Vedanta Centre of Sydney I was fortunate to be the sole receiver of Diksha on that occasion. This opportunity was envied by many of my relatives and friends back in India where it is common to have initiation in groups. My meetings with Swamiji after my initiation were not as frequent as I would have liked them to be, as Swamiji lived in Sydney and we in Adelaide. The outbreak of Covid-19 and its associated restrictions limited our meetings, even when we could visit the Ashram in Sydney. However, I endeavoured to communicate with him via e-mail (or telephone when possible), and he always responded, sometimes with recorded voice messages where he would address me as “Sneher Bhai Gouranga"(affectionate brother Gouranga). That deep and loving voice continues to resonate in my ears. Swamiji had a divine ability to make people feel close to him. He always treated my wife as his own disciple even though she was initiated by Sri Mohanananda Maharaj more than 20 years before my initiation.

My acquaintance with Swamiji was short compared to many other devotees who have many more memories to share. The Vedanta Centre of Sydney and devotees around the world have recorded Swamiji’s lectures and posted them on YouTube, creating a vast reservoir of wisdom. My capacity to draw from this huge reserve is limited, but I have no regrets as I can listen to those lectures and watch those videos frequently to quench my thirst for inspiration and knowledge. “My cup is small, but I can drink oftener".

Govindan S. Aiyer

Melbourne

It is with a heavy heart that we reflect on the departure of our beloved Reverend Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj (Hereafter called the Swami), affectionately known as Salil Maharaj. While his passing is an irreparable loss to our community, his teachings and the moments of grace we shared remain etched in our hearts. To know the Swami was to witness a rare blend of profound spirituality, practical wisdom, and deep human compassion.

A Providential First Meeting My journey with the Swami began in the year 2000 at Myrna Street, Strathfield. On the advice of the late Sri Tapesh Gangopadhyay then President of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Victoria, I travelled to Sydney to request the Swami to visit Melbourne.

Upon meeting him, I was struck by a powerful sense of déjà vu. He bore a striking resemblance to Swami Siddhatmanandaji Maharaj, the former warden of the Ramakrishna Mission Students Home in Chennai, where I had once been a student. I found him in a humble, cramped space, sitting on the floor and focused on his writing. That meeting sparked an association that would

span over two decades. By 2001, our Melbourne lecture series commenced. My early service was simple – picking him up from the airport and ensuring his safe transit – but these moments allowed for a growing bond between a master and a seeker.

"Daivam Manusha Rupena": God in Human Form

One of the most transformative moments of my life occurred on 22 February 22, 2002. During the Swami's Bhagavad Gita lecture at Monash University's Rotunda Hall., I suddenly felt a wave of illness and I rushed out to the lawn, unaware that I was in the midst of a massive heart attack. As I lay in the hospital awaiting a complex five-way bypass surgery, the specialists were hesitant given the severity of the blockages. Then, the unexpected happened. On 28 February 28th, the day before my surgery, the Swami flew down from Sydney specifically to see me. The image is still vivid: the Swami took his Japa mala (prayer beads) into his palm, chanted silently, and placed it upon my head. An overwhelming surge of emotion washed over me; I felt a profound stillness. Truly, as the saying goes, "*Daivam manusha rupena*" – God visited that hospital ward in the form of a man.

The Visionary and the Healer

Following my recovery, the Swami visited my home for a traditional South Indian Brahmin lunch. Our conversation turned towards medical procedures, a subject he spoke on with immense authority. This wasn't just theoretical. For years, the Swami had built and managed the massive Vivekananda Polyclinic in Lucknow from the ground up. Inspired, I travelled to Lucknow in 2006. With the Swami's letters of introduction, my family and I were treated with immense kindness at the Belur and Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Lucknow Centres. Walking through the Vivekananda Polyclinic, I saw firsthand the scale of his visionary work. He was not just a monk; he was a builder of institutions that served humanity.

Realising the Dream of an Ashram

One of the Swami's great desires was for the Melbourne Vedanta community to have its own home. I recall my dear friend and mentor, "Paulsaab"(Sri Santosh Kumar Paul), once expressing his fear that he would not see an Ashram established in his lifetime. I consoled him, saying, "It will happen soon, and you, the Swami, and I will sit side-by-side singing the Aarati." That prophecy came true. Through the Swami's guidance and our collective efforts, we secured our first property in Vermont, Victoria. I will never forget that evening: Paulsaab, the Swami, and I sitting together, singing the Khandana (Aarati song). It was then that I discovered the Swami's mesmerizing, soulful singing voice. Later, as the community grew, we transitioned to our more spacious current home in Ringwood East, Victoria, a place, the Swami loved dearly.

Glimpses into History

During a drive to the Dandenong Hills, I had the rare privilege of a long "interview" with the Swami about his life. He shared stories of his journey to Tiruvannamalai to meet Sri Ramana Maharishi before joining the Ramakrishna Mission. Most remarkably, he confirmed that as a young boy, he had an opportunity to meet the legendary freedom fighter Netaji Subhash Chandra

Bose, when his uncle took him to the freedom fighter's house. I often told him that he was destined to complete a full 120-year cycle of life (Vimshottari Dasha), much like the great reformer Ramanujacharya. While he left us sooner than I had hoped, the richness of his life was complete.

Practicality of Teachings

What stands out most among the Swami's teachings is the practicality of his messages. No philosophical intricacies, no scholastic eloquence, but a simple message for everyday life – "You are in Him, He is in You" – Vedanta as presented by Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. The result is to make oneself "a better specimen of a human being", as he put it. It was a "Harmony of Integral Yogas", the blending of the emotional, rational, ingenuity and strong will power blended harmoniously, as the great Swami Vivekananda wanted, But it was presented to us in simplistic language by Revered Swami Sridharanandaji.

A Personal Legacy

If I have one regret, it is that I never asked him why he did not publish more of his own written commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita or the Upanishads. He was a master of these scriptures, revered by his peers in the Ramakrishna Order for his clarity. Yet, beyond the scholar and the leader, it is the man I miss. The Swami often preferred a warm hug over a formal prostration (sashtanga namaskaram). The way he called me "Baiya"(brother) still rings in my ears.

Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj's life was a testament to humility, compassion, and tireless dedication. Though he is no longer with us in person, his spirit is the foundation upon which our community stands.

Om Shanthi, Shanthi, Shanthi.

Harshita Bhatt

Swami Sridharanandaji was a disciple of Swami Virajanandaji, who was a disciple of Holy Mother. Swamiji was deeply rooted in Holy Mother. He used to describe how, whenever he faced great difficulties, he would pray to Her and find his prayers answered.

It is not possible to put my feelings into words. He was larger than life. Words will not be sufficient to describe his greatness and intellectual legacy.

My journey started in 1980 when we were living in a small country town near Dubbo. I was told that Swami Ranganathanandaji was going to hold a retreat in Leura, near Katoomba. I went alone to attend the retreat. I met Swami Ranganathanandaji and made an immediate connection. That was my first point of contact with the Ramakrishna order. Throughout my childhood, I was always very inspired by Swami Vivekananda and had read about Guru Maharaj (Ramakrishna Paramhamsa) and Holy Mother. Swami Ranganathanandaji told me that he was going to send Mataji in six months and then somebody else later on. That somebody was our Sridharanandaji Maharaj. I did not know about him until 2002. But once we came to know about him, we started

attending his lectures in Strathfield Bowling Club, Augusta Street. We saw Swamiji at the Ashram at 62 Redmyre Road, Strathfield, and introduced ourselves – that's how our journey began. It went from strength to strength. We became his disciples. We felt very honoured and privileged that he chose us to look after him. Then, the journey continued when the Ashram moved to Ashfield, where Patanjali Yogasutra was taught. We would finish our work, and rush to attend the lectures. That was a very enjoyable time for us. The next chapter started when Ashram was relocated to the current address in Ermington. We enjoyed coming to Gita classes on Sunday mornings and Mundak Upanishad on Wednesday evenings. We learnt a lot, and we still have a lot to learn. We felt loved and blessed by Him. We felt personal warmth.

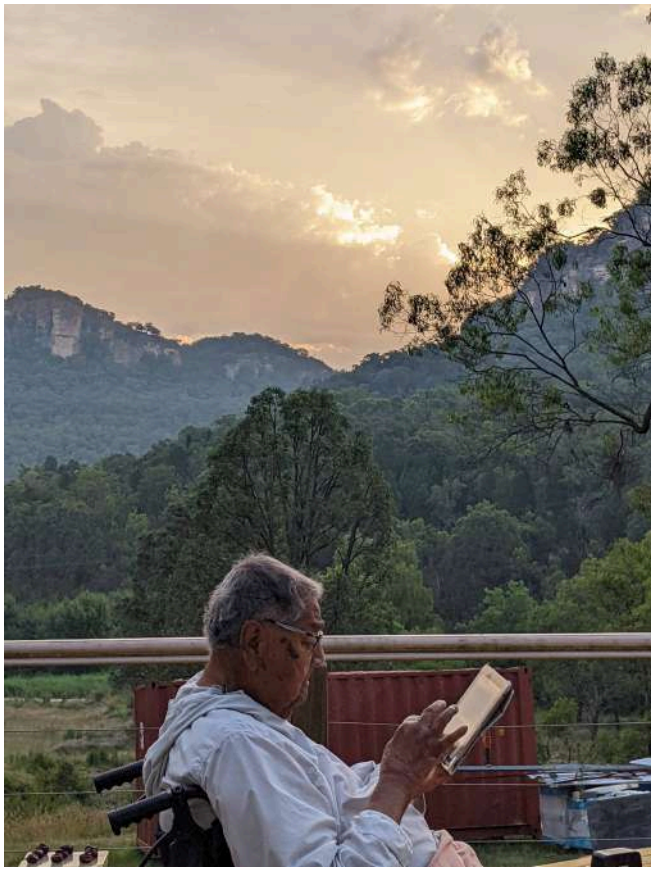
I would like to share a few anecdotes. Swamiji had a sweet tooth. My husband, Dr Nalin Bhatt, used to make shrikhand, a typical Gujarati sweet-dish, for Swamiji. Swamiji would look at me with a cheeky smile and ask me "is it Asli or Nakali"? I had to convince him that yes, it is Asli (meaning it was not made with an artificial sweetener, but with real sugar!)

Swamiji used to tell us lots of stories about the time before he took Sanyasa. He often talked about how he cared for his guru, Swami Virajanandaji. His company was not only enlightening but very enjoyable.

When my husband wanted to visit Belur Math in 2016, Swamiji organised the whole pilgrimage for us. The last stop was Lukhnow Ashram. Swamiji had been the brainchild behind the construction of this magnificent Ashram, designing it himself. Swamiji had told us in Hindi that "*mazdur ki taraha kaam kia tha*" which means, he worked just like the labourers. He designed each and every part of the Ashram with perfect precision. The auditorium was excellent, with all the details perfectly symmetry and with perfect acoustics. There were still lots of former staff and old devotees there who remembered Swamiji and spoke fondly of him. They told us about how he used to climb the construction site himself, just like the builders, to check the work was proceeding as planned. We went on Shivaratri day while there was a program with beautiful Bhajans. As I was sitting in the auditorium, I was reminded of the very famous Tejpal auditorium in Mumbai, but felt that this one was even better than that. In the construction of the Lukhnow Ashram, everything was beautifully planned and executed. Just before the gardens could be finished, Swamiji was asked to come to Australia. Those gardens are still unfinished. Nobody there has his vision.

Swamiji walked the Path with grace and unwavering discipline. When he came to Australia, there was nothing and He had to establish an Ashram from scratch. There were lots of difficulties. But during His time here, he managed to establish Ashrams in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Canberra, even one in Auckland (NZ). That proves he lived a life in the service of Guru Maharaj, and in the service of Truth.

Swamiji's message is to see the Divinity in everyone. I remember Swamiji's signature phrases, like 'man making', 'character building', 'noble ideas', and how Vedanta teaches that by absorbing and assimilating these ideas, the quality of our personality and life will improve.



Swamiji's message was: "We are children of the Divine. We are pure Existence, pure Consciousness, and Divine Bliss, Atma. Sat Swaroop,Chit Swaroop, Anand Swaroop, Atma. This is our true original nature."

I will definitely miss him a lot; His smile, his warmth and his sincerity. Although his physical form is no more, his teachings will remain in my heart forever.

Hiren and Asima Mukhopadhyay

Perth

Asima and I first met Revered Swami Sridharanandaji, our respected 'Boro Maharaj', in Sydney in 2001, after when he came from Lucknow to Australia in October 2000, to assume responsibility for establishing the Vedanta Centre of Sydney in Australia. It was indeed an auspicious occasion, the formal inauguration of the Ramakrishna Mission Centre at the Stratified home of Mr and Mrs Ramakrishna. From that sacred beginning, our lives were profoundly enriched and blessed by his loving guidance, compassionate presence, and wise counsel. That same year, after obtaining our Permanent Residency (PR), we migrated to Australia; yet we found ourselves in a dilemma about whether this land (Australia) should truly become our home. We approached Boro Maharaj Swamiji with our concerns, and with deep affection and understanding, he offered us advice that was immensely helpful and reassuring. Boro Maharaj remained a constant source

of inspiration throughout our spiritual journey. Asima was especially blessed to receive 'Mantra Diksha' (Spiritual initiation) from him. He often reminded us that to attain the highest goal in life, one must cultivate indomitable willpower and rock-solid conviction. These were not merely words of inspiration; they were but a living reflection of his own life – marked by unwavering faith, inner strength, and selfless dedication. Boro Maharaj's Swamiji's presence was always uplifting, radiating warmth, love, and quiet dignity. His wisdom inspired countless seekers. We feel particularly fortunate to have attended some of his enlightening classes on the Bhagavad Gita, where his clarity of thought and depth of realisation left an indelible impression on our hearts and minds. In the journey of life, we meet many people, but there are a few rare and blessed souls who remain with us forever, even after they have left their physical form. 'Boro Maharaj' was one such great soul – one who will forever reside in our hearts, guiding and inspiring us through his life and teachings.

Jay Thakur!

Sri Ramakrishnaya Samarpanamastu!

Ishwarya Swaminathan

Sydney

Swami Sridharananda's Mundaka Upanishad classes and the Bhagavad Gita classes drew me in and illuminated spirituality as simply common sense. One thing I will always remember about Swami Sridharanandaji Swamiji is that he asked us not to be swayed by the poetry of the Sanskrit language, but to focus on the messages being conveyed.

Swamiji did not simply talk about spirituality, but he brought it to life using easy to understand examples. His oratorical skills were phenomenal and most importantly he was a living example of his teachings. I remember how in every class, Swamiji used to set everything neatly on his desk, his calm and unhurried approach and his kind address to everyone as "Dear Friends …"

Swamiji's compassion was conveyed in his warm welcome to all who came to him. He had an amazing memory for the small details and made each one feel that they were the children of the Divine by giving everyone his full attention.

Everyone knew that Swamiji was a Karma Yogi and a living example of what Karma Yogai means. But to me, what stood out most, was his compassion for everyone. all souls and the confidence he instilled in everyone that the spiritual goals are attainable if only one puts in the efforts required and makes an "attitudinal correction".

Swamiji's words continue to inspire me and I am grateful to the Divine to have given me the great privilege to meet Swami Sridharanandaji. Pranam Swamiji.

Julia Gan

In 2011, I began to study the Sanskrit language as an adult learner. The journey led me somehow to visit the Sydney Vedanta Centre in late 2012, where I met Swami Sridharanandaji. Subsequently, I returned to the uplifting and peaceful Vedanta Centre many times to learn more about the Vedanta. I was fortunate to be able to attend some of Swami Sridharanandajis talks on the Bhagavad Gita.

It was my impression that Swami Sridharanandaji was a dedicated and astonishingly capable spiritual teacher and administrator.

When the Covid19 pandemic hit it became more difficult to visit the Vedanta Centre but the teachings remain accessible online. Though I was unable to visit, it was uplifting to know that Swamiji was still there. Having been sent to Australia to continue the work, Swami Sridharanandaji had remained in this country for the rest of his life and continually helped us all.

On 13th December 2025, Swami Sridharanandaji left the body and reached the lotus feet of the Lord.

This devotee has come from a worldly background and yet can still feel the call of the Vedanta.

Kalyan Balakrishnan

Sydney

I am really humbled to write a small piece on Revered Swami Sridharanandaji who is the Guru for my wife Usha and myself.

Let me begin with an anecdote that Swamiji (Revered Swami Sridharanandaji) shared with Usha and me some time back.

About 75 plus years earlier, a young man named Sri Salil Kumar Barat completed his Mechanical Engineering degree from Calcutta (now Kolkata). Being spiritually inclined and like many such persons from the east, he decided to visit Pondicherry and spend a day at Sri Aurobindo's

Ashram. He did this but found that the atmosphere did not awaken any serious spiritual inspiration. Accordingly, he got on the train to Madras (now Chennai) to connect to the train from there to Calcutta. On the train, he met two elderly gentlemen, and they got into a conversation. Understanding the strong spiritual bent of the young man and his quest, one of them suggested that he accompany them to Tiruvannamalai and spend some time in the august presence of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Sri Salil was unsure as his father was expecting him back at Calcutta the next day. But the gentleman, who was a senior railway official, assured him that he would put him on the same train the following day and also message his father that he was coming a day late.

