



REACH

Newsletter of Vedanta Centres of Australia

Motto:

*Atmano mokshartham
jagad hitaya cha,*

**“For one’s own
liberation and for the
welfare of the world.”**

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Sayings and Teachings

Attributes of God lessens

“When one ascends the monument – the three or four-storeyed buildings, tall trees and the grass growing low on the ground all look alike. The more you advance in spirituality, the less you will see the attributes of God.”

--- Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna: A Biography in Pictures; Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, page 66.

Real meditation is spontaneous

“It is wrong if the mind is drawn to worldly objects. By ‘worldly objects’ I mean money, family, and so on. But it is natural for the mind to think of the work in which one is engaged. If meditation is not possible, repeat God’s name. If a meditative mood comes, well and good; but by no means force your mind to meditate. Real meditation is spontaneous.”

--- Sri Sarada Devi.

Holy Mother by Swami Nikhilananda; Ramakrishna-Vedanta Centre, New York, page 220.

The ideal Man

“When a man has no more self in him, no possession, nothing to call ‘me’ or ‘mine’, has given himself up entirely, destroyed himself as it were – in that man is God Himself; for in him self-will is gone, crushed out, annihilated. That is the ideal man.”

--- Swami Vivekananda.

Teachings of Swami Vivekananda; Advaita Ashrama; Kolkata, page 104



Image of Sri Ramakrishna at the temple of Sri Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, Howrah, W. B. India

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FROM JUNE TO OCTOBER 2011

Function	Centre	Date
Reception of General Secretary Maharaj and Public Meetings	Brisbane	To be announced
	Melbourne	To be announced
	Perth	To be announced
	Sydney	To be announced
Guru Purnima	Brisbane	Friday, 15 July 2011
	Melbourne	Friday, 15 July 2011
	Perth	Friday, 15 July 2011
	Sydney	Friday, 15 July 2011
Sri Krishna Janmastami	Melbourne	Monday, 22 August 2011
	Sydney	Monday, 22 August 2011
Durga Puja	Sydney	Monday, 4 October 2011

Welcome

We welcome you all to the Ramakrishna - Vedanta Movement and invite you to attend our functions and actively participate in the propagation of the Universal message of Vedanta as epitomized in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda.

News from and activities of the Vedanta Centres of Australia and New Zealand

For the period from January 2011 to May 2011

ADELAIDE CENTRE

Monthly activities:

a) Swami Sridharananda continued his three-days-a-month visit to Adelaide and delivered discourses on the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* at the Dulwich Community Centre, 14 Union Street, Dulwich SA 5065. The lectures are being recorded. For details of the ongoing monthly programmes please contact Mr. Raman Sharma, Secretary, on 08- 8431 9775 or Mrs. Pathma Iswaran on 08-8379 5336.

b) Readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* was held every month on a prescheduled Sunday from 2:30 p.m. at 33 Woodhouse Crescent, Wattle Park, SA 5066.

Celebrations:

a) The **Annual Celebration** was held on Saturday, the 26th of March at the Dulwich Community Centre from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. A group of devotees sang bhajans while Swami Chandrashekhara performed the traditional worship. He also spoke on 'Vedanta and Sri Ramakrishna'. Many devotees participated in the

function and later enjoyed the *prasada*. He also gave a parlour talk on 'Swami Vivekananda and his message' on the 27th of March in the evening after rendering bhajans.

BRISBANE CENTRE

Daily activities:

The Centre is situated at **181 Burbong Street, Chapel Hill, QLD 4073**, (Phone no. 07-3720 0228) Worship in the morning and *arati*, *bhajans*, and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* are performed regularly. A resident volunteer looks after the day-to-day activities of the Centre.

Monthly and Annual activities:

Swami Atmeshananda visited Brisbane once a month and delivered talks on the *Bhagavad-Gita* as well as on other spiritual topics.

Celebrations:

a) The **birth anniversary** of Holy Mother Sri Saradadevi was celebrated on the 1st of January 2011 at the Indooroopilly Senior Citizen's club. Around 130 devotees participated. Swami Atmeshanandaji, accompanied by Brs. Shivaram and Harshal conducted the programme.

b) The **birth anniversary** of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated on the 5th of February at the Centre. Swami Atmeshananda conducted the programme.

c) The **birth anniversary** of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated on the 12th of March at the hall of Figtree Pocket Public School. Swami Atmeshananda conducted the worship and the local devotees presented devotional music. The local children recited incidents from the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

Swami Sridharananda visited the Centre from the 17th to 22nd of May along with Swami Atmeshananda. During the visit, he delivered a talk at the Griffith University on 'The Law of Karma' and another at the University of Queensland on 'Evolution of the Concept of the Divine' on the 18th and 19th of May, respectively. The Swamis participated in the Annual Celebrations of the Brisbane centre on the 21st of May when Swami Sridharananda spoke on the Concept of Vedanta. Around 400 persons participated in this event.

Other Activities:

Swami Sridharananda visited Brisbane



The shrine and devotees at the annual celebration in Adelaide



The shrine and devotees at the birth anniversary celebration of Holy Mother Sri Saradadevi in Brisbane



Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk, Minister for Transport & Multicultural Affairs, Qld, addressing the annual day meeting

on the 5th of April and also on the 3rd of May 2011.

CANBERRA CENTRE

Monthly activities:

Swami Sridharananda conducted classes on the *Bhagavad-Gita* twice a month at the Belconnen Community Centre in Canberra. He also gave parlour talks once a month based on the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Contacts: Mr. J. Venkataraman, Secretary - 02-6258 7612 and Dr. Ian Doherty, Treasurer - 02-6247 8519.

MELBOURNE CENTRE

Daily Activities:

Vesper service is held daily from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Centre at **7 Judy Court, Vermont, Vic 3133**. It includes set hymns, scriptural readings and meditation and occasional devotional singing.