Then the young man went to the Ramana Ashram and was quite mesmerised by the atmosphere and the benign aura surrounding Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi. As most of you know, Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi spoke very little and it was his penetrative eyes and the meditative silence of the prayer room that kindled spirituality. Before departing, the boy went to offer his pranams (salutations) to Bhagawan, when he (Ramana Maharshi) looked at him and said – Go to Ramakrishna.

And the rest – as they say – is history.

The young man was our own beloved Swami Sridharanandaji who later rose to become one of the pillars of the Ramakrishna Order and the leader of the Vedanta Movement in Australia.

Our meeting with Revered Swami Sridharanandaji was willed by the Divine. About 15 years back, I was going through a rough patch and my wife and I shared this with Mataji Radhikananda Saraswati, then known as Brahmacharini Sujathaji, with whom we were very close. She said that she would take us to a place which would calm our minds and we would meet a spiritual person who would influence our lives positively. We came to the Ashrama and after the Aarati, met Revered Swami Sridharanandaji sitting in his familiar chair at the end of the corridor of the demountable structure (the temporary shrine that was used during the construction work). After sharing our concerns, he looked at me and said – “Be divine centric and not ego centric". This has been my personal Mahavakya whenever I faced a challenging situation – helping to raise myself from the mundane issues.

Over the last 15 years, my wife and I have interacted with Swamiji on innumerable and memorable occasions which included our receiving Diksha from him. He made me take to the podium many times for different functions and developed my dormant skills. He pulled me out of retirement and asked me to contribute to the Institute of Higher Learning, as my offering to the Divine and to the Ramakrishna Mission. These are just some of the ways in which he energised me.

I do not wish to restate his great qualities of head and heart, as all those whose lived with him or whose lives he has touched would know. However, I would like to focus on one maxim that he often liked to quote from about Swami Vivekananda, which was – “Man Making and Character Building". Revered Swami Sridharanandaji was truly a Maker of Men and Women, and a Builder of Character.

Many years, back, during the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Swami Vivekananda

(2011-2013), I was asked to speak at our Sydney Vedanta Centre. In my humble way, I summarised some of the key principles enunciated by Swamiji that would lead to Man Making and Character Building. In my view, there have been few individuals whose lives demonstrated these principles, as done by Revered Swami Sridharanandaji. While I will refrain from elucidating all of them, I pick a few to state my case.

The first one is to “Arise and Awake". It is important to realise that each one of us is pure. One should never think of oneself as weak or incapable. Revered Swami Sridharanandaji was a living example of this, as demonstrated by his ability to raise people and tap into their hidden potentialities and skills enabling them to rise above the ordinary. This is exemplified by the contribution of many of us to the Vedanta Movement in Australia – – something we would never have thought possible

Another principle is that “All power is within you". Swamiji Vivekananda’s message here is to remind us of our true nature – - to remember the message of Vedanta – – I am Sat Chid Ananda (Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute). Revered Swami Sridharanandaji, through his innumerable Sunday morning sessions and the one-on-one sessions with many a devotee, strengthened our belief that that we are the Divine. His life was a living example of the manifestation of the divinity which within him. Through this he enabled so many of us to have “faith in ourselves".

The next tenet of Swami Vivekananda is to “Be strong and fearless". Swami Vivekananda’s message here is that “Strength is life. Weakness is death." Revered Sridharanandaji was again a torch bearer of this principle. Who but him could dare to travel the world in his nineties. Who but him could brave all odds to undertake new ventures and surmount financial challenges: – be it the establishment of Vedanta Centres across Australia, the spiritual retreat centre (in Growee, New South Wales) or the Institute of Higher Learning. He had conviction in the unending truth of the Upanishads, “That the sun cannot dry, the fire cannot burn, the sword cannot kill, for I am the birth-less, the death-less, the ever-living Spirit."

Another principle is to “Always entertain positive thoughts". Thought is the propelling force within us. Swami Vivekananda asks us to think that we are the infinitely powerful Atman, – and then see what strength comes out. Revered Swami Sridharanandaji always said - “You are all Children of Immortality." He never let any negative thoughts enter his own mind or in our minds. He always believed in the power of the Holy Trinity, and letting positive, strong, helpful thoughts stay in our minds. He was a living example of the Sthithapragya or person of “steady wisdom" as described by Sri Krishna in the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

A further entreaty of Swami Vivekananda is to “Seek God within and see the God in all". Swami Vivekananda stressed that as long as one thinks of the Divine as separate from oneself, you do not know Him. For He is one’s Self. Revered Swami Sridharanandaji refused to believe that people were bad. He always encouraged us to look at the various good qualities and took personal interest in enhancing these and removing the not so desirable qualities. He was a tower of patience and truly saw the divine in every person.

Yet another important character-building teaching stressed by Swami Vivekananda is to “Carry the light of knowledge." No one in my memory has done this better than Revered Swami Sridharanandaji. He truly believed that Vedanta needs to be carried into our everyday life – city, country, nation, home - everywhere. Through his endless, and tireless service and expositions he carried the light of knowledge to every door – to raise the divinity hidden in every soul. At his funeral, I met a few individuals who had attended his sessions in the formative years of the Vedanta Centre at Ashfield (New South Wales). Revered Swami Sridharanandaji’s teachings still reverberated within them in their hearts, even though although they had not attended any session in the last fifteen years.

Revered Swami Sridharanandaji’s life truly exhibited Swami Vivekanda’s entreaty to work to realise more and more the Vedantic ideal of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature. He was truly a Maker of Men and a Builder of Character.

Be Divine centric and not ego centric – he pleaded. You will then become in his own words - a better specimen of a human being.

Kamal Bhatt

Sydney

In 2005, we came to know from a friend about the Bhagawad Gita classes at Ashfield Bowling Club. That is when we first got the opportunity to listen to Rev. Swami Sridharanandaji. It was immediately very obvious to notice his command over the subject matter and ability to simplify the complex scripture like the Bhagawad Gita. From then, his magnetic personality and our interest in the scripture started to draw us towards him.

In 2006, I met him personally at the Sydney Airport with my family where he had come to receive a Swamiji from India. Although our encounter at the Gita class 6 months earlier was very brief, Swamiji surprised us with his powerful memory, remembering my name and where we had met many months ago.

We were very fortune to have Swami Sridharanandaji, Swami Damodaranandaji and other Swamijis of Vedanta centre at our home for a few occasions. Swamiji’s loving and compassionate approach attracted my kids towards him. He took an acute interest in their school projects and hobbies.

I always felt a divine aura around Swamiji. Just his presence alone had a powerful calming effect whenever my mind was agitated. Swamiji’s words always comes to my mind as soon as I open the Bhagawad Gita and the Mundaka Upanishad. One of Swamiji’s favourite quotes was “Atyantik Dukh Nivrutti and Param Sukh Prapti", which I will never forget for my whole life. The ultimate aim of Vedanta philosophy is to achieve Param Sukh Prapti.

In the last 20 years, Maharaj has showered lots of blessings onto our family in difficult times and has helped us to improve our spiritual understanding. We feel very grateful to God to have known and been guided by such a Self-Realised Saint like Rev. Swami Sridharanandaji. We will always feel his divine presence every time we visit the Sydney Ashram.

Our Pranams – Kamal, Trupti, Smit and Kunal.

Ketki Vinayachandra

Singapore

Some souls do not merely pass through our lives – they become our shelter. They walk the earth so quietly, so self-effacingly, that one realizes they have been in the presence of the Divine made human. Our dearest Guruji, Most Revered Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj, was one such soul.

When I first met him in Sydney in 2003, I was a student who had arrived alone in a foreign land. I came from a protected family, with no contacts in Sydney, and Swamiji was approximately seventy-eight years old then – outwardly simple, inwardly vast. I was merely looking for a place to stay. Without hesitation, he offered me a small room in the house next to the ashram. At the time, I thought he had given me accommodation. In truth, he had given me shelter – the kind only a Guru can give.

It took me one and a half years to even consider speaking to him. Life had made me wary, cautious, inwardly guarded. Yet I will never forget my first meeting with him on the verandah of the Ashfield Ashram. He did not ask questions. He did not probe. He simply looked at me – and in that gaze, I felt completely seen. Without my saying a word, he understood what I carried in my heart. It was as though he could read my mind and soul effortlessly, without intrusion, without judgment. That was my first glimpse of his divine connectedness – a connection so natural to him that he never made a display of it.

From that day onwards, he nurtured me in every possible way – materially, emotionally, spiritually. I did not need to explain myself to him. He knew me inside out. Often, when I went to him seeking guidance in difficult situations, he would gently say, “Let me think about it." Later, he would return with clarity so profound, so precise, that I realized he had not merely “thought" – he had “meditated", he had conversed with the Divine, and he had brought back an answer meant exactly for me. His guidance was never impulsive, never emotional – it was anchored in stillness, discernment, and grace.

To me, Swamiji was far more than a Guru – he was a Guardian to My Soul, in a way that even biological parents cannot always be. His love was unconditional, boundless, and utterly selfless. When I first arrived at the Ashram, I was amazed to see how people gravitated toward him – seekers, devotees, professionals, students, householders, monks. His personality was utterly magnetic. And what amazed me even more was this: every single person who came into contact with him walked away feeling deeply loved, deeply cared for, and deeply understood – not merely in a material or emotional sense, but in a profoundly spiritual way. He met each soul where they were, yet gently lifted them higher.

Swamiji often spoke of a story – of three types of elevated monks who visited a village. The first passes through the village absorbed in his own sadhana. The second teaches and instructs. But the third – while firmly established in his spiritual life – goes out of his way to care for the villagers, to comfort them, to ensure their well-being before continuing his journey. The villagers love this monk deeply, because he makes them feel held. Swamiji did not merely narrate this story – he embodied it completely. His compassion was active, lived, tangible.

Yet, despite this ocean of love, he was deeply practical. He would always say that one must think rationally, clearly, and realistically – not be swayed by temporary emotions or impulses. This rare balance – of immense love combined with uncompromising practicality – is something I still find unfathomable. He never encouraged dependency; instead, he strengthened us from within. His corrections were firm when needed, his discipline exacting – because he knew that true growth requires both tenderness and truth.

When I left Sydney to return home to Singapore, I told him – with the audacity only a child can muster – that if I were ever to take initiation, it would only be from him, and from no one else. I even told him that if I did not get initiated, it would be his fault. Today, I smile at my own boldness. But such was his love that he did not rebuke me. Instead, in 2007, he called me back to Sydney and gave me shelter at his sacred feet through initiation. His love was gentle, divine, and unconditional – yet as a Guru, he also schooled me, sometimes sternly, always precisely. He was the ultimate teacher – giving each disciple exactly the lessons they needed for their spiritual evolution.

Swamiji often reminisced about his own Gurudev, Most Revered Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj, describing him as a strict taskmaster who trained him to perfection in every aspect of life and service. And we could see that training reflected in our beloved Guruji. He was perfection itself

– from the smallest detail, such as the way he placed objects on his table, to the execution of the largest projects. I vividly recall the inauguration of the Sydney Ashram at Ermington – Swamiji was in the shrine hall, tirelessly directing volunteers, personally overseeing every minute detail of the shrine decorations, ensuring that each offering was worthy of the Divine.

I was blessed beyond measure to travel with him on road trips – those journeys, those silences, those moments of shared presence are priceless treasures etched into my soul. His life itself was extraordinary – a living textbook of how to walk the spiritual path while fully discharging one's duties in the world. Those who were close to him, especially his initiated disciples, could clearly see that his life was not ordinary by any measure – it was exemplary, luminous, and deeply instructive.

Though Swamiji left his physical body on 13 December a few days short of a Glorious 100 earthly years, he imparted his final lesson even in his Mahasamadhi – to hold on firmly to Holy Mother Sarada Devi and to Thakur. He assured us that when we do so, he would be there too. And indeed, he is – in his eternal blessings, in his unseen guidance, in the quiet strength that still carries me forward. Words fail me when I try to describe what he truly was. Yet I know this with certainty: I am who I am today purely by his grace, compassion, and love.

Swamiji, may you always bless this daughter with your eternal love. My ardent prayer is that when my final moment comes on this earth, you will receive me once again – as you always have – with infinite compassion.

All salutations to My Most Beloved Guruji, Reverend Swami Sridharanandaji

Jai Maa! Jai Thakur Hari Om

Madhuchanda Ghose

Phoenix, AZ

Namaskar Matajis, Swamijis, and dear friends of Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj.

I am Madhuchanda Ghose from Phoenix, AZ. I am humbled to have the opportunity to say a few words about my Revered Maharaj, Swami Sridharanandaji.

My son and I were scheduled to meet Maharaj on Monday, Dec 15th. However, the meeting was not to be. We missed him by a few days. Holy Mother had other plans for him. I have known Maharaj for more than four decades. He was a dear friend of my parents and me.

I met Maharaj for the first time sometime in the mid to late 70's in Singapore. I had come home for the summer recess from IIT Kharagpur, and Maharaj had been invited by Sw. Siddhatmanandaji, who was then the President of the Singapore Mission. I do not recall any details of the talk I attended, but I do clearly recall that I was able to follow him from start to finish. Maharaj was a powerful speaker. He was able to deliver his messages at the level where we were. He offered guidance that was timeless and deeply personal.

I was initiated at an early age and as I matured and turned my focus on my daily religious practice and readings, Maharaj was my 'go-to-Maharaj'. My discussions with him were always enlightening. There was never an occasion where I would have to say, "but Maharaj how about this or Maharaj how about that". He was able to determine what was not clear to me without my having to say anything. His answers cleared confusion. He always provided deep insights. He never left room for doubts to brew over time.

Having been an educator for close to 30 years, I have often wondered how he did that. Maharaj was encouraging, compassionate and always showed unwavering calmness. On June 9, 2010, Maharaj called me in the afternoon in Phoenix, AZ. My mother was in hospice care at home. He said to me in Bengali, "Madhu, it is time to let your mother go. Your mother has led a full life. It is time for you to let her go." He gave me specific instructions on what to do when the time came. His words gave me both courage and peace. My mother passed away that very night! I had to stand by my father who was more than 90 years old.

Over the days that followed, he provided guidance on how I should move forward with the needed rites and rituals. He served as our elder family member. Over the years, he had visited my family in Phoenix a couple of times. I had met him a couple of times at our Hollywood Ashram in Southern CA. I have also visited him here in Sydney.

He is with the Holy Trinity now, smiling down on us with his warm smile. I know that when I go back home and have my quiet time each morning, I will hear his voice and the guidance he had given me over the years.

May his blessings be upon all of us always. May his words continue to guide us down the path he showed us. May his laughter ring in our ears.

Thank you. Jai Ma!

Malliha Sinniah

Not just once, but often I've thought it was worth migrating to Sydney, just to listen to Swami Sridharanandaji's talks on Bhagavad Gita, every Sunday.

Several years ago, I complained to my Chithappa-father's younger brother, that no one had taken me to the Siva temple in Karur in India. He said I had not yet received God's blessings to visit that temple. That was Chithappa's way of teaching me that everything happened by God's grace, not because we tried to make them happen.

But I did not try to make this happen. I had not heard about Swami Sridharanandaji's talks. I did not ask to go to the Vedanta Centre. One day, a friend came along and offered to take me to Swamiji's Gita class. Just one lecture was all it took; I could not miss a single one after that. It just happened. Was I then led by divine grace?

I would wait for six days to get back there on the seventh – Sunday. Was it Swamiji's empathy or his charisma? Was it his resounding voice or his convincing logic? Was it the truth behind

Vedanta or Swamiji's unique teaching style? Or all of these, bundled into one irresistible blessing from above?

We have missed living in the same era as the Holy Trinity. But Swami Sridharanandaji has graciously brought the Holy Trinity to us through his guru Swami Virajanandaji, a direct disciple of Holy Mother Herself and a direct monastic disciple of Swamiji, the star disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.

A precious gift to us – the family of Vedanta devotees in Australia – from our revered Swami Sridharananda ji, wrapped in his meticulous teachings, with compassion and care.

So let us rejoice being in Swamiji's evergreen presence. Let us keep his thoughts burning bright, by continuing those small, baby steps in the footprints of his teachings.

Meera Honan

Brisbane

I am delighted to share my reminiscences of Revered Swami Sridharanandaji, whom I affectionately called "Swamiji" and whom I was blessed to know for more than half of my life. His passing on 13 December 2025 leaves a profound silence, yet his presence continues to shine within everyone he touched.

Swamiji quite literally sped into my life in the early 1990s during a family holiday in India. At that time, he was based in Lucknow, and we were awaiting our first meeting at the Ashram he had established there. A message arrived advising that Swamiji would be slightly delayed – he was attending a meeting at the Vivekananda Hospital, another of his remarkable ventures in Lucknow.

As we wandered through the serene grounds of the ashram, a small vehicle suddenly zipped through the gate, catching our attention. Out stepped Swami Sridharananda: dignified, radiant, and full of energy. I had never seen a Swami behind the wheel of a car before, and his broad, beaming smile as he greeted my family is something I still remember vividly. It felt less like a first meeting and more like a reunion with a beloved elder. We spent half a day with him touring the ashram and the impressive Vivekananda hospital he brought to life. Swamiji's warmth and grace left a lasting impression on us all and it was evident that his impact in Lucknow was significant to the Mission's activities. When we returned to Brisbane, we had no idea that our connection with Swamiji would deepen further. Some years later, we were thrilled to learn that he was coming to Australia to establish the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in Sydney. Until then, devotees in Australia had only occasional visits from monks of the Order; the idea of a permanent centre felt like a blessing beyond measure.

In hindsight, it seems almost unbelievable that when Swamiji arrived in Australia, he was 75 years old – embarking on a vast new mission, in a foreign land, with few contacts or connections. Yet what he built over the next quarter century is nothing short of extraordinary. The Sydney and

Brisbane ashrams today stand as vibrant centres of worship and community – living testaments to his perseverance, vision, compassion, and unshakeable faith.

One moment that captures Swamiji's boundless heart occurred when he met my soon-to-be brother-in-law for the first time. Being the first marriage in our family, we were excited to share the news with him. Swamiji was to join us for dinner that evening. When he arrived, he welcomed my brother-in-law with a warm embrace – then gently pulled him back, looked into his eyes, and asked, "What is your name?" It did not matter to Swamiji that he did not yet know his name; what mattered was that this person was becoming part of our family. That was his way: he connected from the heart first and all else followed.

During the years that followed, especially when my children were young, I could not visit Swamiji as often. But every time he visited Brisbane, I treasured the moments we shared. Swamiji gave himself completely to others – chatting, taking calls, offering guidance, responding to messages – yet somehow remained utterly focused and present with whoever was before him.ă

In 2020, just days before the global pandemic closed borders, I received initiation from Swamiji in Sydney. The timing felt divinely orchestrated, as if the universe ensured the opportunity arrived just in time. After the ceremony, I shared a meal with him – a moment I cherish deeply. True to form, while we ate, his eyes remained glued to the cricket match playing on the TV, a reminder

of his wonderfully human, endearing side. Even in his most elevated spiritual role, he carried warmth, humour, and familiarity that made everyone feel at ease.

Swamiji was a profound teacher not only through his words but through his example – his discipline, his humour, his compassion, and his tireless service. He had a remarkable ability to make the spiritual path feel both accessible and expansive. His presence brought clarity. His laughter brought lightness. His guidance brought courage and conviction. To have known him is to have been reminded of what is possible when one lives with unwavering faith and purpose.

As I reflect on his life and on the immense privilege of having known him, what stands out most is his boundless love. It radiated effortlessly – to long-time devotees, to newcomers, to strangers, to our family, and to me. That love remains the thread that continues to connect us with him, even in his physical absence.

Swamiji's legacy shines in the Centres he built, the teachings he shared, the lives he transformed, and the communities he nurtured. But above all, it shines in the hearts of those who had the grace to walk even a few steps of life's journey with him. I offer these reminiscences with deep gratitude, joy, and reverence. May his spirit continue to guide us, inspire us, and remind us always of the divinity within and around us.

Meera Neelakantan

Melbourne

My inaugural meeting with Swamiji took place at the residence of Mr. Raghavan in Wheeler's Hill, Melbourne. During the gathering, Swamiji invited each attendee to offer a song or a prayer. When my turn arrived, I chose to chant a shloka from the Mandukya Karika, which concludes with the phrase 'Atma kamasya ka spriha.' It was a truly profound experience to subsequently hear Swamiji deliver a lecture that expounded upon this very verse in extensive detail.

In Melbourne, it was my privilege to lead the invocatory prayers before Swamiji's lectures. In addition to the customary shlokas dedicated to the Ramakrishna Holy Trinity, I would include an auxiliary verse from the works of Adi Shankaracharya. Remarkably, Swamiji would then seamlessly weave the essence and philosophical meaning of that specific shloka into the core of his discourse.

On one occasion, Swamiji inquired about my upcoming visit to Sydney. During my subsequent stay at the Sydney Ashram with a friend and his family, Swamiji gathered us to share a profound revelation: that the holy relics – the nails and hair – of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother are enshrined within the altars of each entre, intensifying the divine presence there. He then graciously allowed us to revere his own Rudraksha mala locket, which contained these same sacred relics – a truly singular blessing.

Swamiji was a consummate orator and storyteller. I remain haunted by his dramatic account of a priest at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple who underwent surgery to drain an abscess without the aid of anaesthesia, demonstrating incredible fortitude. On a personal level, despite not having received formal initiation from him, Swamiji once deeply moved me by asking if I had synchronized my mantra with my breathing. Reflecting on the spiritual principles Swamiji nurtured within us, we might consider the following questions for our own spiritual practice:

- Are we engaging all four faculties – Emotionality, Rationality, Ingenuity, and Indomitable Will – in our pursuit?
- Do we maintain a constant awareness of the Divine Presence within us?
- Has our exposure to spiritual literature resulted in a fundamental attitudinal shift?

His unique philosophical insights, such as 'Being and Becoming,' the 'Prismatic Mind,' and the 'Denomination-less Denomination' established by Sri Ramakrishna, continue to resonate. Furthermore, his love for us was all-encompassing. Much like Kalidasa's description of Sri Rama in Raghuvamsa, where every subject felt they were the most loved by Sri Rama, every individual who spoke with Maharaj felt uniquely cherished.

His administrative legacy is equally remarkable. To depart India at the age of 75 to establish centres of great magnitude in Australia and New Zealand requires phenomenal commitment. Living up to his name, Sridharananda, he manifested monumental Centres across Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and New Zealand. These achievements stand as a testament to his thunderous conviction: 'One who lacks self-confidence lacks real faith in God.'

I conclude with a verse from the Ramakrishna Stotram by his Guru, Swami Virajanandaji, which perfectly encapsulates the essence of Sridharanandaji:

पञ्च-वर्ष-बाल-भाव-युक्त हंस-रूपिणं
सर्व-लोक-रञ्जनं भवाब्धि-सङ्ग-भञ्जनम् ।
शान्ति-सौख्य-सद्म-जीव-जन्मभीति नाशनं
तं नमामि देव-देव-रामकृष्णमीश्वरम् ॥ १ ॥

Mira

Lucknow

This is an attempt at my reminiscences on Revered Sridharanandaji Maharaj during his days as the Head of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in Lucknow from 1989, when I first met him, until his transfer to Australia in 2000. I first came to visit Revered Swami Shantaswarupanandaji who was living a retired life in Lucknow. It was Swami Sridharanandaji who invited Revered

Swami Shantaswarupanandaji to come to Lucknow to live. These are some glimpses of Revered Swami Sridharanandaji.

Revered Maharaj gave all his classes and lectures in English which was a blessing for me. After he completed the Gita, he would take another small scripture and return again to the Gita. Although the classes were in English, they were heavily attended, and the shrine was packed with devotees. After the intense class discourse, he would greet each devotee and generally say a word or so. One day after class a devotee brought his son. Youth Day was approaching and the boy was eager to attend but was underage. His father told Revered Maharaj about the boy's problem and asked his permission to allow the boy to join the Youth Day. Revered Maharaj said to the boy, 'Stand up straight.' He then looked at him and said he could attend – to the boy's utter joy! There was that quality in Revered Maharaj, to be open to all and solve any seeming problems, joke with others and join in hearty laughter.

At that period the new temple was being constructed. It was believed told that Revered Maharaj saw the Holy Mother, as a girl of about 12 years, dancing on the entrance area of the temple, holding her saree with one hand and twirling around, as young girls do. Then Revered Maharaj thought - so Mother wants to come to Lucknow and we will make space for Her. With incomparable zeal, Revered Maharaj worked on the temple with his contractor (Mr. Bishwas). The structure combined all types of art from various places of India using wood carvings, metal work, stained glass work, and marble. The marble was brought daily as huge rock pieces and cut to size on a special saw at the back of the Polyclinic. The pieces were fitted according to a pattern that the cut piece displayed. Then there was the stonework for the walkways. Metal work designs were fitted on the floor combined with marble. Outside were huge deities welcoming the devotees as they approached the altar. The beautiful altar was made with three carved lotuses to hold the cut-out

life size photos of the deities. Simultaneously various works progressed. Revered Maharaj, after spending time in the activities of the temple would then go to the hospital to attend his other duties.

When I had the good fortune to visit the hospital in 1989, it had 100 indoor beds and various departments of general medical care. At the entrance in the central hall stands a huge stature of Swami Vivekananda. I understood that this was the artist's last work before he died. It is a dynamic statue, depicting Swami Vivekananda as walking and turning his head when he hears the call of man. He is dressed in a mixture of Indian and western clothing. It was a masterpiece of Revered Maharaj's design. The hospital was slowly converting from manual work for registration of patients to a computerized system for patients, accounts, billing, medical tests, etc. One junior Swami was eager to organize the computer section, and Revered Maharaj gave his permission. But I also witnessed the junior Swami receiving many reprimands which could melt you into the ground. As the hospital required a staff of nurses, Revered Maharaj started a School of Nursing which was housed in the old Math behind the hospital. The monks had shifted to the property in Nirala Nagar, about two blocks away.

This is just a sketch of a most unique Swami who combined a large heart, tremendous capacity for work, precision in work, scholarly knowledge, humour and eagerness to serve all. No doubt this was a monk moulded by Swami Vivekananda himself.

When I expressed a desire to stay and serve in the ashram, Revered Maharaj agreed and helped me to have a government permit to stay which was renewed yearly.

I can never forget these wonderful experiences.

Mohan Krishnan

Melbourne

About two weeks after our revered Swami Sridharanandaji left his mortal self, I had a brief dream of his walking past me while acknowledging me with his affectionate Bengali accented pronunciation of my name, Mohan (Mohon"). As I walked on hoping to find him again, I spotted

a group of other monks, but he was no longer to be seen. Alas! With Swamiji's passing on, we have lost a titan among us. Our love and grateful memories of our revered and beloved Swamiji will however remain with us.

My wife and I first met Swamiji at the late Mr. Santosh Paul's home about 25 years ago. His talk had so inspired us that we sought initiation from him. At that time, he was not giving initiations and so arranged for us to be initiated by the late Rev. Swami Damodaranandaji. We used to look forward to Swamiji's 3-day monthly visits to Melbourne, with his lectures starting usually on a Thursday evening and finishing on a Saturday afternoon. Once as I drove Swamiji to a lecture hall, we were talking of Sri Ramana Maharshi. He mentioned that he had come to know of Maharshi as a teenager when he read Paul Brunton's "A Journey in Secret India", and that soon after his final exams he had travelled to Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry with his classmate. While his friend remained in Pondicherry, Swamiji headed back home by train. As the train approached Villupuram, he happened to enquire with a fellow passenger where Tiruvannamalai (where Maharshi resided) was, and was told that he could get off at the approaching station and take a bus to the place to visit Bhagavan Ramana. So, he interrupted his journey and headed for the Ramana Ashram in Tiruvannamalai. On arrival at the Ashram, he found Maharshi was seated reclining and he sat on the floor before him. Maharshi did not speak to Swamiji but looked into his eyes for some time. After spending some time before Maharshi, he proceeded to prostrate before him and take leave to resume his journey home. As he did so he thought he heard Maharshi chanting softly "Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna" but only realised its significance when he came into contact with monks from the Ramakrishna Math soon thereafter, and by the time he completed his engineering degree in 1947 he had resolved to immediately join the Ramakrishna Math.

For me, Swamiji was not only a great spiritual teacher, but a well-informed friend with whom you could discuss temporal matters and affairs of the world, and a kind and affectionate uncle. I have never witnessed him getting agitated, being impatient or speaking harshly in any circumstance. I had always felt peace and a sense of elevation in his presence. He was no doubt a *Sthithaprajna*. His talks were educative and uplifting, and even at his advanced age the choice and flow of words in pristine English were impeccable. It sometimes seemed to me that Swami Vivekananda was talking through him. In his gentle way, he would frown upon ostentation. I also think he never enjoyed people falling at his feet to display their reverence. He advised me to keep my life simple.

I would like to share here below some pointers that I gleaned from Swamiji's lectures over the years (with due apologies for the limitations of my understanding and coverage):

- start my spiritual journey by the desire to achieve a level of awareness where nothing can perturb me. This is a desire for emancipation or moksha or mukthi (mumukshutvam).
- My spiritual enquiry begins with reflections on "What am I?" and "Who am I?" I am aware that I am and focus on my Awareness of my Amness. This process gradually removes the limitations of my personality. As I outgrow the limitations of my outlook and personality, I

will experience joy and a realisation that my true nature is ecstatic joy. When I go beyond this stage of awareness, I experience pure bliss by merging in Brahman.

- Atman is the all-encompassing and all-pervading Divine Being or Reality subjectively viewed by the person within his body-mind complex (Amness), and Brahman is the same Divinity viewed universally (Isness). Atman (Amness) is Brahman (Isness).
- An aspirant can practise his spiritual practice with the following steps:

    1. *Sravana* (listening as well as reading)
    2. *Manana* (cogitation and contemplation on what was heard and read)
    3. *Nidhidyasana* (deep contemplation or meditation of the teaching until an unshakeable conviction is arrived at, culminating in experience and realisation.)

- A realised soul manifests and emanates the Divinity within himself.
- If I am a victim of my past, I can manage my present to create my future. Repeated activity becomes a habit. By practising the awareness of the Divine within myself (Atman), the bliss of the Divine is experienced, and Godliness develops in me.
- Divine awareness within will in due course extend to the Divine awareness without – arriving at a realisation that I am the essence of the existence of the Cosmos, which is devoid of name, form and utilitarian value.
- If we cross the subtle line between self-confidence and arrogance, we land into trouble. Arrogance renders us vulnerable to mistakes and adversely affects our performance. Through introspection we need to guard against getting arrogant. Success should humble us and let us acknowledge it as due to God's grace.
- To answer the call of duty one must be prepared to pay the price of right action.
- While working and interacting with the world, an attitudinal correction is required to outgrow my egoistic limitations, i.e. an ego-centric attitude has to be converted to a soul-centric or divine-centric attitude.
- The soul is the eternal, immutable Reality and thus cannot be destroyed. The body is mortal but the One who resides in it is indestructible and unlimited. The One who resides in the body has the proprietary right to discard it.
- The mind is a prism through which awareness is sensed. We perceive effects and conceive the principles of causation. From perceptual knowledge perceived via the senses, we graduate to conceptual knowledge (ideas, interpretation, understanding, etc.). From perception and conceptualisation, we advance to direct and intuitive experience or supernatural awareness or superconsciousness (Aparokshanubhuti). Experiencing the Truth is more than knowing and understanding.
- I am not limited to my body, life force, mind or intellect. My true nature is Satswarup, Chitswarup and Anandaswarup. To rehabilitate myself to discover the glory and excellence of my true original self, Sadhana (hard work) is required. This Sadhana could be via one or more of the 4 main yogas, viz. Karma, Raja, Jnana and Bhakthi Yogas – whereby we utilise

the four faculties that we have been endowed with, viz. ingenuity, indomitable will power, rationality and emotionality.

- A serious spiritual student or aspirant has to have a prashantha chitta (have a stable composure, i.e. be not excitable or fickle), and be a samanvitha (must have no desire for enjoyment of things of life and is able to resolutely curb and discard any desires that may come up).
- The world is a constant flow of changes and opposites/dualities and is thus transient. Reality is that which is unchanging, eternal, absolute and infinite. Conventional thinking revolves around name, form and utilitarian value. Through Awareness of my own Existence, I try to identify myself with the Reality behind the apparent, the Essence of the Universe or Cosmos, the Eternity behind the transient, and the Infinity behind the finite. Thereby, I outgrow my limitations and identify myself with the Divine.
- By outgrowing my limitations and broadening my outlook, I merge myself in the Soul (Atman). From identification with the Atman, realisation develops that we are all one and the children of the One, the Divine. Ethics, morality and self-less service emanate from this awareness.
- Introspect and identify habits, tendencies, propensities and obsessions that take us away from the Divine path. Remove these obstacles.
- Do not hurt anyone in thought, word or deed.
- Live in the world and enjoy the Joy of Creation as a manifestation of God but not be of it (i.e. do not get involved in it.). As you live and work in the world, straighten yourself. Interact with the world with constant remembrance of the Lord.
- Hold on to the belief that all that is happening is God's will, that He is in charge of the Universe. He will take care and it will all be according to His will. My will has to be merged with God's will.
- I will not subject myself to my impulses; instead, I will be rational and controlled. Nothing in this world can sway me, shake me or make me impure because I am a manifestation of the Divine.
- We come from God, live in God, live with God, live for God, live by the Grace of God and go back to God.

Hari Om!

Mouli Ganguly

Melbourne

This is a heartfelt reflection on my experiences and memories with Swami Sridharanandaji. I aim to capture the essence of my spiritual beginnings and the sense of community that blossomed in Melbourne in particular, since his arrival in the early 2000s. It serves as a personal record

of the moments, people, and lessons that have shaped my journey, providing an insight into the profound impact Swamiji had on my life.

One of my fondest memories of Swami (lovingly called Boro Swamiji, or the Senior monk) was when he used his stories to explain the nature of true love and devotion. He would exhort us to hold the Divine always close to our hearts with “every moment awareness". He used the term “my dear" to express his love through his personal blessings. His hands were soft and sometimes he would hold your hands while speaking. I felt a powerful energy, infuse my soul in these moments. This gentle reminder inspired me to cultivate a deeper sense of love and connection, not only with Swamiji and the Divine, but with everyone I encounter in my journey. His words continue to echo in my mind, guiding me towards kindness and compassion each day.