The bookstall made available literature on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, Vedanta philosophy, and other

spiritual topics in print, audio, and visual media throughout the period. For further information please contact Mr. Suresh Ravinutala, Secretary, on 03-9803 6154 or Mr. Mohana Krishnan on 03-9801 6174.

Weekly/Monthly Activities:

a) Swami Sridharananda continued to deliver monthly discourses on the *Bhagavad-Gita* from Thursday to Saturday of a prescheduled week at Monash University Clayton Campus of Law, Wellington Road (L. Theatre L1). The Thursday and Friday sessions were from 7:45 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. and the sessions on Saturdays were from 11 a.m. to 12 noon. The recordings of these discourses are available in Audio, Video and MP3 formats.

b) **Prayer Meetings** were conducted on the first Sunday of every month, from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. which included prayer, recitation of sacred mantras, singing of *kirtan* and *bhajans*, followed by selected readings from

the scriptures and discussions on them by the participants. The meetings concluded with an *arati* and the distribution of *prasad*.

c) A **Group study** on *Bhagavad Gita* continued every alternate Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

d) **Group study** through viewing of the '*Bhagavad-Gita*' lecture series on Video were held every Saturday from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Celebrations:

a) The **birth anniversary** of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated on the 26th January 2011. The programme started at 9:15 a.m. and concluded at about 12:30 p.m. It included formal worship, *Havan*, *bhajans*, floral offering followed by *arati* and *prasad* distribution. The programme was attended by about 65 devotees and was conducted by Swami Chandrashekaranda. He also delivered a talk on 'The life and Teachings of Swami Vivekananda'.

b) **Shiva-Ratri** was observed on Wednesday, the 2nd of March after the evening Arati with chanting and Abhishekam.

c) **The birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna** according to the Thithi (lunar phase) was celebrated on Sunday, the 6th of March at 5:30 p.m. with bhajans and readings.

d) **Annual celebration** and formal **birth anniversary** of Sri Ramakrishna was held on Saturday, the 19th of March with a special worship, *Havan* and *Bhajans*. The worship



Birth anniversary of Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda at Melbourne Centre

started at 9 a.m. and concluded at about 12 noon. It was conducted by Swami Chandrashekaranda.

e) **Meditation sessions** were held from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. from the 25th to 27th of January and from the 18th to 21st of March 2011.

f) **Ramnavami** was observed on Sunday, the 17th of April at 5:30 p.m.

Other Activities:

On Sunday, the 10th of April a recital of Indian **classical music** was rendered by two young disciples of Padma Bhusan Smt. Girija Devi of Banaras Gharana — **Debapriya Adhikari** (vocalist) and **Samanwaya Sarkar** (Sitarist). They presented a duet in classical music and then they presented tappa, tap-kheyal, thumri, dadra, chaiti, holi, kajri and jhula.

PERTH CENTRE

Daily Activities:

The Centre is located at **51 Golf View Street, Yokine W.A. 6060** where vesper service is held daily at 7 p.m. with *arati*, readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and meditation. The Centre maintains a small bookstall and a library. Contacts: Mr. Unni Krishnan, Assistant Secretary - 0430 391 369, Mr. K.P. Basu Mallick Secretary - 0422 370 066.

Monthly Activities:

Swami Sridharananda visited the Centre every month from Thursday to Saturday on prescheduled weeks and conducted discourses on *the Bhagavad Gita*. About 50 devotees

attended the discourses. Monthly *satsang* which includes the singing of *Bhajans* and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and other inspiring books were conducted on the first Sunday of every month from 11 a.m.

Celebrations:

The birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna were celebrated on the 29th of February and on the 6th of March 2011 respectively.

SYDNEY CENTRE

Daily Activities:

At the Centre at 2 Stewart Street, Ermington, chanting, daily worship and meditation is held every morning from 6:30 a.m. to 8 a.m. Vesper service is held the evening starting at 7 p.m. includes devotional singing and a reading from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Counselling, interviews and discussions with devotees are also conducted regularly. The library is available to devotees for reference and research. The Centre maintains a bookstall which has a range of books on the Ramakrishna -Vivekananda, Vedanta, Yoga, and other spiritual literature. Devotional songs, discourses on *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, *Mundaka Upanisad*, and other topics are also available in various media.

Weekly/ Monthly Activities:

The Centre conducted the following activities in Sydney:

a) Swami Sridharananda conducted

classes on the *Bhagavad-Gita* every Sunday morning from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Centre. Swami Damodarananda gave talks on spiritual subjects during the travels of Swami Sridharananda.

b) Classes on *Bhagavad Gita* were also conducted by Swami Sridharananda at 1 Edwin Street, Fairlight, **Manly Beach** on Tuesdays from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

c) Some devotees availed **spiritual counselling** and guidance. The Swamis also visited the homes of devotees when required.

d) Swami Atmeshananda conducted classes on Meditation and Spiritual Life for ladies on two Mondays in a month .

e) **Meditation** sessions were held on Sundays from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.

f) Classes on **Sanskrit language** were held on Saturdays and Sundays for various levels of adult students in the morning and evening.

g) Classes on Vivekachudamani were conducted on Sundays from 4 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.

h) *Yogasana* Classes for adults were held every Saturday at the Centre from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

i) **Bala Sangha** Classes on **moral and spiritual lessons, drama and movement** were conducted for children every Saturday from 4:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. at the Centre.

j) Classes on **moral and spiritual lessons** were also conducted for



Bhagavad-Gita class at Perth Centre



A group photo at the Easter Retreat

children at Carlingford West Primary School and Eastwood Public School on Wednesdays from 9:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. during the academic term.

k) For the benefit of students the Centre provided **English Language tutoring** on Tuesdays from 5:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. during the school term.