He had a towering presence. He was based in Sydney. In the early days we listened to his lecture during his monthly visits. It started building a body of knowledge in me about Vedanta philosophy and scriptures. Over time, it started impacting me as a person and how I thought about life, relationships and the purpose. It developed a deeper understanding of the Trinity, life’s priorities and the need to conquer the powerful whispers of the ego. In the mid-2000s, I was staying in Sydney for two or three days every week and most weeks I was fortunate to visit the Sydney ashram at Ashfield and was welcomed to share the Prasadam after the vesper service. Swami Atmeshanandaji Maharaj was there as well with other residents. The Sydney evenings were very special in their company.

With his arrival, the nascent Vedanta movement nurtured by the late Mr. Tapesh Gangopadhyaya and his wife, slowly took deep roots. With his encouragement, we wrote and did a play around the three stages of Thakur Ramakrishna Dev’s life. Around 25 children that participated in the play had the whole Vedanta family in Melbourne involved. Shubroto Bhattacharya painstakingly recorded and played the dialogues and music. Aradhana and other volunteers dressed up the kids in monastic clothes. The finale was a formation representing all direct disciples on stage in monastic attire. Over 300 people attended that early function.

Over time, the first Melbourne ashram was acquired through his guidance. Every Friday evening, I began attending with offerings and would play the vesper service songs. Harshal

Maharaj and Shiva Maharaj also lived there as students. The Vedanta movement took deep roots in Melbourne, through his guidance. In 2006, my wife Aradhana's parents moved to Melbourne from Geelong. I had the great opportunity of driving Boro Swamiji to Geelong a couple of times and we were blessed with him sharing the stories of his amazing life. We continued the conversation, when they moved to Melbourne.

The Melbourne ashram moved to a bigger premise in the current beautiful location in East Ringwood with his guidance, in 2012. We yearned for a resident monk. Boro Swamiji arranged for Swami Chandrashekharananda to be the first resident monk in Melbourne. We had his company and blessings for just over a year. Both our sons got married in Melbourne. Boro Swamiji blessed them with a saree with the Holy mother's blessings. In 2017 Swami Sunishthanandaji came to Melbourne. It was a very happy and exciting time for us. Boro Swamiji exhorted us to make sure that we supported Swami Sunishthanandaji to the best of our ability. We did a big play around the life of Sister Nivedita, which I assisted Sunishthanandaji to write. Professional actors helped work with the Vedanta family in Melbourne to stage this play, which helped raise significant funds. Boro Swamiji continued to guide us on the play and brought international dignitaries to watch it with us.

Reflecting now, Boro Swamiji's blessings and guidance have touched me and my wife very deeply. I also had another connection - my maternal uncle Harshadeb Mukherjee was the general in charge of the medical core in the Indian army. He was very close to Boro Swamiji. He settled in Lucknow after retiring from active service and helped Boro Swamiji, with the setting up and running of the Ramakrishna Mission hospital in Lucknow for many years. When he became ill with cancer, Boro Swamiji was personally and actively there with my uncle and his family, to help them through their journey over the next 20 years. The family still remembers Boro Swamiji with much love and gratefulness.

I last met Boro Swamiji in Sydney in 2025. Sitting behind a glass partition, with his kind smile, he sent his blessings to the Melbourne Vedanta family, saying with a loving smile "my body from neck upwards, works as well as ever". My wife Aradhana and I feel truly blessed to have known and been blessed by Swamiji in this lifetime.

Pronam Swamiji.

Mrs Siva Shankaralingam

Perth

Our humble pranams to our Revered Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj. Swamiji always made us feel as though he was an integral part of our family and his presence brought quiet comfort, guidance and strength into our lives. Through his gentle words and constant concern, he showered us with love and care. I would like to share a small selection of moments that my family and

I were blessed to experience with Swamiji and which we hold close to our hearts always.

Every Gita class with Swamiji was truly a lesson for life. At times, he would repeat parts of his talk and that repetition helped the teachings stay with us and guide us in our day to day lives. Each class felt like a blessing that continues to shape and support us.

During Swamiji's visit to Perth, our family had few opportunities to serve lunch for Swamiji in the ashram. We would prepare the dining area, set the table and then knock on his door to invite him for lunch. During one such visit, I forgot to bring the ashram keys and only realised this when we were almost there. I felt very worried and my husband and I were discussing what to do next. To our utter surprise, Swamiji already knew, as though he had foreseen the situation. He had kept all the doors open and was sitting near the entrance. In that moment, my panic turned into pure joy. My husband and I served lunch with a light heart and thanked Him and Mother silently.

Another time, before cooking lunch for Swamiji, I prayed to Mother to be with me and help me prepare the food. Soon after, I became absorbed in the preparations and completely forgot about my prayer. When we reached the ashram and I began serving food, Swamiji asked me to sit beside him and told me to serve food for myself as well. He then made me eat along with him. While driving home, I kept thinking about why he had insisted that I sit and eat with him. Only after reaching home did I realise that my prayer had been answered without a single word being spoken.

For one of Swamiji's lectures, I wore a yellowish-green saree to the ashram. When I arrived at the ashram, Swamiji immediately noticed and said it was Mother's favourite colour, explaining that the colour resembled that of the mustard flower. He then told me that for Mother's birthday that year, I should buy a similar coloured saree and that it would be draped for Mother at the Sydney ashram. By Swamiji's loving wish and Mother's grace, I was blessed to buy a saree for Mother on Her birthday. I never imagined that a single colour could bring so much joy to our family. Much later, when we visited the Sydney ashram, Swamiji asked us to take the saree back as Mother's prasad and gave it to my daughter as a blessing for her wedding.

Swamiji would always recall this small incident whenever he enquired about my daughter, even though it had occurred many years earlier. She once dropped Swamiji at the airport from the Perth ashram. Towards the end of the journey, as we approached a set of traffic lights, the signal turned amber. My daughter continued through, not wanting to brake suddenly and jolt everyone in the car. Whenever Swamiji asked about our family and each one's well-being, he would always recall that day with a smile, beginning with, 'I still remember your daughter took me to the airport ' and then shared the moment with those around him. It reflected the depth of attention and care he gave to even the smallest details and his powerful memory.

Swamiji was more than a father to me in the way he enquired about our family's well-being and blessed each one of us. With his loving memory, I bring this note to a close. We thank the Divine for giving us the opportunity to share a few of the experiences we were blessed to have with Swamiji. With hearts filled with sincere love, gratitude and reverence we offer our pranams

at His lotus feet.

With all humility and sincere prayers, Siva, Shankar and family, Perth

Nandita Dasvarma

Adelaide

When I first listened to Swami Sridharanandaji, our Boro Swamiji (Senior Swami) giving a lecture on Shrimad Bhagawad Gita, I felt it went straight into my heart because what he spoke was so clear and powerful! Since then, I have not missed an opportunity to listen to his lectures, in person or on YouTube. I have encouraged my relatives and friends to find time and tune in to YouTube videos of Boro Swamiji.

My acquaintance with Boro Swamiji is not long compared to others, but even though I did not receive my initiation from him I always felt something divine and special about him. He had met my Spiritual Guru Sri Mohanananda Maharaj of the Balananda Ashram in Deoghar, India. A few years ago, Boro Swamiji visited our home in Adelaide, when he saw a photograph of my Guru, immediately recognised him and said: “I know him. I had once invited your Guru to our Ashram in Lucknow". This made me feel even closer to Boro Swamiji. Our common mother tongue, Bengali was another binding factor with him. Among the many lessons I learned from Boro Swamiji is one about being humble. He used to say: “Always think of the small I". Boro Swamiji also taught me how to prepare myself to do Japa (chanting of Mantras).

Boro Swamiji had been a Sanyasi for more than 70 years when I first met him, but he had not forgotten the taste of home cooked Bengali food. When my husband received his initiation from Boro Swamiji in Sydney, I cooked Payesh (rice pudding) for offering and he loved it. On occasions during our visits to the Sydney Ashram, I used to derive happiness at cooking and offering some

of his favourite dishes. A funny incident I remember is when we discovered pumpkin vines in the kitchen garden in the Sydney Ashram. I cooked the tender pumpkin leaves and stems into a Bengali dish (jhol) and offered it to Boro Swamiji. He was immensely pleased and remarked jokingly: “Bangali Mayera Kumror Danta Dekhle aar Lobh Samlate Paren Na" (Bengali mothers cannot control their desire to cook tender pumpkin leaves when they find them)! He also loved savoury snacks made from flour (kucho nimki), and stuffed pea kachori and alu dam. I derived much joy to cook and take with me or send with someone else some of Boro Swamiji’s favourite food (mainly kucho nimki), whenever I or another person was visiting the Ashram in Sydney.

I have heard so many wonderful stories of his life from him! He spoke about his mother who had knitted an asana (small rug) on which one sits to pray or meditate. Boro Swamiji had kept the asana with all care; perhaps it was with him till the end. On our last visit to Sydney in October 2025, Boro Swamiji was very kind to spend some time with us when he spoke about why and how he established Vedanta Centres in Australia. He used to visit South-East Asia to give lectures and noted that the Vedanta Centres had no presence east of Malaysia and Singapore. This prompted him to venture out to Australia. First, he established the Centre in Sydney. That was when he was 75 years of age! People are usually well into their retirement at that age, but he started a whole new mission and was successful in establishing a Vedanta Centre in all state capitals on mainland Australia as well as in the national capital, Canberra.

In conclusion, I can only say that Swami Sridharanandaji was not only a spiritual Guru and Speaker of the highest order, but he was also a wonderful human being who touched the heart of anyone who came in his contact. I will cherish his memory and keep listening to his recorded talks for the rest of my life.

My respectful Pranams Swamiji!

Niranjan Deodhar

Sydney

My pranams to the Holy Trinity, to the Swamis and Matajis, to fellow devotees and friends

Let us remember Rev. Swami Sridharanandaji through the way he lived and interacted with the divine, with us, and with everyone in this world. Let us honour his memory by adopting his teachings on how to live, how to make choices, how to think on things and what things to think about.

My family and I have benefited from his guidance since early 2000. I start with an anecdote of what being in his presence meant for us. About 10 years ago for a youth event being planned at the ashram my daughter was asked by the swamis to prepare a short talk on how the Vedanta way of thinking had changed her life. I passed on the message but then noted for the next few days that she was avoiding the matter. Eventually I asked her why she was not getting on with

it, saying this should be quite easy for her. She hesitated a bit and then said, “no, the question is ‘how Vedanta has changed my life’ and I can’t answer that, because I don’t know any other way of life". She was like a fish being asked to describe water.

Such was the power of simply being in the presence of Swamiji when he gave his talks.

I will highlight but 3 of the many ways in which he inspired us to live in pursuit of realising the divine.

लभन्ते ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृषय : क्षीणकल्मषा : ।
छिन्नद्वैधा यतात्मान : सर्वभूतहिते रता : ॥ ५ :२५ ॥

Swamiji was always ‘focused on the good of all’. He connected with everyone around him with love and affection and built relationships with people from all walks of life. Very early in my journey of learning from him, I saw him equally at ease in giving discourses on the most abstract of ideas to the most practical, in interacting with children and adults alike, and in engaging with devotees, other monks, professionals, neighbours, officials, and political leaders. Swamiji’s vision for Vedanta in Australia was far reaching and expansive. Building on the core of providing spiritual guidance to those who seek it, the organisation he envisioned includes providing social and community benefits through value-based education, community services, and inter-faith goodwill. In all contexts, his genuine desire to bring about the good of all endeared him to everyone.

ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा करोति य : ।
लिप्यते न स पापेन पद्मपत्रमिवाम्भसा ॥ ५ :१० ॥

Engaging with the world in all its facets inevitably brings its own challenges, trials, and tribulations, at times even conflict. Swamiji stood true to the call to ‘be like a lotus leaf in water’. I was fortunate to see him in action at close quarters in this manner, role-modelling a behaviour that was grounded in the highest of philosophy, and at the same time demonstrating how to deal with the most worldly of situations. While dealing with the challenges he always kept his calm and composure. In his words and deeds, he continued to wish the best for everyone involved, including those who were getting distracted away from the vision he was working towards. At all times he remained focused on his duty.

And finally:

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥ ९ :२७ ॥

Swamiji exhorted us to do our duty in all its forms and offer it to the divine, and thereby build awareness of the presence of the divine every moment of our life. As with all his teachings, we

saw him practice what he preached. He would often talk about his own lectures being part of his duty as a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, and how he needed to guard against getting affected by whether we understood him or not. In his uniquely mischievous way and with a child-like smile, he would poke fun at himself, saying he felt on cloud nine if we understood and applied his teachings, and he might be miserable if we did not. Of course, having known him for long, we knew that this was in jest, and that he was doing exactly the opposite.

My eternal gratitude to the Almighty for the opportunity to learn from, and watch closely in action, a spiritual master and a great leader that is our beloved Swamiji.

Hari Om

Prem Lata and Yatish Kumar

Sydney

Pranams to Guru Maharaj,

I would like to share how I came under the radar of Bade Swamiji.

It was in 2003, when a friend mentioned to me that Swamiji was starting a class on Patanjali Yoga Sutras and whether I would be interested in attending. After discussing with my husband, we agreed to attend. As some of you may know, the lectures were at 7:30pm in the evening. We were both working at that time and we had to plan how to do this as we normally have our dinner early and if we wait till after the lectures, it would be too late. To go home after work and come to the Ashrama in Ashfield would not have been feasible. So, I would prepare dinner for both of us in the morning, take it to work, heat it in the oven, and eat in the car so that we can arrive around 7:00 pm for the Arati and the talk. Talking about Aarti, Swami Atmeshanandaji would lead the Aarti with beautiful music, and that left an indelible mark.

On the first day, we sat at the back of the class, so that we could quietly make an exit if needed. I had never heard of Sri Ramakrishna or Sarada Ma. The very first lecture was introductory, and it was the real beginning of our spiritual journey. It was our first formal exposure to Vedanta. The manner in which the talk was delivered, and the speaker, left me mesmerized and speechless. Swamiji's excellent English, his delivery, his booming voice, choice of words, clear exposition got both of us hooked to his talk. It was sheer magnetism. At the end of the class, Swamiji stood at the door to give his blessings and bid goodbye. At the end of the very first class, Swamiji said to me "do not sit at the back and judge that character in the front, get to know him. Next time, you come and sit at the front." I thought to myself how did he read my mind as I was wondering about the man in the dhoti!

The next week, Swamiji enquired and found out that we were working and coming directly from work. So, he asked us to join him prior to the class in the kitchen and offered tea and snacks. This aspect of Swamiji created a loving father like figure, and this routine continued each week.

It created such an affectionate and loving atmosphere that we would feel a great loss if we could not attend a class. At the end of the second week, Swamiji asked both of us to stay behind after the lectures and after some talk said that “we will be good friends." At that time, I did not give it much thought, but looking back, it was a prophecy.

This was how our journey began with Swamiji. Shortly afterwards, Swamiji introduced us to the Holy Trinity, and we both became devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji came to our house and told us where to establish our shrine.

When Swamiji acquired the Ermington property, he happily invited us to have a look at the Heritage Building. This building was run down, with pigeons' nests dropping everywhere, floor-board missing, etc. We were a bit bewildered as to how this place could be made habitable! Well, that was just another of his miracles, how this place was made habitable. Swami Atmeshanandaji and Swami Tadanandaji were part of the team that made this possible. Swamiji had a profound sense of vision and the Ashrama in Sydney today is a testimony to his vision, stamina, strong will and conviction. In just 25 years, he has established Vedanta Centres in most capital cities of Australia.

Swamiji was also a perfectionist. When the new shrine was being built, he would sit on a chair like a film director and meticulously give directions to where and how to place things. An amazing fact is that without any ruler or tape, he directed Prakash Bhai to put the logo of Ramakrishna Mission in the centre. He would say, move a little bit to the left, no, no, a little bit to the right. This went on for some time until finally he was satisfied. When afterwards, somebody measured the position and found that it was indeed within a few centimetres of the dead centre! The choice of material, colour, style was all prescribed by him. His search for perfection was so strong that sometime, it could drive one crazy! I know this because I was one of the helpers when Prakash Bhai was building this shrine.

Swamiji also enjoyed good cuisine and had a wonderful sense of humour. At one time I served him food, and he looked at his frame, and said to me that the portion size that I had offered him was based on the size of his frame. No, no, please reduce my portion. Some of his favourite sweets included Jalebi and Apple Crumble.

Moving towards some of his pointers to help us on our onward spiritual journey, he would constantly repeat, (and many of you know his repeating ability) to get to know your true original nature, make yourself a better specimen of a human being, make your roots strong, be one pointed, and do your Japa and Meditation. Another favourite was Attitudinal Correctness. Do everything to the best of your ability and do it all as a service to the Divine. Another memorable event initiated by Swamiji was the three-day retreat during Easter long weekends at various centres. These events were spiritually uplifting, with talks by Swamiji, and Kirtans and Mantra chanting led by Swami Atmeshanandaji.

With children, he would be very affectionate and hold them on his lap and offer them sweet. He was also stern when the situation demanded. He loved all his devotees and friends equally.

How lovingly he would ruffle my hair and give me blessings after his talk! Swamiji is residing in our hearts and still guiding us on our spiritual journey.

We both are blessed to have had that close acquaintance of Swamiji.

Hari Om

Priya Iyer

Revered Swami Sridharanandaji played a foundational role in my spiritual journey. His influence was not limited to formal teachings or public discourses; it revealed itself quietly through conversations, silences, humour, and a rare depth of listening. Even well into his eighties, his clarity of thought, warmth, and gentle wit reflected the inner freedom he embodied.

What drew me most to Swamiji was his ability to speak of profound truths with simplicity. His words encouraged reflection and helped loosen rigid ways of thinking, allowing understanding to grow organically over time. Swamiji valued self-inquiry and personal responsibility in one's inner life. His understanding of dharma, as a living alignment with truth and integrity rather than a fixed set of rules, left a lasting impression on me and continues to guide my choices.

While Swamiji was a gifted orator, what made him truly special was his ability to listen. He listened with genuine interest, without haste or hierarchy. In his presence, one felt respected and fully heard. One of my most cherished memories is the attention he gave my daughter when she was just eight years old. Curious and talkative, she found in him an attentive listener who took her thoughts seriously. He encouraged her questions and engaged with her ideas, quietly nurturing her confidence and curiosity. The impact of this encouragement became evident over time. At the age of twelve, she wrote a reflective piece on the "purposelessness of humankind's unending desires" an insight that surprised many, but not Swamiji. As she grew into her teenage years, that curiosity evolved into a deeper search for meaning. Today, she has grown into a beautiful human being, inwardly rich and spiritually grounded, qualities she carries with her as she moves forward

in life. I believe Swamiji's early engagement played a quiet but meaningful role in shaping this foundation.

Swamiji was also generous with appreciation, finding grace in simple offerings. I recall serving him a humble, traditional sambar I had prepared. He received it with warmth and kind words, teaching me through that moment that sincerity matters more than greatness. I remain profoundly grateful for having been touched by his grace. Though Revered Swami Sridharanandaji may no longer be physically present among us, his legacy lives on, in our reflections, in our choices, and in the deeper awareness with which we engage with life.

With humble pranams and heartfelt gratitude – I remain a humble student of his teachings.

Puloma and Dilip Mukherjee

Melbourne

Being a long-time devotee in the Ramakrishna order and living in Melbourne, I came across Swami Sridharanandaji many times and received his blessings.

Of all the memories I have about Swami Sridharanandaji, the most vivid is the one on 12 September, 2013, when we had six Swamis in Melbourne - Swami Sridharanandaji from Sydney, Swami Tyaganandaji from Boston , USA, Swami Baneshanandaji from Germany, Swami Sarvapriyanandaji from India, Swami Sunishthanandaji from Fiji, and Swami Chandrashekharanandaji from Melbourne accepted our invitation for dinner at our place in Bulleen after finishing the speech at Latrobe University on the occasion of the 150th Birthday celebrations of Swami Vivekananda. We felt blessed and enlightened by their visit. We feel lucky that the busy Swamis spared their time for insignificant devotees like us. We still recollect how wonderful and spiritual the evening progressed.

With Bhakti purna pronam to all Swamis.

Radha Kodur

Om Gurubhyo Namaha

To our family, it was a great honour to be part of Vedanta Centre, Sydney and to have Swami Sridharananda Swamiji guiding us. His cheerful voice, confident way of soothing and solving our doubts will remain in our minds forever. Swamiji's cheeky smile, sometimes making jokes on himself will be always remembered. We eagerly waited for Swamiji's 'Sunday Bhagavad Gita classes'

His memory was truly astounding; he remembered every single member of our family by name, offering his blessings to them whether they are physically present during my visits or not.

Our house was blessed by his visit when I had my spinal surgery and couldn't go to Sunday classes for few weeks.

Being lovers of spicy food, the Masala Dosa (Aloo sabji with coconut chutney) we once prepared in the Vedanta Centre kitchen was too spicy for him. However, he took it very gracefully and managed to eat it.

The contributions he made in developing the Centre, determination to improve the Spiritual awareness among people is remarkable.

Swamiji will always be remembered in our hearts. May the blessings of the Holy Trinity shower upon us all, bringing peace to the world.

Radha Krishan Sharma

Canberra

We are deeply saddened by the Mahasamadhi of His Holiness Shri Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj, most revered Sanyasi and guiding light who spread the wisdom of Vedanta in this part of the world.

I was blessed to meet Pujya Swamiji very early, before we even had a Vedanta Centre in Sydney. He was accompanied by His Holiness Shri Swami Damodaranandaji from Fiji. It was in a home in Kaleen, Canberra where I first prostrated before him, and he embraced me with such warmth and compassion – a moment I will never forget. Over the years, I had the privilege of his darshan many times during his monthly Satsangs in Canberra. Each gathering was a source of inspiration, filled with his kindness, love, and profound teachings.

Through his tireless efforts, Pujya Shri Swamiji nurtured the growth of Vedanta in Australia setting up several Vedanta centres and touching countless lives with the message of the holy

Upanishad and Gita for Self-realisation. His presence was a blessing, and his legacy will continue to guide us on the spiritual path.

With heartfelt gratitude, we offer our humble salutations and prayers for Atma to attain the abode of Bhagavan Shri Ramkrishna and Maa Sarda Devi!

Om Shantih Shantih Shantih!

Raghu Raman

Sydney

We sometimes refer to a person of eminence as 'larger than life.' If you have not come across one, but seen Swami Sridharananda ('the Swami'), you can confidently say, 'I have seen one.' The Swami had a certain majesty about him that never went unnoticed. When I was in the hospital, the Swami came to see me. He was wheeled in and spent some time. After he left, the nursing staff came to me and wanted to know who he was. I told them and asked them why they asked me that question. Their response was, 'when you see him, you just want to pay your respects to him, don't know why'. That says it all.

My relationship with the Swami had been largely impersonal. But I had many opportunities to interact, provide any assistance he asked for that I could and enjoyed 'poking the honeycomb' of his wisdom. Unless you poke the honeycomb, you don't get the honey, as the saying goes. He once said, 'I came to Australia with a worn out suite case. Look around you, how the Vedanta movement has grown with centres in all the major capital cities in the country. Do you think one man, Sridharananda, can accomplish that? I can only say that Sri Ramakrishna had made good use of this instrument', pointing to himself.

One of the highlights of his work in Sydney has been the weekly classes in Manly, rain or shine. We had 12-15 people, sometimes more. Imagine a person in his late eighties, finishing his session and insisted on getting dropped off at Manly wharf, take a ferry to the City and a train to Eastwood, picked up at the station by the Asharamites. It would be easily past 10 pm by the time he had reached the Vedanta Centre, and all the time with no food. My offer to drive him to Ermington was rejected.

The Manly classes were not lecture sessions, but rather parlour meetings, highly interactive with questions from the participants, mainly Western. The Swami tried to answer them as non-technically as possible, using the language of psychology and common sense with a scriptural basis, in order to provide a better understanding of the purpose of life. He considered those assembled as 'jignasu', i.e. serious seekers after the Truth, and was happy and eager to assist. Later on one lady said to me that 'I don't quite understand what Swami means when he says, "He is in you, You are in Him"'. I tried to explain to her as I understood it. She thought it was one of the most profound teachings she had heard.

The Swami's Gita classes on Sundays were legendary. I have seen more than 100-120 people attend on several occasions. I had often wondered how a person can speak for a full hour on only 1-2 slokas of the Gita. He did. He was looking at the verses from various different angles as a philosophy, as poetry, as a psychological treatise on human behaviour, as a devotional scripture, and as a masterpiece of Sanskrit literature, all the time focusing on how to better ourselves in our humble attempts to march toward the goal of human life. 'An attitudinal correction' was what was required, he often said.

One day he explained how the Gita had used prepositions (upasargas) in Sanskrit language so wonderfully to embellish, enhance and emphasise the message. Some examples are the Gita says 'Adhi Gachhati' (to attain, to reach the depth), not simply 'Gachhati,' meaning just 'go'. Another example is 'pari prasna' (to question with all humility with an extreme eagerness to learn) rather than just 'prasna' (question). There are many such examples and one can go on. The Swami largely based his classes on the commentary of Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad Gita.

On some important verses of the Gita, the Swami spent 2-3 weeks on a single sloka. An example is verse 18.46. I am not repeating the verse, but I remember mentioning before that class to a fellow member of the congregation that the Swami would spend at least 3-4 weeks on this one verse alone, much to the scepticism of that member. The Swami did and I was not surprised. The talks have been recorded and are available to anyone interested.

One other significant contribution of the Swami, not known to many, is his lectures on the spiritual heritage of India and the history of development of the six systems of philosophy, from the Vedic Age to the present day, culminating in the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. These lectures were given extempore, in Lucknow before the Swami had come to Australia, and fortunately had been recorded and transcribed. I had the privilege of editing the manuscript and adding references and foot notes, with guidance from the Swami in places where I needed clarification. It is my understanding that the Vedanta Centre is planning to publish it soon. Lastly, I thoroughly enjoyed his unstructured reminiscences of Swami Virajanandaji, his own Guru, through which we could get glimpses of the great Swami Virajanandaji. Again, that's how I learnt to poke the honeycomb.

Towards the end, the Swami used to say, in his own inimitable way, that 'nothing below the neck was functioning well, but above neck, everything was going well.' Proved to be so true. But what was happening 'above the neck' was what finally led him to the holy abode of Sri Ramakrishna. I have personally been much benefited by knowing him and learning from him, just as many others who had the same privilege.

Rajeev Ramakrishna and Vandana Sarathy

We are deeply honoured to pay tribute to Revered Swami Sridharanandaji, whose presence brought spiritual strength, wisdom, and grace to the Vedanta Centres in Australia.

His life was marked by profound spiritual awareness, unwavering compassion, and a rare gift for illuminating the highest truths with simplicity and warmth. His deep and detailed knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita was truly exceptional. Since 1993, we have had the privilege of knowing Swamiji personally and experiencing the inspiration of his presence first-hand.

Early Association

Swami Sridharanandaji first came to Sydney from Lucknow, India on the invitation of another great Swami, Swami Damodaranandaji. We remember that first meeting in our parents home with great clarity and affection. It marked the beginning of a deeply cherished association for our family.

Our parents, Mr and Mrs Ramakrishna, had already been blessed to meet him several times in Lucknow and to travel with him in India. They always felt profoundly fortunate to have enjoyed his companionship during those journeys.

Later, with Guru Maharajs blessings, they were able to request Belur Math to post him permanently to Sydney. Over the years, we too were fortunate to meet Swamiji on many occasions and to share in memorable conversations with him.

Personal Memories and Spiritual Presence

Among our fondest memories are those of Swamiji seated at our parents dining table, sharing vivid anecdotes about his Guru and the senior monks of the Order, and reflecting on how those sacred influences shaped his young mind. With characteristic laughter and gentle dignity, he brought the scriptures to life in a way that was both engaging and deeply inspiring.

His understanding was vast and profound, yet always expressed through a warm, genuine, and deeply theistic spirituality that touched all who listened. We also remember with affection how much he enjoyed my mothers hot dosai and idli – a small but cherished detail that reflected his warmth, simplicity, and humanity.

Swamiji was defined by unwavering kindness, compassion, and resilience – virtues he embodied in every interaction. In his presence, one felt both spiritual depth and human tenderness.

Qualities That Defined Him

While the greatness of many human beings may be measured by the goodness of their conduct, the greatness of a monk is born of spiritual realisation. Such attainment lies beyond ordinary understanding, and it is often difficult for us to fully recognise the stature of such souls. Yet even within the limits of our understanding, it was evident that Swami Sridharanandaji belonged to that rare order of realisation beings whose lives quietly elevate all around them.

As we mourn his physical departure, we also celebrate a life that burned with the steady flame of spiritual wisdom – a flame that warmed hearts, illumined minds, and inspired earnest seekers. Swamiji possessed the rare gift of expressing the deepest truths of Vedanta in language that was at once accessible, profound, and transformative.

Scholarship and Teaching

From an early age, Swamiji embraced the path of sannyasa, dedicating his life wholly to the

pursuit of Truth. The Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, and the wider scriptural tradition were his constant companions. Yet he never wore his scholarship as an ornament. Instead, he shared that wisdom freely, making subtle and profound teachings understandable to all, whether beginner or long-time seeker.

As a speaker, Swami Sridharanandaji was deeply compelling. His words did more than inform – they awakened. He had an extraordinary ability to meet each listener where they were and gently lead them toward deeper insight and self-discovery. Listening to him, one did not simply learn; one was reminded of the eternal truths hidden beneath the distractions of everyday life.

The secret of his teaching lay in making listeners feel that they understood the Scriptures as deeply as he did. He rarely drew attention to his own tapasya or scholarship. His discipline and learning were not displayed for admiration but used to make profound truths accessible without burdening students with the intensity of the effort behind them.

He insisted that we take his message deeply within ourselves – to live it, to practise it, and to strive first to become decent human beings before aspiring to be realised souls.

His Enduring Legacy

The best way to remember Swami Sridharanandaji is to revisit his discourses in our own minds and reflect on what we have put into practice. Though we no longer have the physical presence of a loving teacher, we still have his inspiration and the responsibility for our own sincere effort.

Even as we bid farewell to his physical form, we recognise that what Swamiji truly embodied – luminous awareness, wisdom, and compassion – cannot be extinguished. His words remain alive in our hearts, his teachings continue to unfold within our understanding, and continues to guide us on our own spiritual journeys.

Let us honour his memory by striving to live the truths he taught – through the study and

practice of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and especially the Bhagavad Gita, and through the sincere cultivation of inner awakening.

Swami Sridharanandaji – teacher and guide – you have not left us; you have simply gone ahead to show us the way.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

Rebekkah Sparrow Lord

Adelaide

Meeting Swamiji

The first time I saw our blessed Swamiji was at a public meeting at The Adelaide Theosophical Society Hall, possibly around 2010. I had come across a flyer at a local Indian grocer. A glossy flyer sat on the counter next to the cash register and the incense sticks. It jumped out at me because the title of the talk to be given was about the life and times of Swami Vivekananda and his experiences with blessed Sri Ramakrishna. I had been previously reading about the experiences of Sri Ramakrishna, walking through several religious paths and coming to the same place in his heart, mind and experience. This had inspired me, and my husband Steven, had an old copy of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna which I had been reading. On the front of the flyer was an image of Swami Vivekananda. On the back of the flyer was a picture of our blessed Swamiji. Steven and I attended the talk at the afore mentioned hall. I recall the hall had a gentle blue hue and the fragrant smell of incense as we found our seats. People began to sing in Sanskrit (presumably a bhajan about Sri Ramakrishna) and I immediately felt a sense of home. Many of the devotees who now attend the Adelaide chapter meetings were there. Swamiji began to speak in a kind and booming voice. I was transfixed and something in my heart knew I was going to come back. His voice made me feel I had found a spiritual home.

Dulwich

We began to attend the monthly meetings at Dulwich Hall, where I always took my notepad to record many pages of notes about Swamiji's enthralling and vast knowledge of The Gita, The Song of The Lord. We attended many such meetings, absorbing, learning, being inspired by the clarity of knowledge, his ability to teach these deeply complex topics in such a lay friendly way. (Lay is a term that often comes from Christian traditions, which usually means someone who is not of the clergy or the priestly class.). Swamiji made it relatively easy for us, as white western folk, not of Hindu background, to understand and apply to our lives, his experiential knowledge of The Bhagavad Gita. Hardly a Gita class went by, without new knowledge being struck like a bell in my heart and mind.

Spending time in Swamiji's presence

Some years went by and I was afforded regular opportunities to meet one on one with Swamiji, at

the devotee Padma's home, who graciously offered this to Swamiji's students. These times were so special to me, and today, I cannot fathom the grace by which I was given that opportunity, to spend time with such a being. On one such visit, I had made a garland of marigold flowers to place around his neck, as a token of my gratitude. He did not allow me to place it, rather, he asked me to have it sent to the centre, where the Holy Trinity were installed, which, I think at that time, was the centre on Glynburn Rd.

Initiation

Some time passed and Steven and I decided to take initiation with Swamiji. We attended the Sydney centre where we were billeted with a kind couple who were close to Swamiji. Our initiation was and will remain a personal and transformative ritual which we will always treasure. We were given our mantra at that time, by Swamiji. Again, I am awestruck with the grace by which these things have happened and the vast spiritual gifts that Swamiji bought to our lives.

Travelling through India

More time passed and in 2015 we travelled through India, staying at Ramakrishna Ashrams from the west to the east coast of India. Swamiji had made arrangements for us to be welcomed at and to stay at all of these ashrams. The local Swamis clearly held Swamiji in the utmost and highest regard, as we were, treated extremely well and made to feel very welcome. We were even given a tour of the huge, advanced, multilevel Vivekananda Polyclinic Hospital in Lucknow, the gift of seva to the health of the local population. However, the jewel in the crown for us, was Swamiji's incredible marble temple in Lucknow.

Cooking for the Swamis in Sydney

Once when staying at the Sydney centre I was afforded the opportunity to cook for all the resident Swamis, including Swamiji. What must they have thought about the homemade vegetarian pizza and roast vegetable salad I will never know. But they kindly ate it. I always enjoyed eating at the long table in the Sydney centre with Swamiji and other Swamis, brahmacharis and guests. I know Swamiji took delight in his food and many of the local women loved to cook his favourite traditional dishes for him, no doubt as loving acts of service. I also know he loved a good packet of salty chips and the odd lolly or two.

Singing bhajans for Swamiji and The Lord

Swamiji always welcomed a variety of songs from various religious and secular traditions at Vedanta gatherings. This was especially inspiring to me, having been raised in the joy of singing worship in Christian churches. At that time, I was deeply feeling the special joy of singing to Christ, at Vedanta gatherings and in the temples. Swamiji encouraged me to follow my heart and spirit in fostering interfaith/secular kirtan style gatherings to sing to, and feel close to the Lord. However, as we soon started a family, time for such a special project ran away from me.