Celebrations:

a) The **Birth anniversary** of Swami Vivekananda was celebrated on the 26th of January 2011. The programme started at 9 a.m. and concluded at about 12:30 p.m. It included formal worship, *havan*, *bhajans*, floral offering followed by *arati* and *prasad* distribution. The programme was attended by around 120 devotees in the morning and about 150 devotees in the evening. Swami Sridharananda delivered a talk on 'The life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda'.

b) **Mahashivaratri** was observed on the 3rd of March at the Ermington centre. The solemn occasion was marked by worship, chanting from the Vedas and devotional singing.

c) The **birth anniversary** of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated on the 6th of March at the Centre. Special worship, chanting, devotional music, a talk by Swami Sridharananda and distribution of Prasad were the main components of the programme. Around 140 devotees participated in this programme both in the morning and evening.

d) **Ramanavami** was celebrated with singing Ramanam Sankirtana and bhajans.

e) The birth anniversaries of **Sri Shankaracharya** and **Buddha Deva** were observed on the 17th of May from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. Reading and talk on the life of Bhagavan Buddha were included in the programme.

Other Activities:

a) A day long spiritual retreat was held at the Ermington Ashrama on the 29th of January 2011. Around 45 devotees attended the programme. The theme of the retreat was entitled '**Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana**'. Swamis Damodarananda and Sridharananda conducted the classes.

b) Swami Atmeshananda visited Townsville from the 25th to 27th of February on invitation by the local Vedanta group and held a class on the **Bhagavad Gita** and conducted a Satsanga programme.

c) On the 20th March 2011 two young upcoming artistes from Kolkata, India - Debapriya Adhikari, a vocal artist and Samanwaya Sarkar, an exponent of the Sitar, performed a Duet from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Centre. This was highly appreciated by those devotees who attended this programme.

d) A **meeting** of the Managing Committee was held at 11 a.m. on the 10th of April 2011.

e) A three day **Children's Day-Camp** was organised from the 12th to 14th of April. About 42 children took part in it. Mantra-recitation, Yoga, clay modeling, craft and other activities were organized to stimulate the creativity of children.

f) A **spiritual retreat** was organised during the Easter holidays from the afternoon of the 22nd of April to the afternoon of the 25th of April at the Satyananda Yoga Retreat, Mangrove Creek, about 100 k.m. north of Sydney. The programme included detailed discourses by Swami Sridharananda about various aspects of meditation and practice of it in our day to day lives, Vedic chanting, meditation, singing of *Bhajans*, video show on Belur Math and Sri Shankaracharya, bushwalking, Karma Yoga, Yoga Exercises and *Yoga-Nidra*. The question and answer session was very lively. There were 46 participants at the retreat.

Overseas Visit:

a) Swami Sridharananda visited New Zealand from the 2nd to 7th of February and again from the 31st March to 4th of April 2011 for conducting classes on the **Bhagavad-Gita** at the Auckland Centre.

b) Swami Sridharananda visited Kuala Lumpur from the 23rd to the 29th of March 2011. During his visit there, he delivered the Convocation address at the Lincoln College and delivered a talk at the local branch centre of the Ramakrishna Order named **Persetuan Ramakrishna Sarada**.

Visiting Monastics

Swami Tadananda from the Ramakrishna Mission, Fiji visited Sydney from the 22nd to 27th of March en route to China and India. He, along with Swamis Damodarananda and



Birth anniversary celebration of Sri Ramakrishna at the Sydney Centre

Atmeshananda and other devotees, participated in a fund raising programme on the 26th of March at the North Rocks community Centre organized by devotees of the Fiji centre.

AUCKLAND CENTRE, NZ

Daily activities:

Vesper service is held daily at the Centre at **27 Arawa Street, New Lynn, Auckland** from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. It includes singing of hymns, readings from the text *God Lived with Them* followed by meditation.

Monthly and annual activities:

a) On the **second Sunday** of every month *Satsang* programmes, which includes singing of *Bhajans*, discourse on the *Ramayana*, reading and discussion about the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and meditation were conducted from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

b) On the **last Sunday** of every month reading and discussion on *Srimad-Bhagavad Gita*, *the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the life and teachings of Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda were conducted in addition to the above. Music and chanting classes were also held on these days.

c) Swami Sridharananda conducted *Bhagavad Gita* classes from the 3rd to 6th of February and from the 1st to 3rd of April 2011 at the Centre.

Celebrations:

a) *Kalpataru* day was celebrated at the Centre on the 1st of January 2011 from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon with *Kirtana* and reading from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

b) The birth anniversary of **Swami**

Vivekananda was celebrated on the 26th of January 2011. The programme was conducted after the evening Arati till 9 p.m. Swamiji's life and message were presented to the devotees by Vivekananda Youth Group and prasad was distributed.

c) **Mahashivaratri** was celebrated on the 3rd of March 2011. The programme started with bhajans at 8 p.m. after the Arati and ended at 9 p.m. The members of Vivekananda Youth Group participated in the programme.

d) The birth anniversary of **Sri Ramakrishna** was celebrated on the 6th of February 2011 at the Centre. The dawn program started at 4:30 a.m. with the singing of *Sri Ramakrishna Suprabhatam* followed by *Sri Ramakrishna Ashtottrasata Namavali* and bhajans. The morning programme ended at 5:30 a.m. The day programme started at 10 a.m. which included Bhajans, reading from *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and, talks on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Programme ended at 1 p.m. with the floral offering (*Pushpanjali*) and distribution of *prasad*.

e) The birth anniversary of **Sri Shankaracharya** was celebrated on the 8th of May 2011 from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. with bhajans, reading from the life of Shankaracharya and the message of Vivekachudamani by the Vivekananda youth Group.

f) The birth anniversary of **Bhagavan Buddha** was celebrated on the 17th of May from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. A talk on the life of Bhagavan Buddha and related reading were included in the programme.