Blessing our little boy

Swamiji took great joy in meeting our little boy, who at the time was around 3 years old. He offered our little one sweets and a big cuddle and a blessing, a time that we will always treasure. Our boy, Qayn, normally quite shy around new people was relatively relaxed and happy in Swamiji's presence, even at the first meeting, chatting with Swamiji happily.

Now that Swamiji has merged with the infinite, I am left with more gratitude than I can accurately express, for his life, his energy, his loving kindness, and his endless legacy to us and to the world.

With love - Rebekkah Lord, Steven Lord and Qayn Lord

Rishi Mehra

Melbourne

I started visiting Melbourne Ashram in late 2012 when Swami Chandrashekharanandaji was the resident monk. Maharaj loved the outdoors and we had lots of projects going - working bee, building new garden beds, using wheelbarrows to move bricks from one end to another to make foundations for the water tank, rendering pergola wall etc. As a result, quite a few weekends

were spent at the Ashram. He did mention about Bade Maharaj and Gita classes, but I thought just one Maharaj is enough for me. With a young family, I was not sure if I could handle Bade Maharaj.

But life had something else planned. Once while talking to Naren Pilaka late at night just outside the Ashram's main door, he mentioned a few things about Bade Maharaj which aroused my interest. On returning home I googled Swami Sridharanandaji and started watching his video reminiscence of his guru Virajanandaji. I watched and watched, unable to stop, and finished long past midnight realising what a terrible idiot I had been. Ever since that day, I did not want to lose any opportunity to be with him - Gita class, retreats, airport drop offs. I would finish work and drive straight to the Ashram. Often, I would see him on his chair outside near the lions overlooking Dandenong ranges.

He was so fond of avocado and cruskits. I am sure that he would have demonstrated the proper technique of cutting the avocados to many a devotee. What a treat it was!! I still remember dinners after Gita classes at the Ashram – the never-ending spread of homemade delicacies lovingly prepared and brought by mothers, placed on the big table. When each one would try to insist that Maharaj try the dish they had prepared, his frequent remarks still ring in my ears "Ooh mothers can kill with their kindness."

Much later, just before he was retiring to his room at night, I mentioned that I had seen his reminiscences about his guru. He was not pleased that such an intimate session to a close audience was posted online. But with a mischievous smile he said "Rishi, let me tell you one incident that is not in the video".

His guru Swami Virajanandaji being president of the order would give darshan to the devotees at Belur Math. On one occasion, there was a long queue and being President Maharaj's sevak, Sridharanandaji was standing near him. In the queue was Sridharanandaji's own mother with a big tray of offerings. When she came in the front, she was pushed from behind and almost fell on President Maharaj. Bade Maharaj had to intervene and scold her. Virajanandaji admonished his sevak saying - Salil how can you talk to your mother so rudely. Maharaj replied - I am here as your sevak and my duty is to protect you. I don't care if I have to go to hell doing that. Virajanandaji was extremely pleased and blessed him.

Everyone knows how lovely his hands were, his way of showing affection was ruffling your hair and then holding your hand warmly and tightly while conversing and at the end of the conversation he used to shake it and let go. His feet were equally adorable. I felt truly fortunate when he asked me, as a personal service, to help put on his socks. His feet were incredibly soft and gentle, and what stood out most was that he remembered the devotee who had gifted him those special socks from Japan. He was very particular and precise about how he wanted them to be put on.

During my recent trip to Sydney, Shiva Maharaj shared a similar experience, recalling how Bade Maharaj would gently sigh if even the zip of his clothing was handled carelessly. He would always

remember the devotee who had gifted it and would pray for them unfailingly each time he used it.

Coming back to spending as much time with him, In recollect the Airport trips flying back to Sydney. I would often stay back at the Ashram on Saturdays in case Maharaj needed anything. On one occasion, when he had overslept, I had to knock on his door, but otherwise he was always impeccably punctual. Suresh ji would arrive exactly at 4:45 for the 6:30 pm flight. On the way to the airport, our conversations would range widely – from politics and cricket to clearing any doubts from the Gita lessons. At the time, his constant concern was how the Sydney ashram was still financially supporting the Melbourne ashram. Most importantly, he would always inquire about the wellbeing of devotees who were not present or whom he had not been able to meet during that trip. At times, he would reminisce about his earlier days and ask if we could schedule an after-dinner session for him to share his memories. Sadly, that never came to pass, as he was extremely fatigued by frequent travel in his nineties. At the airport, we would arrange a wheelchair and escort him to the departure gate. Once he was ready to board, we would offer our final pranams, and he would bless us, waving goodbye with great affection. After he landed safely in Sydney, both Suresh ji and I would receive a call, once again showering us with his blessings.

I feel even now, Bade Maharaj has taken a flight but this time not to Sydney but straight to his Ishta Holy Mother. I am sure he is eternally blessing all of us.

Rita Kazanchi

Melbourne

GURU BRAHMAN GURU VISHNU GURU DEVO MAHESHWARA GURU SAKSHAT PARA BRAHMAN TASMAI SRI GURU DEVO NAMAHA

This verse summarises what Swami Sridharanandaji meant to me.

Before meeting Rev Swamiji, a friend gave me a copy of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. As I started reading it, I got immersed in it and read it continuously for 3 nights. After reading the Gospel, I felt that I had found in the path to God shown by Sri Ramakrishna, what I had been searching for. I had never visited any of the Sri Ramakrishna ashrams in India or elsewhere and neither had I seen any picture of Sri Ramakrishna. Soon after this my friend took me to Swami Sridharanandaji's talk on Mundaka Upanishad. His talk was mesmerising and I felt an awakening within me to grow spiritually. This was followed by a meeting with him at a gathering at a devotee's house.

His gentle compassionate and kind behaviour with everybody made me feel the presence of Sri Ramakrishna in him. I felt that I had found my Guru and soon I requested him to give me DIKSHA. He said that he needs to get permission at first from Belur Math to give initiation. So,

after a few months when he came back from Belur Math he was permitted to initiate and by the grace of Holy Mother, Rev Swamiji gave me diksha and I felt a rebirth within me.

Whenever I met him for guidance, I felt transported to a higher realm of peace and bliss. His guidance was always practical and ethical. Regarding upbringing of my children who were in early teenage years, he said “Be what you want them to be." That was so correct as children learn more from what they see than what they are told to do. I also suggested to my daughters to read the Daily Book of thoughts and prayers by Swami Paramananda which he had recommended. This book helped my daughters a lot and they made it a habit to read daily in the morning before going to school and university. Swamiji also highly recommended to read books authored by Swami Tapasyanandaji, Swami Nikhilanandaji, Swami Chetanandaji and the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Life of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Saradanandaji’s volumes on The Great Master.

Swamiji entrusted me the holy task of taking care of our holy shrine at the Melbourne Vedanta centre for over 14 years as there was no Resident monk. I consider this a privilege as it made me feel very close to the Holy Trinity by daily cleaning and decorating the shrine. By divine grace and Rev Swamiji’s immense trust in me, I took care of the Students home which was a house next to the ashram owned by Vedanta Centre. As I was running a home furnishing business, I rented the two garages of the Ashram houses to keep my stock as a small contribution to the income for the centre. This was a great privilege too as being close to the Vedanta centre ashram, I gained spiritually and truly made me experience presence of Guru Maharaj Holy Mother and Swami Vivekanandaji every moment. I felt the guidance all the time.

Swamiji lived in God and with God every moment. He was a picture of excellence and perfection, and he lived each moment doing endless service to spread the message of our holy scriptures while being in complete union with Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He worked as their instrument and gave us Ashrams in capital cities of Australia taking all the risk single handedly. He had the great vision of establishing the Ramakrishna mission in Australia and New Zealand to uplift humanity to a higher life following Karma Yoga, Gyana yoga, Bhakti yoga and Dhyana yoga. He came to Australia when there were no Ramakrishna Ashrams at the ripe age of 75 and worked tirelessly to establish our centres which are now flourishing due to his hard work.

Rita Roy Chowdhury

Sydney

Swami Sridharanandaji (1925 – 2025) was a popular teacher and a spiritual guide for many devotees of the Ramakrishna Order. In Australia, he established the Vedanta Centre of Sydney, and centres in Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. I met him for the first time in Vedanta Centre, Sydney in 2007. During the evening prayers, he invited devotees to sing bhajans. I

accepted that invitation, and sang my first bhajan in Bengali 'Amar matha nata kore dao he tomar Charan dhular tale' by Rabindranath Tagore.

At the end of the prayer, he said 'you sang very well. Come again and sing for the Mother,' he said, smiling with deep kindness, and immediately I accepted. During Durga puja I got an invitation from him to sing devotional bhajans at Vedanta centre, Sydney. For me, it was a great honour. I asked Swamiji, 'Do you have any suggestions about which bhajans I should sing?'. He replied, 'Maa yer gaan gaibi'. After offering Anjali, when I came outside in the yard, I noticed an extraordinary scenario. He was sitting on his chair and many devotees were lining up to offer their pranams and receive his blessings. Sitting there, with a beautiful smile, clad in orange, he looked like a 'Sanyasi Raja' blessing his devotees. I too joined that queue and received his blessings. Even now, that scene is fresh in my heart. For me he was a true Saint Maharaja.

Once he shared a story about his life in Lucknow (India). He mentioned that a well known Bengali singer used to come to the Lucknow Ashram and sing some famous bhajans. Swamiji shared his favourite bhajans list with me. He also sang some of lines and hummed the tune. Whenever, I sing those bhajans, I feel that Swamiji is in front of me, listening.

One day in 2018, I had a lovely conversation about spirituality, self realisation, philosophy, music. He took me to the library and introduced some of the books. He said, 'you can borrow the books from here and read.' He brought a book for me from his room (Sree Maa Sarda Devi

by Swami Gambhirananda) and gifted it to me. He said, 'read this book. If you don't understand any area, mark with a pencil and come to me. I will explain.'

During the celebration of Sri Ramkrishna's birthday, Swamiji requested me to sing: *Kon alote praner prodip jaliye tumi dhoray aso*, a song by Rabindranath Tagore. I sang that along with other bhajans. After the celebration he honoured me, blessed me with a gift pack (one saree, one sindoor, one pair of shankha). I didn't expect that could happen and I had tears in my eyes. He said, 'next time you wear this saree, come and sing for the Divine Mother'. My heart was full of gratitude and joy. I touched his feet and for a few minutes I couldn't talk.

When we received the email that he was in the hospital, I wanted to visit him. But soon I received the email that he reached the lotus feet of the Divine. When I offered flowers and my final pranams at his feet, I noticed that his face still held his beautiful smile.

On his final ritual day I joined the prayer and offered my bhajans for Holy Trio (Sri Ramkrishna, Maa Sarda Devi, Swami Vivekananda). I also sang bhajans from his favourite list he had given me before. I heard from other Swamijis' that he took sanyas diksha from Swami Virajanandaji, who was an initiated disciple of Sarada Devi herself! What a great person he was and talked with me in a simple friendly way. His noble personality never showed up when he spoke.

Now, when I come to the Vedanta centre, Sydney, he is not present physically, but his spirit and presence lives on in the beautiful garden he created. I sit next to the plants, take a deep breath and I can feel his loving presence there and the beautiful song by Tagore comes to mind:

Antar mama vikashita kara
Antartartara he
Nirmal kara, ujjal kara Sundar kara he

Robyn McCarthy

Sydney

I was born and bred a Catholic with Irish ancestors in 1947. As a child, my faith in God was developed by dedicated teachers. In adulthood, I studied the changes in Church practices and doctrine after the Vatican Council in the 1970's with progressive religious and lay teachers. Parallel with these later studies, I was also a committed Yoga student who eventually had the privilege of learning Patanjali's Sutras from a Master, as well as becoming acquainted with the Bhagavad Gita.

However, it was not until 2004 that I was guided, by the Divine, to attend a lecture on the text at Holmesglen TAFE, that I met Swami Sridharananda. Up until that time I was ignorant of the Vedanta Movement and the Ramakrishna Trinity.

I can bear testimony to the saying 'when the student is ready, the teacher appears'. The moment Swami's eyes locked with mine, I said to myself 'I have been waiting for you all my life'. Some months later I was dealing with a family tragedy and Swamiji kindly offered to meet with me privately on a regular basis. I was later initiated by him. Everything I had learned prior to our meetings blossomed under his tutelage. The answer to my lifetime questions on the 'meaning of life' and 'who am I', were finally clarified.

Swamiji has been my rock as I have charted the past twenty, challenging years. His teachings have been transformational for me. Under his guidance I have been given the grace to digest the indigestible. Daily, his words ground me in this world of Maya – 'Live in God, with God for God, by the grace of God' – 'Don't be a stupid ass and barter away your poise' – 'as you think so you become' – 'the more you walk North, you automatically leave the South behind' – 'the Essence behind appearance'. I came to understand the 'Karyam Karma'

My relationship with Swami is encapsulated in the words of the song 'You Raise Me Up'.

When I am down and oh, my soul, so weary
When troubles come and my heart burdened be
Then I am still and wait here in the silence
Until you come and sit awhile with me.
You raise me up so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders, you raise me up to me than I can be.

Thank you Swami, Namaste.

WHO IS ME

Who is me? I asked Swami purposely.
Could it be that I'm a flea, or a tree I inquired playfully?
We'll see, he said decidedly.
Perhaps a bee? I queried emphatically.
Oh no, he replied sympathically.
Then who is me? I whined miserably.
Maybe I come from the sea? I said hopefully.
Oh no, not the sea
But you are part of all you see said Swami solemnly.
Who me? I stammered stupidly.
You are the spark in fire
The flight in birds
The light of the sun

The wave in the ocean.
But I have no notion
that is me, I said mournfully.
Come sit with me, whispered Swami patiently
And wait for clarity.
In time you will perceive
That in essence, you are a fragment of Reality.

Robyn McCarthy ©

Sankar Sinha

Tasmania

It was 2020 and COVID was upon us and it changed my routine and my life.

Rather than write an essay, I would like to share few email exchanges that sumamrise my experience with Swami Sridharanandaji.

On Sat, 6 Jun 2020, I wrote to Swamiji Respected Swami Sridharanandaji,

The COVID-19 is a blessing in disguise to me, as it has resulted in attending your teachings on every Saturday and Sunday while staying at home in Hobart.

Having listened to you today, I wonder why “Matri-rina" is not among the “Pancha-rina" you have mentioned today - is it because that “Matri-rina" is such that one can never repay?

Yours insignificant devotee Sankar

I received this wonderful clarification from Swamiji

Sneher Bhai Sankar

I have received your letter dated 16 June. I am extremely happy that you are attending the Saturday & Sunday classes on-line. So, I am quite sure you are finding the classes informative, educative and instructive. Please build up your character and personality based on these teachings of the eternal truth. That will be the return you give me for my hard labour.

You have asked me about Matri-rina. It does not form part of the Pancha-rina. Pitri-rina does not mean only the debt to the father, it means the debt we owe to our ancestors who have contributed to build up the reputation of our lineage. Pitri-rina does not refer just to the father only, it refers to the ancestral line. It is the debt for the wisdom that I have inherited from my lineage. As far as Matri-rina is concerned, it can never be paid back. Whenever the concept of

Matri-rina arises in the scriptures, it is said, 'it is not repayable'. I hope it answers your question, dear. You are not an insignificant devotee; we are all God's children.

With heaps & heaps of abiding love for you, I remain

Yours affectionately

Sridharananda

I give this as an example of Swamiji's ability to explain spiritual concepts in a clear and concise manner. I remain indebted to Swamiji for all his teachings and guidance.

Saptarshi Ray

Sydney

I first came to know of Revered Swami Sridharanandaji around the year 2000, when my parents discovered that the Ramakrishna Mission had begun its work in Sydney. I recall them trying to locate a modest house in Strathfield where Swamiji had initially established the Centre's presence after being deputed to start the Mission in Australia. Those early years, marked by simplicity and quiet determination, left an enduring impression on me.

As the Vedanta Centre subsequently moved to Ashfield, my parents and I began attending pujas and celebrations such as Durga Puja and the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda. On these occasions, I had the opportunity to listen to Swamiji's discourses. Later, during the early 2000s, I also attended Sunday talks on the Bhagavad Gita at the Strathfield Bowling Club, where Swamiji would address devotees with remarkable clarity and depth.

My interaction with Swamiji was largely through listening to his lectures and observing him during Centre activities. His talks were invariably the highlight of major celebrations, often delivered just before lunch or dinner prasadam. What struck me most was not only the substance of his words, but the manner in which he spoke – gentle yet authoritative, affectionate yet uncompromising in spiritual seriousness. Even today, his tone of voice and careful articulation remain vivid in my memory.

During festivals, Swamiji would often move among the devotees as they ate, enquiring whether everyone had been served and only taking his own meal after ensuring that others were looked after. After Sunday classes, my parents and I would join the line of devotees offering pranams, receiving his blessings, and exchanging a few words. These were brief moments, but they carried warmth and reassurance, leaving one with a sense of having been seen and acknowledged. When I think of Swami Sridharanandaji now, several qualities stand out clearly. Foremost was his profound knowledge of Vedantic philosophy and of the teachings of the Holy Trinity – Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda. His advice, whether delivered from the lectern or

in personal exchanges, was always grounded in these teachings and marked by discernment and balance.