THE LONG ROAD HOME

For a seeker of truth
Life is no fun.
Having spent my life
Out of the sun.
A Catholic born and bred
But only fed a life based on sin
And suffering which seemed out of line
With love to questions I asked came hollow replies-
Why would I ask "Who am I?"
A wife, a mother, a yogi, a friend,
A daughter, a sister,
There seemed no end to who am I.
But my heart yearned for more knowledge,
High mountains have I climbed,
Many streams have I forged
Trying to discern the truth of my Being.
The Yoga Sutras
Opened the door to clarity.
Persevering practice and detachment became the norm
As I fought my way out of egoist storms.
During my battles God took pity And heard my cry.
She showed me the Gita as a means to fly.
But She withheld the teacher.
She kept me waiting many years,
Testing my mettle
But at last She showed mercy and Introduced me to Swami.
Before him I sat, -no longer a sinner
But a beginner
In the school of Vedanta.
The idea of God's 'Is-ness' and 'Am-ness'
Saturated my mind,
Challenging and channelling my actions
To perceive the Unity in Diversity.
Yet the clouds of samskaras
Still threaten my days
For maya still conjures Her spell.
But now it is the Divine Play
In which I act
Trying to remember my lines-
"As you think so you become, God and I are one."

— *Mrs. Robyn McCarthy*, a devotee and a Yoga Teacher, Melbourne.



Birth anniversary celebration of Sri Ramakrishna in Auckland



Audience at the *Bhagavad-Gita* class

Discourses on Four Paths of Yoga by Swami Vivekananda

Our main problem is to be free. It is evident then that until we realise ourselves as the Absolute, we cannot attain to deliverance. Yet there are various ways of attaining to this realisation. These methods have the generic name of Yoga (to join - to join ourselves to our Reality). These Yogas, though divided into various groups, can principally be classed into four and as each is only a method leading indirectly to the realisation of the Absolute, they are suited to different temperaments. It is not that the assumed man becomes the Real Man or Absolute. There is no becoming of the Absolute. It is ever free, ever perfect; but the ignorance that has covered Its real nature for a period of time is to be removed. Therefore, the whole scope of all systems of Yoga (each religion represents one) is to clear up this ignorance and allow the Atman to restore Its own nature. The chief helps in this liberation are Abhyasa and Vairagya. Vairagya is non-attachment to life, because it is the will to enjoy that brings all this bondage in its train; and Abhyasa is constant practice of any one of the Yogas.

Karma-Yoga

Karma-Yoga is purifying the mind by means of work. Now if any work is done, good or bad, it must produce as a result a good or bad effect; no power can stay it, once the cause is present. Therefore good action producing good Karma, and bad action, bad Karma, the soul will go on in eternal bondage without ever hoping for deliverance. Now Karma belongs only to the body or the mind, never to the Atman (Self); only it can cast a veil before the Atman. The veil cast by bad Karma is ignorance. Good Karma has the power to strengthen the moral powers. And thus it creates non-attachment; it destroys the tendency towards bad Karma and thereby purifies the mind. But if the work is done with the intention of enjoyment, it then produces only that very enjoyment and does not purify the mind or Chitta. Therefore all work should be done without any desire to enjoy the fruits thereof. All fear and all desire to enjoy here or hereafter must be banished forever by the Karma-Yogi. Moreover, this Karma without the desire of return will destroy selfishness, which is the root of all bondage.

The watchword of the Karma-Yogi is "not I, but Thou", and no amount of self-sacrifice is too much for him. But he does this without any desire to go to heaven, or gain name or fame or any other benefit in this world. Although the explanation and rationale of this unselfish work is only in Jnana-Yoga, yet the natural divinity of man makes him love all sacrifice simply for the good of others, without any ulterior motive,

whatever his creed or opinion. Again, with many the bondage of wealth is very great; and Karma-Yoga is absolutely necessary for them as breaking the crystallisation that has gathered round their love of money.

Bhakti-Yoga

Bhakti or worship or love in some form or other is the easiest, the most pleasant, and most natural way of man. The natural state of this universe is attraction; and that is surely followed by an ultimate disunion. Even so, love is the natural impetus of union in the human heart; and though itself a great cause of misery when properly directed towards the proper object, it brings deliverance. The object of Bhakti is God. Love cannot be without a subject and an object. The object of love again must be at first a being who can reciprocate our love. Therefore the God of love must be in some sense a human God. He must be a God of love. Aside from the question whether such a God exists or not, it is a fact that to those who have love in their heart this Absolute appears as a God of love, as personal.

The lower forms of worship, which embody the idea of God as a judge or punisher or someone to be obeyed through fear, do not deserve to be called love, although they are forms of worship gradually expanding into higher forms. We now pass on to the consideration of love itself. We will illustrate love by a triangle, of which the first angle at the base is fearlessness. So long as there is fear, it is not love. Love banishes

all fear. A mother with her baby will face a tiger to save her child. The second angle is that love never asks, never begs. The third or the apex is that love loves for the sake of love itself. Even the idea of the object vanishes. Love is the only form in which love is loved. This is the highest abstraction and the same as the Absolute.

Raja-Yoga

This Yoga fits in with every one of these Yogas. It fits inquirers of all classes with or without any belief, and it is the real instrument of religious inquiry. As each science has its particular method of investigation, so is this Raja-Yoga the method of religion. This science also is variously applied according to various constitutions. The chief parts are the Pranayama, concentration and meditation. For those who believe in God, a symbolic name, such as **Om** or other sacred words received from a Guru, will be very helpful. Om is the greatest, meaning the Absolute. Meditating on the meaning of these holy names while repeating them, is the chief practice.

Jnana-Yoga

This is divided into three parts. First: hearing the truth – that the Atman is the only reality and that everything else is Maya (relativity). Second: reasoning upon this philosophy from all points of view. Third: giving up all further argumentation and realising the Truth. This realisation comes from firstly, being certain that Brahman is real and everything else is unreal; secondly, giving up all desire for enjoyment; thirdly, controlling our

senses and the mind; fourthly, intense desire to be free. Meditating on this reality always and reminding the soul of its real nature are the only ways in this Yoga. It is the highest, but most difficult. Many persons get an intellectual grasp of it, but very few attain realisation.

Discourses on Jnana-Yoga

Om Tat Sat! To know the Om is to know the secret of the universe. The object of Jnana-Yoga is the same as that of Bhakti and Raja Yogas, but the method is different. This is the Yoga for the strong, for those who are neither mystical nor devotional, but rational. As the Bhakti-Yogi works his way to complete oneness with the Supreme through love and devotion, so the Jnana-Yogi forces his way to the realisation of God by the power of pure reason. He must be prepared to throw away all old idols, all old beliefs and superstitions, all desire for this world or another, and be determined only to find freedom. Without Jnana (knowledge) liberation cannot be ours. It consists in knowing what we really are, that we are beyond fear, beyond birth, beyond death. The highest good is the realisation of the Self. It is beyond sense, beyond thought. The real "I" cannot be grasped. It is the eternal subject and can never become the object of knowledge, because knowledge is only of the related, not of the Absolute. All sense-knowledge is limitation, it is an endless chain of cause and effect. This world is a relative world, a shadow of the real; still, being the plane of equipoise where happiness and misery are about evenly balanced, it is the only plane where man can realise his true Self and know that he is Brahman.

This world is "the evolution of nature and the manifestation of God." It is our interpretation of Brahman or the Absolute, seen through the veil of Maya or appearance. The world is not zero, it has a certain reality; it only *appears* because Brahman *is*.

How shall we know the knower? The Vedanta says, 'We are It, but we can never know It, because It can never become the object of our

knowledge." Modern science also says that It cannot be known. We can, however, have glimpses of It from time to time. When the delusion of this world is once broken, it will come back to us, but no longer will it hold any reality for us. We shall know it as a mirage. To reach behind the mirage is the aim of all religions. That man and God are one is the constant teaching of the Vedas, but only few are able to penetrate behind the veil and reach the realisation of this truth.

The first thing to be got rid of by him who would be a Jnani is fear. Fear is one of our worst enemies. Next, believe in nothing until you *know* it. Constantly tell yourself, "I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am not thought, I am not even consciousness; I am the Atman." When you can throw away *all*, only the true Self will remain. The Jnani's meditation is of two sorts: firstly, to deny and think away everything we are *not*; secondly, to insist upon what we really are – the Atman, the One Self—Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss. The true rationalist must go on and fearlessly follow his reason to its farthest limits. It will not answer to stop anywhere on the road. When we begin to deny, *all* must go until we reach what cannot be thrown away or denied, which is the real "I". That "I" is the witness of the universe, it is unchangeable, eternal, infinite. Now, layer after layer of ignorance covers it from our eyes, but it remains ever the same.

Two birds sat on one tree. The bird at the top was calm, majestic, beautiful, perfect. The lower bird was always hopping from twig to twig, now eating sweet fruits and being happy, now eating bitter fruits and being miserable. One day, when he had eaten a fruit more bitter than usual, he glanced up at the calm majestic upper bird and thought, "How I would like to be like him!" and he hopped up a little way towards him. Soon he forgot all about his desire to be like the upper bird, and went on as before, eating sweet and bitter fruits and being happy and miserable.

Again, he looked up, again he went up a little nearer to the calm and majestic upper bird. Many times was this repeated until at last he drew very near the upper bird; the brilliancy of his plumage dazzled him, seemed to absorb him, and finally, to his wonder and surprise, he found there was only one bird – he was the upper bird all the time and had but just found it out.

Man is like that lower bird, but if he perseveres in his efforts to rise to the highest ideal he can conceive of, he too will find that he was the Self all the time and the other was but a dream. To separate ourselves utterly from matter and all belief in its reality is true Jnana. The Jnani must keep ever in his mind the "Om Tat Sat", that is, Om the only real existence. Abstract unity is the foundation of Jnana-Yoga. This is called Advaitism (without dualism or dvaitism). This is the corner-stone of the Vedanta philosophy, the Alpha and the Omega. "Brahman alone is true, all else is false and I am Brahman." Only by telling ourselves this until we make it a part of our very being, can we rise beyond all duality, beyond both good and evil, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, and know ourselves as the One, eternal, unchanging, infinite – the "One without a second."

The Jnana-Yogi must be as intense as the narrowest sectarian, yet as broad as the heavens. He must control his mind absolutely, be able to be a Buddhist or a Christian, to have the power to consciously divide himself into all these different ideas and yet hold fast to the eternal harmony. Constant drilling alone can enable us to get this control. All variations are in the One, but we must learn not to identify ourselves with what we do, and to hear nothing, see nothing, talk of nothing but the thing in hand. We must put in our whole soul and be intense. Day and night tell yourself, "I am He, I am He."

The greatest teacher of the Vedanta philosophy was Shankaracharya. By solid reasoning he extracted from the Vedas the truth of Vedanta, and on them built up the wonderful

system of Jnana that is taught in his commentaries. He unified all the conflicting descriptions of Brahman and showed that there is only one Infinite Reality. He showed too that as man can only travel slowly on the upward road, all the varied presentations are needed to suit his varying capacity. Shankara taught that three things were the great gifts of God: firstly, the human body; secondly, thirst after God, and thirdly a teacher who can show us the light. When these three great gifts are ours, we may know that our redemption is at hand. Only knowledge can free and save us, but with knowledge must go virtue.