Equally striking was his tireless dedication and hard work. Swamiji was instrumental in firmly establishing and expanding Vedanta Centres across Australia, a task he undertook with quiet resolve. Beyond his spiritual role, he was an exceptional organiser. Prior to coming to Australia in his late seventies, he had played a significant role in shaping the Ramakrishna Mission in Lucknow and the Vivekananda Polyclinic there. That he should take on the demanding task of laying foundations in a distant land at such an advanced age speaks volumes about his spirit of service and sacrifice.

Over time, I also became aware of his spiritual lineage – as a disciple of Srimat Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj – and of his standing as one of the senior-most sannyasis of the Ramakrishna Sangha. This lineage was evident not merely in formal training, but in the way he lived and taught Vedanta: without embellishment, rooted in practice, and oriented towards inner transformation rather than display.

Swamiji's presence created an atmosphere at the Vedanta Centre that was solemn yet warm, imbued with reverence, calm, and peace. It evoked in me the same feeling I had experienced as a child during visits to Belur Math – a sense of being in a space set apart from the noise of everyday life. It felt like a refuge where one could turn inward and reflect, and his presence alone seemed to steady the mind and invite quiet introspection.

While his talks consistently moved me, one small personal memory captures his humanity and gentle humour. On one occasion, when Swamiji came to our home for lunch and saw the extensive spread my mother had prepared, he jokingly remarked in Bengali, "Emon khawacchis jeno fashir ager din er khabar?" – "You are feeding me as if I am about to be hanged tomorrow?" – alluding humorously to the belief that convicts are served an abundant meal before execution. The remark, delivered with a twinkle of wit, revealed a lightness that coexisted naturally with his spiritual gravity.

On another occasion, Swamiji noticed my growing interest in social service, particularly in the

lives of rural communities, Indian villages, and agriculture. He recalled meeting a young monk during his years in Lucknow – a monk who would later go on to head the Ramakrishna Mission in Ranchi, where significant work was being undertaken for the upliftment of rural and tribal communities in Jharkhand. Swamiji took the initiative to put me in touch with the Ranchi Mission. Encouraged by what I learned, I later visited the Mission to witness its work firsthand. That experience left a deep impression on me, and ever since, I have carried it as a personal objective in life to support the Ranchi Ramakrishna Mission in its efforts to serve and uplift rural and tribal communities. In this quiet act of connection, Swamiji once again exemplified his way of guiding others toward service without fanfare. The themes that recurred in Swamiji's teachings have stayed with me over the years. He consistently emphasized the core ideals of the Ramakrishna Order – "love for love's sake" and the vision of "Jiva as Shiva," serving God through service to humanity. He spoke often of the inherent divinity of the human soul and of life as a process of discovering and manifesting that divinity through character-building, discipline, and the assimilation of noble ideas. He also encouraged an expansion of consciousness – a movement beyond narrow, ego-centric living towards a more universal outlook grounded in compassion and selflessness.

It was through the cumulative influence of his talks, combined with the encouragement of my parents, that I felt inspired to seek initiation from the Ramakrishna Mission, later receiving it from President Maharaj Swami Gautamanandaji. In this way, Swami Sridharanandaji's influence on my spiritual journey, though not marked by frequent personal interactions, was nonetheless profound and formative.

For those who did not have the privilege of meeting him, I hope they come to understand Swami Sridharanandaji as a monk who embodied the ideals he taught – a gentle, joyful, and disciplined soul, who worked tirelessly to plant the seeds of Vedanta in Australia. His legacy lives on not only in institutions and Centres, but in the countless lives quietly shaped by his presence, words, and example.

Sarva Ramiah

Sydney

It was the summer of 2003, sometime in mid-January. I was on a train to Ashfield from Lakemba with a handwritten address of 'Vedanta Centre of Sydney' given to me by Swami Yatatmanandaji of Madurai Ramakrishna mission. I was not sure how the Monastery in Australia looked like. I was imagining something similar to the Madurai or Chennai Sri Ramakrishna Temple/Math. After reaching Ashfield train station, I took a short walk and reached the Vedanta centre, which was actually a house. I knocked on the door, but there was no reply. The side gate was open, so I walked to the back of the house and found the back door ajar. The house had a long hallway and to the right was the shrine, with small photographs of the Holy Trinity. To the left was the kitchen

and then a library. A sign there read, 'Do Not Enter: Monastery.' I stood there for a while, and that was when I met Swami Atmeshanandaji Maharaj for the first time. Maharaj was very friendly and I started to visit the monastery often. Since I was fond of cooking, I also began cooking for the Swamis there. One evening, I met Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj for the first time. He was towering tall with very bright and large eyes, a commanding presence and a bass voice. His mere appearance made me actually a little 'cautious' and he inquired about me.

Our first conversation was at the dining table. There was then a lady from New Zealand called 'Karuna' who used to manage the kitchen for a while. Karuna was serving swamiji some evening snacks and during our conversation he mentioned in a casual voice "you can talk to me about football, religion, spirituality - name any thing and I can have a real good conversation." I kept quiet but did not expect Swamiji to talk about football. He was having a conversation with others on the table including Mr Rick (a dentist) who visited Ashfield monastery often. I would join him for some gardening work later.

I started visiting the Monastery regularly and got to know most of the resident as well as visiting monks including Swami Chandrashekharanandaji, Swami Tadanandaji, Swami Damodaranandaji and most importantly Swami Chetananandaji Maharaj. His 2 books – 'They lived with God' and 'God lived with Them' – really influenced my thoughts and meeting him was my lifetime goal. It so happened that Swami Sridharanandaji was looking for someone to drive Swami Atmeshanandaji and Swami Chetananandaji to Canberra via the Sunnataram Buddhist Monastery and I was given the opportunity to be the driver. On our way to Sunnataram, Swamiji discussed various spiritual issues and matters of the monastery with Swami Chetananandaji. Two specific conversations caught my attention.

1. Swami Chetananandaji advised me - "Don't take everything what you read about Sri Ra-

makrishna literally. It takes a very long time – even for monks like me – to understand his teachings". I had been earlier discussing his two books mentioned above, He asked if I had read his new book “Sri Ramakrishna’s Divine play" and what I liked about it. As Swami Sridharanandaji was present, I did not want to open my mouth and kept quiet. But Swami Chetanananandaji would not let me off the hook that easily. He asked again. This time, Swami Sridharanandaji said, “Sarva, he is asking you, what did you like about this book?"
Fearfully, I replied, “One particular scene you described actually came alive for me while I was reading the chapter on ‘Bhava’ You explained how freely Sri Ramakrishna moved while dancing, and as I read your explanation, I could see it clearly, like a video. The paragraph was so dynamic; the scene just came alive." Both Swamijis were very happy and this made me happier.

2. Both Swamijis went back to their own conversation. Swami Chetanananandaji was talking about how he would ‘retreat’ almost like a hermit whenever he wrote any books about the great master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa deva. Also, there was some mention about some devotee donating some residential property and Swami Chetanananandaji was not too keen to receive it. Swami Sridharanandaji said in a little serious voice - “Such offerings is for the future of the monastery and for Sri Ramakrishna’s work. It will be favourable to the future of the organisation as well as society." Here I saw his vision for the first time – the “future of the society." His mind was operating on a different level – strategic and futuristic. His purchase of a rundown heritage house in Ermington, Sydney was doubted by many. Today in 2026, it is the largest establishment of the Vedanta centre in Australia, a benchmark of his ‘future vision for the society’ in brick and mortar. He worked tirelessly guiding and leading everyone from planning to organising, drafting, constructing and completing this monumental project.

While I could freely communicate and befriend all the other monks, Swami Sridharanandaji remained a little ‘far away’ for me. I did not know the reason and he kept his distance. He was very busy and I have heard about his outstanding skill as an orator as well as a task master when it came to getting a job done. Swami Chandrashekharanandaji would talk about Swamiji’s achievements in Lucknow. It was spellbinding to hear about his drive, initiative, stern approach at Lucknow especially in developing the monastery to become a very large and well-established organisation within a very short time.

On a few occasions, I have noticed Swamiji looking visibly upset with someone or at times looking even very stern. I was actually avoiding him with the fear of being apprehended for anything I may do as a novice householder. But Swami Atmeshanandaji kept me very involved, especially during celebrations, engaging me in some activity or other, especially in the kitchen and in the book stall. Swami Damodaranandaji’s arrival to Ashfield Monastery changed everything. I got gravitated towards him as he was very jovial, full of fun and spoke Tamil very well.

I was eager to get initiation and used to talk about it to Swami Atmeshanandaji and later

Swami Damodaranandaji. While Swami Atmeshanandaji was making Swami Sridharanandaji aware of my interest, two years went by and I was getting impatient. So, I complained to Swami Damodaranandaji of this and requested him to initiate me. He became very serious and said “Swami Sridharanandaji is a spiritual giant and very senior and you must wait for him to offer you initiation. Do not ever ask me again about initiation. Be patient".

That same week Swami Sridharanandaji had asked me to meet him and I went to see him. He said “Looks like you are asking Suresh Maharaj about initiation. What do you know about the Holy Trinity? What is your knowledge about the one Sri Ramakrishna worshipped?."I answered him with the little knowledge I had gathered from Sri Ramakrishna’s Gospel by Swami Nikhilanandaji. Swamiji appeared satisfied. But he said “you must visit me along with your wife because initiation is for both. If not, there will be problems amongst you both later in life." I thanked Swamiji for his advice and left for home wondering how I can convince my wife for initiation.

I remember Swamiji appreciating me once, in 2006, when our son was named after Shashi Maharaj, Swami Sridharanandaji heard about this and appreciated me. He also said, “Remember that your son belongs to Sri Ramakrishna – you are just serving him. When you think in these terms, there wont be too much attachment." Every time I met Swamiji, he would always inquire “How is Shashi?, How is Hema?." His memory was incredibly sharp. In June 2025, I met him alone for a chat. He said “Everything above my neck functions well. But below - I doubt if anything functions at all. So, pray for me." I really did not know what to say so I kept quiet and nodded. Once he told Shashi “Make your parents proud. You must study well and your (subject of) education is indeed of high demand." He could switch between worldly advice to the highest spiritual wisdom with a snap of a finger.

Shashi and I have attended some of his great lectures on Shrimad Bhagavad Gita at Ermington. The profound teachings heard through his subtle and awakening voice have been soul stirring.

Swamiji was very fond of one visiting monk from Hollywood, Bob Maharaj, later Swami Vedamirtanandaji. He knew that we both went for walks and runs and encouraged me to spend time with him during his visit. He had a special liking for Bob Maharaj who had lived with many senior monks of the Ramakrishna order including Swami Prabhavanandaji – a direct disciple of the Spiritual Son of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa deva – Raja Maharaj (Swami Brahmanandaji).

After the Monastery moved to Ermington, I was again involved in gardening and creating a water pond working with Shiva Maharaj and Swami Chandrashekharanandaji. The pond was shallow and got murky too quick. Once I was cleaning the pond and Swami Sridharanandaji appeared suddenly and asked me - “why is the pond dirty? This entire place belongs to Sri Ramakrishna and he actually walks around the monastery; you must keep the place absolutely presentable and very clean. Sri Ramakrishna’s feet touch the pathways. So be mindful and keep everything clean". I stood there dumbfounded and did not have courage to say anything and I nodded in acceptance.

On Guru Purnima days he showered his grace on me, which flowed like a river. I would come

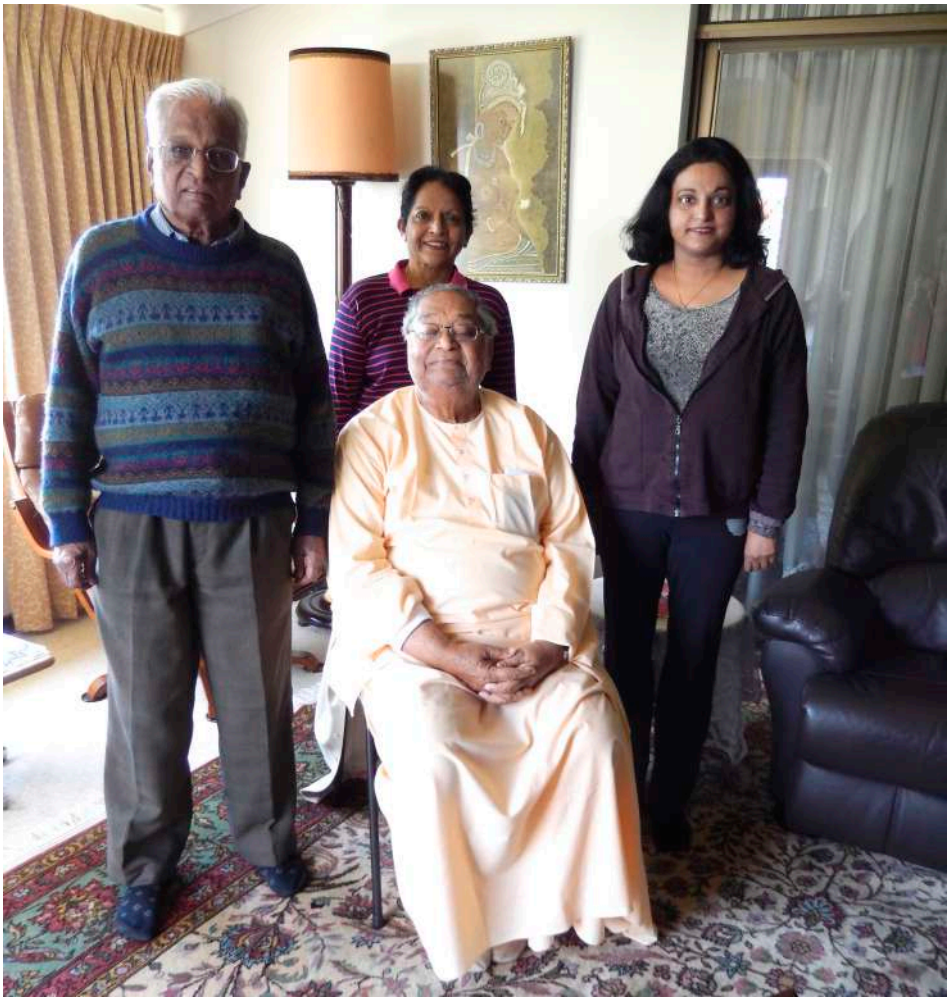
with lots of worldly problems in my mind to seek solutions but after meeting Swamiji all I could do was to have tears in my eyes. On one occasion when I thought my world has turned sour and was upset, Swamiji taught me one final lesson and 'put me back on worldly track with a spiritual solution' – how to live life in the world? – peacefully. Being with him had not only solved my worldly problems but also inspired many householders like me to seek 'truth' through Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's great teachings: to serve, to gain knowledge from scriptures like Shrimad Bhagavad Gita and live a vigorous and active life.

Savithiri, Sharmini and Ramesh Lingam

Perth

Our family first met Swami Sridharandaji Maharaj when he came to Perth for his maiden visit to Australia in 1993 at the invitation of Swami Damodaranandaji Maharaj who was then the head of the Ramakrishna Mission in Fiji. Before the opening of a formal Ramakrishna Mission centre in Australia, Swami Damodaranandaji often visited most of the cities in Australia annually, and invited various Swamis to provide spiritual discourses to the devotees in Australia. Swami Sridharanandaji honoured us by staying at our house whenever he visited Perth. During his first visit to Perth, we were unaware of what a great orator and illumined soul he was. We discovered this when he came to the Perth Hindu Temple in Canning Vale to give a talk on Sri Ramakrishna and the principles of Vedanta. He started his talk slowly and softly, but later when discussing these spiritual subjects, his voice would rise to a crescendo to emphasise key precepts. The whole audience sat in wonder and astonishment at his oratory.

On a personal level, we remember taking him to various scenic spots around Perth, including Kings Park and the botanical gardens as well as a Swan River cruise. He did request a trip to our local beach which he enjoyed immensely, seeing the splendour of the Indian Ocean. When the idea was conceived of possibly establishing an official Ramakrishna centre in Australia, the then President of the Ramakrishna Mission was Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj who had visited Australia before and had stayed at our house on more than one occasion. The esteemed Maharaj personally consulted our father Dr Lingam on his thoughts of where the first Ramakrishna centre should be located in Australia. Our father recommended that the first centre should be based in Sydney. It should be noted that Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj specifically chose Swami Sridharanandaji to be the pioneer in establishing the first Ramakrishna Mission centre in Australia in Sydney, despite his already being in his mid-70s and having established an impressive centre in Lucknow. After establishing the Ramakrishna Mission in Sydney, Swami Sridharanandaji would often come to Perth to give religious lectures to the devotees, especially on the Bhagavad Gita. He was also the key figure in organising and arranging funds for the establishment of Ramakrishna Mission centres in other cities round Australia including Perth. In late 2009, Swami Sridharanan-



daji tasked our family to find a suitable site for a Perth centre for the Ramakrishna Mission. By Mother's grace, within a few weeks we saw an advertisement for the sale of an Anglican Church in Yokine. Again, by Mother's grace, at the auction, we were successful in purchasing this property. The site had the advantage of already being zoned as a place of religious worship with ample car parking space and an additional hall. We remember Swami Sridharanandaji's joy (who at the time was in the United States) at being told the news that the Ramakrishna Mission had been successful in purchasing the property.

Swami Sridharanandaji touched many Perth devotees, on both a spiritual and personal level. He had a very special personal relationship with our family and a deep connection to our parents. Despite his age, he was a tireless worker for Guru Maharaj and Holy Mother and often visited the new Ramakrishna Mission centres he helped establish around Australia and also in other places overseas.