The essence of Vedanta is that there is but one Being and that every soul is that being in full, not a part of that being. *All* the sun is reflected in each dew-drop. Appearing in time, space, causality, this Being is man, as we know him, but behind all appearance is the one reality. Unselfishness is the denial of the lower or apparent self. We have to free ourselves from this miserable dream that we are these bodies. We must *know* the truth, "I am He." We are not drops to fall into the ocean and be lost; each one is the *whole*, infinite ocean, and will know it when released from the fetters of illusion. Infinity cannot be divided, the "One without a second" can have no second, all *is* that One. This knowledge will come to all, but we should struggle to attain it now, because until we have it, we cannot really give mankind the real help. The Jivanmukta ('the living free' or one who knows) alone is able to give real love, real charity, real Truth, and it is Truth alone that makes us free. Desire makes slaves of us, it is an insatiable tyrant and gives its victims no rest; but the Jivanmukta has conquered all desire by rising to the knowledge that he is the One and there is nothing left to wish for.

The mind brings before us all our delusions – body, sex, creed, caste, bondage; so we have to tell the truth to the mind incessantly, until it is made to realise it. Our real nature is all bliss, and all the pleasure we

know is but a reflection, an atom, of that bliss we get from touching our real nature. That is beyond both pleasure and pain. It is the "witness" of the universe, the unchanging reader before whom turn the leaves of the book of life.

Through practice comes Yoga, through Yoga comes knowledge, through knowledge, love, and through love bliss.

"Me and mine" is a superstition; we have lived in it so long that it is well-nigh impossible to shake it off. Still we must get rid of it if we would rise to the highest. We must be bright and cheerful, long faces do not make religion. Religion should be the most joyful thing in the world, because it is the best. Asceticism cannot make us holy. Why should a man who loves God and who is pure be sorrowful? He should be like a happy child, be truly a child of God. The essential thing in religion is making the heart pure; the Kingdom of Heaven is within us, but only the pure in heart can see the King. While we think of the world, it is only the world for us; but let us come to it with the feeling that the world is God, and we shall have God. This should be our thought towards everyone and everything – parents, children, husbands, wives, friends, and enemies. Think how it would change the whole universe for us if we could consciously fill it with God! See nothing but God! All sorrow, all struggles, all pain would be forever lost to us!

Jnana is "creedlessness", but that does not mean that it despises creeds. It only means that a stage above and beyond creeds has been gained. The Jnani seeks not to destroy, but to help all. As all rivers roll their waters into the sea and become one, so all creeds should lead to Jnana and become one.

The reality of everything depends upon Brahman, and only as we really grasp this truth, have we any reality. When we cease to see any differences, then we know that "I and the Father are One."

Jnana is taught very clearly by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. This great poem is held to be the Crown jewel of all Indian literature. It is a kind of commentary on the Vedas. It shows us that our battle for spirituality must be fought out in this life; so we must not flee from it, but rather compel it to give us all that it holds. As the Gita typifies this struggle for higher things, it is highly poetical to lay the scene in a battlefield. Krishna in the guise of a charioteer to Arjuna, leader of one of the opposing armies, urges him not to be sorrowful, not to fear death, since he knows he is immortal, that nothing which changes can be in the *real* nature of man. Through chapter after chapter, Krishna teaches the higher truths of philosophy and religion to Arjuna. It is these teachings which make this poem wonderful; practically the whole of the Vedanta philosophy is included in them. The Vedas teach that the soul is infinite and in no way affected by the death of the body. The soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose centre is in some body. Death (so-called) is but a change of centre. God is a circle whose circumference is nowhere and whose centre is everywhere, and when we can get out of the narrow centre of body, we shall realise God – our true Self.

The present is only a line of demarcation between the past and the future; so we cannot rationally say that we care only for the present, as it has no existence apart from the past and the future. It is all one complete whole, the idea of time being merely a condition imposed upon us by the form of our understanding.

(To be continued in the next publication of Reach)

Source:

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda; Mayavati Memorial Edition; Volume VIII; Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata, pages 152-5; pages 1-9.

"The Impersonal God seen through the mists of sense is personal."

— Swami Vivekananda

Complete Works of Sister Nivedita 1: 120

According to the Vishuddha Siddhanta Almanac Swami Premananda's birthday celebration was observed on Wednesday, the 15th of December, 2010.

(Part Two)

Baburam learned how his compassionate guru served mankind and he later followed Ramakrishna's example in his own life. Years later he recalled:

"When he was suffering from the excruciating pain of cancer, everyday he would wait for seekers of God to come. Sometimes he would look out at the street and say - 'What has happened? Nobody has come today...' He could not talk but only whisper. He was hungry but could not eat. He found no relief either in sitting or in lying down. Day and night he felt a burning sensation all over his body. In spite of all this terrible suffering, he never stopped showering his grace on people and helping them realise God. This went on for a year and a half. If this is not crucifixion, I don't know what is."

Days of Wandering and Austerity

Sri Ramakrishna passed away on 16th August 1886. Baburam temporarily moved to his mother's Calcutta residence. Shortly thereafter, the disciples established the first Ramakrishna Monastery at Baranagore. In the middle of December 1886, Baburam's mother invited the Master's disciples to her country home in Antpur. Narendra, Baburam, Sharat, Shashi, Tarak, Kali, Niranjan, Gangadhar and Sarada travelled to Antpur by train, singing devotional songs along the way.

One cold night, a bonfire was lit in the courtyard. The disciples gathered around it and meditated for a long while. Then Naren began to tell them the story of Jesus, placing emphasis on his great renunciation. Greatly inspired, the disciples took the vow of renunciation in front of the 'dhuni' fire. Later, they discovered that this evening had been Christmas Eve, and they felt that a more propitious time for their vow could



Swami Premananda
(bliss of divine love)
(1861-1918)

not have been chosen. After returning to Baranagore, the disciples took formal sannyasa, performing 'viraja homa' (a special fire ceremony) in late January 1887. Narendra gave Baburam the name 'Premananda', meaning "bliss of divine love", remembering the Master's remark that Sri Radha herself, the goddess of love, was partially incarnated in him.

In the last part of February 1887, after Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary, Premananda left for Puri with Saradananda and Abhedananda. They stayed six months at Emar Monastery and attended the Chariot Festival of Jagannath. They lived on prasad from the temple and would pass their days in meditation and *japam*. Towards the end of August they left Puri, and after visiting Bhubaneswar, Konarak, Udaygiri and Khadagiri, they returned to Baranagore.

Sometime in 1889 Premananda went to Varanasi, where he met the great illumined soul Trailanga Swami

and the learned ascetic Swami Bhaskarananda. In 1890 he went to Gazipur to see Vivekananda, who was then staying with the great yogi Pavhari Baba. Premananda became ill there, and was sent back to Varanasi to live with Abhedananda. On 13th April 1890 Premananda's brother-in-law, Balaram Basu, died. Upon hearing this sad news, the swami returned to Calcutta to console his sister.

The Ramakrishna Monastery was in Baranagore from 1886 to 1892, and in Alambazar (near Dakshineswar) from 1892 to 1897. While living in Alambazar, Premananda went to Dakshineswar quite often. He would practise japam and meditation for long hours either in the Panchavati or in the Master's room. Forgetting food and drink, he lived on the memory of the Master. He was extremely simple, humble and self-effacing. Although the monastery was their permanent home, from time to time the disciples would travel to various holy places in India for pilgrimage and to practise spiritual disciplines.

In 1895 Premananda visited various holy places in northern India, and at last settled at Kalababu's Kunja, Balaram Basu's retreat in Vrindaban. He would spend the entire day absorbed in the contemplation of God, and in the evening he would visit the deities in the temples.

After some time, Brahmachari Kalikrishna (later Swami Virajananda) joined him. During the Swing Festival of Krishna, they and Bhaktamal, a Vaishnava monk, decided to circumambulate Vrindaban. Bhaktamal asked Premananda to put on a pair of shoes, but the latter refused as it would be disrespectful to the holy place. Living on alms, they stayed in Barsana, the birth-place of Radha, for a month and a half. At last they returned to

Vrindaban. Shortly thereafter Kalikrishna became ill; Premananda took him to Etawah for treatment. They stayed with Hariprasanna (later Swami Vijnanananda) who was working there as an engineer.

In Etawah they heard the news that Vivekananda was returning to India from the West. Towards the end of 1896 they left for Calcutta; but on the way they stopped at Burdwan to visit Holy Mother at Jayrambati. They stayed there for a couple of weeks.

At the Alambazar Monastery

After returning from the West, Vivekananda introduced a daily routine in Alambazar Monastery: in the morning-meditation, chanting, exercise, karma yoga; in the afternoon-scripture class, question and answer sessions, vespers, meditation. If a monk did not get up early in the morning, he had to beg for his food that day. Once, Premananda woke up late. He went to Swamiji and said, "I am sorry I did not get up early today; brother, you made the rule that one should be punished for that reason. Please punish me." Immediately Swamiji gravely said, "Baburam, could you imagine that I would punish you?" Tears rolled from Swamiji's eyes. Brahmananda mediated the situation, saying, "It is not a question of punishment. According to the rule one is supposed to beg food that day, that's all." Premananda left to beg for his food.

In March 1897 Ramakrishnananda left for Madras to start a center, and Swami Premananda assumed the responsibility of the worship service. The Ramakrishna Monastery was moved from Alambazar to Nilambar Babu's garden house in Belur on 13th February 1898; and finally Swamiji consecrated the Belur Math on 9th December 1898. In the meantime Premananda left for pilgrimage to Northern India on 4th April 1898 and returned in December during the consecration ceremony. Premananda then resumed his worship service, and Swamiji made him one of the trustees of Belur Math.

One morning at 9 o'clock Premananda was about to start worship in Belur Math's old shrine. Swamiji came to the shrine to bow down to the Master. Seeing Premananda, Swamiji said, "Brother, all these days you have been worshipping the Lord with flowers and sandal paste; now start worshipping the living gods. Go to Belur village and serve the poor and the afflicted." Premananda left the shrine to obey his leader's order. In the village he found an old, sick widow and offered her treatment from the monastery's charitable dispensary; but the woman refused his help. Then he came across a few unwashed children in another area; he brought them to the monastery, cleaned them, fed them and sent them back to their homes. When Premananda was asked, he told Swamiji about his experience, "When I was serving them, I felt I was actually serving the Master through living gods."

Sri Ramakrishna made Vivekananda the leader of his disciples. It is really astounding how they obeyed and respected him. One day in Belur, Sharat Chandra Chakrabarty had a dream that he was worshipping his guru, Vivekananda. He told Swamiji about his dream and begged for permission to worship him. Swamiji had to acquiesce. When the ceremony was over, Swamiji said to the disciple, "Well, your worship is finished. Now Premananda will be in a rage at your sacrilegious act of worshipping my feet in the flower tray meant for Sri Ramakrishna's worship." Before his words were finished, Premananda entered the room. Swamiji said to him, "Look, what a sacrilege he has committed. With the articles of the Master's worship, he has worshipped me." Premananda said with a smile, "Well done. Are you and the Master different?"

In the beginning, in order to train the novices, Swamiji made a rule that nobody should nap in the afternoon. One day Swamiji learned that Premananda was

sleeping; perhaps he had not slept the previous night. But Swamiji ordered his disciple, "Go drag him from the bed. Pull him out by the feet." The disciple obeyed his guru. Premananda cried, "What are you doing? Stop! Stop!" He did not stop. Premananda understood that Swamiji was behind it, so he did not say anything. After vespers, Swamiji was pacing in the northern veranda of his room. As soon as he saw Premananda, he embraced him and said, "Brother, our Master used to treasure you in his heart, and I am such a person that I asked that you be dragged from your bed. I am not fit to live here." Then he began to sob uninterruptedly. Premananda had a hard time consoling Swamiji that day.