When he was 99 years of age, we visited Swamiji at the Sydney Centre. Despite being in frail health, he graced us by talking with us privately on a daily basis while we were there and gave valuable spiritual guidance and advice.

He was a spiritual giant in the service of Guru Maharaj and Holy Mother and we feel deeply privileged to have known him.

Savithiri, Sharmini and Ramesh Lingam

Shankar Chandrashekaran

Sydney

First encounter:

I was fortunate enough to listen to Swami Sridharanandaji in a devotee's home in the year 2000. The talk was arranged by one of the Divine Life Society devotees. I was amazed by Swamiji's brief talk on a spiritual subject. At the end of the talk, the host requested me to give a ride to Swamiji's dwelling place in Strathfield. I gladly accepted the request. During the journey, I asked Swamiji about his activities in Sydney. Swamiji mentioned about the weekly Sunday talks on Bhagavad Gita. He was kind of enough to offer me 'prasad' before taking leave of him. Every Sunday I used to go and play tennis with a group of friends. Hence, I had a dilemma whether I should go to Swamiji's class or not? But my wife, Mythily started going to the class on Sundays. She suggested that I should attend at least one or two classes. I agreed and attended the classes at the Strathfield bowling club. I was captivated by the brilliant rendition of the teachings of Lord Krishna. Only two classes were enough for me to change my mind to give up the Sundays tennis, that I had enjoyed for over 10 years with friends. I started attending the weekly Sunday classes, at Augusta Street bowing club in Strathfield.

Swamiji's Bhagavad Gita classes

Swamiji's enthusiasm, with a commanding voice, a beaming smile, abundant passion for the subject matter attracted not only me but many new devotees. Swamiji's love for the devotees to tailor his talks according to the level of understandings of the audiences has always been his great strength. Though on occasions, I had listened to many of Swamiji's talks on various spiritual topics, Swami Sridharanandaji's discourse is in a class of its own. Other key aspects of the talks included the fact that Swamiji could keep the attention of the audience without any addition of jokes or any captivating anecdotes to describe even abstract ideas.

Key Messages from Swamiji's Gita classes

1. Anchor on God - To keep doing whatever you do but have indomitable faith in the teachings of Gita and have an anchor on God or Guru or 'Ishta devata'!
2. Attitudinal correction – Swamiji often mentioned this to reinforce devotees to make changes in one's own behaviour.
3. Knowing & Being - One has to transition from knowing the teachings and also strive hard to change and bring about self-transformation. While Guru can help, the transformation effort has to come from the disciple only. Gita Ch.6-5 is the proof (प्रमाण). You have to lift yourself by your self-effort. उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत्।
4. Repetition of slokas - I used to wonder why Swamiji is repeating the same slokas? By repetition, the messages can pierce through the heart to make one remember the teachings. Today, I realise that it is essential in any Vedanta teachings to hold on to the key messages.
5. One day during the talks, Swamiji advised all the devotees to memorise at least the 2 slokas of Vibhuti yoga Ch.10 - slokas 10,11

   तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम्
   ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते।

   तेषामेवानुकम्पार्थमहमज्ञानजं तम :
   नाशयाम्यात्मभावस्थो ज्ञानदीपेन भास्वता।

   The two slokas talk about the assurance from Bhagavan that God will not let the devotees down. Instead, He will lift the devotees from their ignorance (darkness of the mind) to grant the right knowledge of the self ('atman').
   By the time, I retired from work in 2013, I realised that the seed was planted by Swamiji's Gita classes. After the completion of the 18 Chapters of Gita by Swamiji in 2014, I came across a young acharya who got initiated by the 35th Jagadguru of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham. He obtained the blessings of the current Jagadguru of Sringeri to conduct Bhagavad Gita study classes as per 'sampradhayam' in Sydney. The acharya used to work out the meaning of each word (पदम्) and the logical arrangement of words in prose order(अन्वय:). The classes included special classes for chanting/memorising and Self-testing of the teaching at the end of each chapter.
6. Other weekly classes In addition to Gita classes, I also attended two other classes conducted by Swamiji during the working week.

   a) **Patanjali yoga sutra class**
      Swamiji's comprehensive teachings of the yoga sutra for a few years has influenced me to practice Yoga asanas. I learned yoga from a yoga master (Uditram), who had accreditation from Yoga Vedanta Forest academy, Rishikesh. Subsequently, Uditram conducted regular classes at the Vedanta centre of Sydney for the devotees. From

Swamiji's classes, I learned that the first two limbs of Ashtanga yoga, namely – 'yama' (external restraint with the world and others) and 'niyama' (internal self-discipline), are essential before progressing into higher limbs - dharana, dhyana and samadhi. The essence of the teachings of yoga sutra is spelt out in the second and third slokas of the first chapter of the Patanjali yoga sutra.

b) **Mundaka Upanishad class**

Swamiji's Mundaka Upanishad classes delved deep into the core teachings of Vedanta, emphasising the pursuit of higher knowledge (para vidya) that leads one towards self-realisation. One of the profound statements that appears in Mundaka 3.2.8 is 'the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman'.(ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति) The regular weekly Upanishad teachings by Swamiji has influenced me to pursue few other Vedanta studies later in life. I joined the online global 'Atma vidya' classes conducted by Swami Omkaranandaji of Theni Ashram, Tamilnadu and then Yogamalika E-learning classes by Swami Paramarthanandaji. In addition, I listen to Swami Sarvapriyanandaji, (Minister of the Vedanta society of New York) talks and Q & A sessions.

Lastly, I want to add that I was fortunate to attend many retreats outside Sydney, where Swamiji was having discourses on various topics. Most of the retreats were held in a beautiful setting with two nights stay at the Mangrove mountains, NSW. These retreats strengthened my spiritual progress.

Shatabdi Dey

Sydney

I am sad to hear of the passing of Revered Swami Sridharanandaji. Between the years of 2017-2019, I had the opportunity of meeting him, and attending his Gita classes on Sundays. I was going through a tough personal patch, and he kindly gave me his time one afternoon where I learnt 2 important things from him,

1. To focus mind on God, to treat God as though he is a member of your family
2. To not speak ill of others, as what you see in others is/maybe a reflection of what is inside you.

While attending his Gita classes, I learnt the meaning of some of the Gita verses regarding managing emotions with thought.

He was very gracious. He gave me a 'Mua' (Bengali), a rice puff. I accepted it happily. I am grateful to Swamiji for his presence and will miss seeing his gracious, kind presence and big smile during the Pujas.

Shubroto Bhattacharjee

Melbourne

First Meeting

Swami Sridharanandaji, known affectionately as Salil Maharaj, came to Melbourne as a guest of Swami Damodaranandaji, then head of the Ramakrishna Mission, Fiji, who visited Australia periodically. My wife Nandita and I attended a meeting in the Moorabbin Town Hall, where Swami Damodaranandaji introduced Swami Sridharanandaji, who sat there like a somnolent Buddha. I wondered what this monk, with his eyes shut, could possibly say to us. Then came his deep, sonorous voice with the words - Dear friends - and I jumped awake, startled out of my dismissive lapse. His language was gripping, with his extensive vocabulary, exact grammar, precise syntax, and clear, faultless delivery. Though the concepts he enumerated may have gone over my head, he was speaking from the depths of his heart – a man steeped in deep knowledge and vast, personal experience of the divine. I was hooked, for life!

Startling Information

On his first visit to our home, in the nineties, he looked up at a wall where two framed pictures hung. "Why is this gentleman's photo in your home?", he asked. Upon learning that this was my

late father, he exclaimed, “You are Sushil Babu’s son"? I had never revealed to him my parents’ names, let alone the reverential way my father had always been addressed. He seemed to have an elephantine memory! Over a simple dinner at our table, one of many, he regaled us with anecdotes about how my father had visited him frequently at the Lucknow Centre, bearing office supplies, as a small contribution to its operations. He revealed how he had personally arranged the marriage alliance between Anjali, daughter of the Lucknow-based Mukherjee family [very close to him] and Subhas, my father’s third brother. He and my Ma turned out to have the same Guru, Swami Virajanandaji! He was just 20 months junior to my Ma. The bond was instant.

Sydney Ashram Instructions

Being stationed in Sydney 2000 – 2004, I attended his lectures in Strathfield and recorded him on my camcorder. He wondered whether the cassette recordings by a dentist devotee would suffice. I suggested that my video recordings captured his every gesture and facial expressions, anchoring the “live" content, and preserving it for posterity. He thought nothing of it until one day he watched a DVD that I lent him of one these recordings and was startled by the difference it made. He then instructed that I should record and photograph every Vedanta event that I should attend, for archiving. He has departed, but I still follow that instruction faithfully.

My Rude, Ignorant Behaviour

A final experience to share occurred at one of the weekly dinners I was required to attend at the Sydney Ashram in Strathfield, usually on a Wednesday. Swami Atmeshanandaji [Suresh Maharaj to us], who had been a Brahmachari at the Bombay Ashram when we had first met him, had been pulled to Sydney by Badé Maharaj, and was at every dinner. Badé Maharaj revealed his desire to acquire a landed building to house a Sydney Centre to be owned by the Ramakrishna Order, estimated to cost $800,000, which was to be financed by a bank loan.

Shocked out of my wits by his daring approach, I asked him two questions at that dinner table:

- With his zero financial muscle or history, why would any bank loan him this colossal amount?
- How on earth did he propose to pay off such a loan, should he be granted one?

His answer was a perfect lesson in absolute faith, and a shining beacon on how to approach problems. “My dear, I am not doing this for personal gain or glory. This work is for Thakur [the Master]. If He so wishes, it will eventuate. If He does not, I shall learn something anyway, and nothing is lost by trying." I shook my head silently at the time in disbelief. How wrong I was!

Swami Sridharanandaji’s quarter century of devoted work in Australia, and the list of centres that he set up nationwide, remains sparkling evidence of the ineffable persuasive charm, unshakeable faith, farsighted vision, and magnetic personality of this divine man of the cloth.

He was surely handcrafted by the Lord in His spare time.

Having him in our life was a privilege and blessing.

Farewell, revered Salil Maharaj. Rest in peace.

Sivagamasundari Amma

Sydney

Every word spoken by my guru Swami Sridharananda rings in my ears, as if he is ever present. When I was with him and offered my pranams, he affectionately called me Amma. I longed to get Diksha from Swamiji, but was too afraid to ask, fearing he would reject me as I was not worthy of his Diksha. To my great surprise, he agreed, and fixed a date. I kept pondering if was really worthy disciple.

I still remember the day when he came to my house and blessed our whole family. When I had to undergo surgery, I was caught by surprise when he came to my house in spite of his busy schedule. That I am really worthy enough for him to give me diksha and to visit me when I was unwell, gives me great confidence that I will forever have the blessings of my Guru. With his Gurumantra, I pray the divine grace shields me in this life and after.

Sometimes after the lectures, we would have prasadam and with great satisfaction we would return home. These memories are forever etched in mind. We were indeed fortunate and blessed to hear Swamiji s classes on karmayoga and jnanayoga. His nectar-like words are forever ringing in my ears.

These memories are forever etched in mind. We were indeed fortunate and blessed to hear Swamiji's classes on karmayoga and jnanayoga. His nector-like words are forever ringing in my ears.

Whenever he saw me he would wave his hands and smile and call me Amma. May be I will hear that voice again when I join him.

My Pranams at His lotus feet

Sivagamasundari Amma

Sumit Raniga

Sydney

Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj is a never ending song in my heart of comfort, happiness and being. I may sometimes forget the words but I always remember the tune.

I was blessed to meet Swamiji for the first time in 1993. I have been blessed to share a very close and sincere relationship with him for 32 years. I have experienced his divine energy, calmness, sincerity, kindness and compassion. He was my friend, my confidant, my spiritual guide, my mentor, and my grandfather. He left an indelible mark on all aspects of my life and character. He remains my inspiration to become the best that I can be intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically so that I can be an instrument of the Divine.

My simple words cannot do justice to what I really feel with him becoming one with the Divine – they cannot fully encapsulate the depth of emotions and sentiments. I have lost my Great Tree.

When Great Trees Fall

By Maya Angelou

When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions hunker down in tall grasses,
and even elephants lumber after safety.

When great trees fall,
in forests small things recoil into silence, their senses eroded beyond fear.

When great souls die, the air around us becomes light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly, see with a hurtful clarity.
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,
examines, gnaws on kind words unsaid, promised walks never taken.

Great souls die and our reality, bound to them, takes leave of us.
Our souls, dependent upon their nurture, now shrink, wizened.
Our minds, formed and informed by their radiance, fall away.
We are not so much maddened as reduced to the unutterable ignorance of dark, cold caves.

And when great souls die,

after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always irregularly.
Spaces fill with a kind of soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be.
Be and be better.
For they existed.

Uma Srinivasan

Sydney

Revered Swami Sridharananda was, is and will forever remain a pure blissful presence in my life. He is the guiding light who helps me walk this life, treading softly, accepting life as it unfolds.

Swamiji appeared in my life – rather I came into his presence – at a point in time when I felt all alone in this world. I was grieving. I was also injured; my right hand was broken. It was as if by magic that Swamiji appeared in my life. There is an ancient saying that the teacher appears when the student is ready.

My Guru Swami Sridharanandaji appeared when life had dealt unexpected blows and I was unprepared to handle the challenges that life had thrown at me. I felt buffeted by the storms of grief, and that is when I regularly started attending Swamiji's Gita talks every Sunday in Sydney.

Like many others, I too listened to Swamiji's talks and felt deeply inspired. He spoke with clarity, precision and authority, and everyone who listened to his talks had something to take away and apply it to their busy working and family life.

But then to be drawn into his presence is an entirely different experience. In early 2009, when I met Swamiji outside the Gita class environment and offered my Pranams, he held my hands and with the tenderest look in his eyes, he said. 'Mother will look after you,' I felt his deep divine love and a beautiful energy transmitting through his hands. It was at once so poignant and absolutely peaceful. His hands were speaking to me as if saying 'Get up child, you will be all right.' At that instant, I knew I would be alright. I would accept whatever life offered. It was as profound and as simple as that for me at that time and continues to be so. Whenever he spoke to me, he would say, 'Karma Yoga is your path. Perform your actions and offer them to God.'

Once I asked him, 'Swamiji, now that I am 65 should I retire?' How foolish of me to ask this question of a Teacher who continued working well into his 90s. Swamiji asked, 'Has your organization asked you to retire?' I said, 'No Swamiji. They are happy for me to continue. And I am happy with my work.' 'Then why should you retire?' he replied. 'Keep working as long as you

can. Work with one hand, but hold on to God and don't let work define who you are. Your work is your service to God. Offer your work and all its benefits it to God.' That motto has stayed with me to this day.

When I think of his teachings, what comes to mind is something he talked about frequently. The four attributes or qualities of every human being: emotionality, rationality, ingenuity, and indomitable willpower. He said these are all available to you. Use these faculties to realise that the divinity is present within you. And if you must be attached to something, be attached to the divine. Once you realise divinity is within you, you can see it everywhere else, in all people, in the entire world. His message was, 'no matter what activity you do, which path you take remember to offer it to God. Your job is to do your work in the best way possible, let it be of the highest quality, and then offer it to God.' He would give the example of choosing a fruit offering for prasad. He would say, 'Don't you choose the best fruit, turn it around, in your hand, examine it for blemishes and then pick the best fruits for offering.? 'Similarly,' he said, 'the work you do should be performed with the highest quality and offered to God.'

His talks were sprinkled with practical advice that anyone could practice. Anyone who met him could see he was kindness personified. He spoke with the softest voice and the kindest eyes. When he spoke to anyone, he was100% with that person. That alone is a lesson for all of us. To be 100% on the person or task in front of us.

Swami Sridharanandaji, through his example, taught me how to be open minded and accept life, no matter what it offered. Good and bad things happen to all of us. It is just how we accept – that is the attitudinal correction he wanted us to make. Once we accept them, life becomes a beautiful walk because we are not buffeted by emotions.

Swami Sridharanandaji remains by my side, guiding every day every thought every piece of work that I do.

I feel privileged that he was with me and helping me through my journey of life, making life what it is for me today, a calm walk guided by his loving teachings.

Swami Sridharanandaji's physical presence may be lost. But his spirit, his words of wisdom and guidance are forever etched in my heart and they are the props of my life's journey.

My deepest Pranams to my Guru Swami Sridharananda.

In Closing

The following beautiful poem written by Sri Rabindranath Tagore seems to be the apt message that Revered Swami Sridharanandaji would have left for all of us.

Farewell My Friends

It was beautiful
As long as it lasted
The journey of my life.
I have no regrets
Whatsoever said
The pain I'll leave behind.
Those dear hearts
Who love and care . . . .
And the strings pulling
At the heart and soul . . . .
The strong arms
That held me up
When my own strength
Let me down.
At the turning of my life
I came across
Good friends,
Friends who stood by me
Even when time raced me by.

Farewell, farewell My friends
I smile and
Bid you goodbye.
No, shed no tears
For I need them not
All I need is your smile.
If you feel sad
Do think of me
For that's what I'll like
When you live in the hearts
Of those you love
Remember then
You never die.

– Sri Rabindranath Tagore

Revered Swami Sridharanandaji will never die. He will forever be in our hearts as a beacon of light and as our spiritual guide.