Swami Vivekananda passed away on 4th July 1902. Three days earlier while walking on the spacious lawn of the monastery with Premananda, Swamiji had pointed to a spot on the bank of the Ganges and said, "When I give up the body, cremate it there." On the day he died Swamiji had breakfast and lunch with Premananda. He was in a jovial mood and gave classes to the monks. After 4 p.m. Swamiji walked with Premananda to Belur Bazar and back, a mile each way. Swamiji felt good and talked to his brother disciple on many interesting subjects. He also mentioned his plan for establishing Vedic college in the monastery. In order to have a clearer understanding of what Swamiji felt on the matter, Premananda asked, "What will be the good of studying the Vedas?" Vivekananda replied, "It will kill superstitions."

Manager of Belur Math

Swami Brahmananda was the president of the Ramakrishna Order, so he had to travel all over India to give initiation and to promote the cause of the organisation. As a result, Premananda was practically in charge of Belur Math. Apart from his regular worship service, he trained the monks, entertained the devotees and visitors, supervised the kitchen, dairy, and garden, took

care of the sick monks, collected money for the maintenance of the monastery, and sometimes went on lecture tours. His body was fragile, but his magnetic personality attracted many people to him. Sri Ramakrishna was living to him, and he had an ability to imprint that feeling in others.

Premananda taught more through the example of his life than through his words. He would go to bed at 11 p.m. and get up at 3 a.m. After washing, he would go to the shrine and perform the morning service to the Master and then he would meditate with the monks for a couple of hours. At 8 a.m. he would instruct the monks to do their respective duties. He himself would sit with some monks, cutting and cleaning vegetables for lunch.

Premananda taught the monks practical Vedanta: how to blend work and worship in daily life.

As a Preacher

Premananda was a magnetic and powerful speaker, and he talked based on his experience. He spoke from his heart – and the voice of the heart is understood by all. He pointed out again and again that religion lies in practice and not in theory. Purity and dispassion are two inseparable conditions for God-realisation. During his stay at Dakshineswar, Premananda started to record some of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. But the Master told him, "That is not your task. Many beautiful words of wisdom will burst forth from your lips."

In Malda Swami Premananda gave a lecture entitled, "Serve Human Beings as God." He emphasised Vivekananda's karma yoga, practical Vedanta, and concluded that the religion of this age is to serve mankind.

In 1901, after returning from East Bengal (now Bangladesh), Vivekananda had said to Premananda, "I have left East Bengal for you." It was a prophetic statement. Every year from 1913 to 1917, Premananda visited East Bengal, sometimes alone and once with Brahmananda. As a result

of Premananda's extensive preaching in East Bengal, many young men joined the Ramakrishna Order.

Premananda was an illumined soul, and he was beyond caste, creed, and religious sect. Knowing his universal attitude, the Muslim Nawab Salimulla of Dhaka invited Premananda to his palace. Premananda carried the Master's prasada to the Muslim devotees. He met the Begums (Muslim women of royal families) in the palace of Nawab Gani, told them the life story of Sri Ramakrishna, and shared his message of the harmony of religions. Knowing Premananda's successful mission in Dhaka, Turiyananda wrote to him, "You are the precious jewel-casket of Sri Ramakrishna. As an embodiment of love, you are distributing love like the gopis of Vrindaban."

In January 1916 Premananda again left for East Bengal with Brahmananda and a group of monks. They visited Kamakhya, a famous place for Mother worship. On this occasion Brahmananda laid the foundation stone of Ramakrishna Mission in Dhaka.

Towards the end

Either because of physical exhaustion in Dhaka or from eating tainted food, Premananda contracted a high fever. He returned to Belur Math in the middle of June 1917. Sometime in March or April 1918, Premananda was sent by his Calcutta doctors to Deoghar, a health resort in Bihar. In the beginning his health improved, but shortly after his fever relapsed and he developed stomach trouble. One day Premananda expressed a desire to meet the famous yogi Balananda Brahmachari of Deoghar. When the news reached Balananda, he came to visit the swami. During this time there was a worldwide influenza epidemic, and many people died. Premananda caught this deadly flu. On Tuesday Premananda's condition deteriorated. Brahmananda was gravely pacing on the veranda and engaged his attendants to chant hymns near

Premananda. All of a sudden he carried a picture of Sri Ramakrishna to Premananda and said, "Brother Baburam, please look at the Master." He then left the room. After a while Brahmananda returned again and said loudly, "Brother Baburam, Brother Baburam, do you remember the Master?" Premananda opened his eyes, looked with a smile at the oil painting of the Master hanging on the wall, and saluted him with folded hands. He uttered feebly, "Grace, grace, grace," and then passed away. It was 4.14p.m. on Tuesday, 30 July 1918. His body was taken to Belur Math and cremated there on the bank of the Ganges. Premananda closed his market of love and flew into the Infinite on two powerful wings: renunciation and love. Truly he was Premananda – bliss in love. He was Bliss and he was Love – an all-consuming love that revealed itself in the service of all – it was the burning passion of his life. Towards the end of his life he casually wrote to someone, "I feel a desire now to love everybody. This is a disease which has now possessed me."

Source:

God Lived with Them: Life Stories of Sixteen Monastic Disciples by Swami Chetanananda; Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, pages 179-191.



"Stick to God! Who cares what comes to the body or to anything else! Through the terrors of evil, say -- my God, my love! Through the pangs of death, say -- my God, my love! Through all the evils under the sun, say my God, my love!"
— Swami Vivekananda

"Can you see your own eyes? God is like that. He is as close as your own eyes. He is your own, even though you can't see Him."
— Swami Vivekananda
Said to seventeen-year-old Ralph Wyckoff